Strange Spaces: The Teleological Function of Topographies with Christian Soteriological Iconography in Algernon Blackwood's Short Stories of Supernatural Horror between 1899 and 1914

Christopher Matthew Scott

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
School of English

31 January 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

H. P. Lovecraft identified Algernon Blackwood as a 'master' of the weird ('Supernatural Horror in Literature' 83). Since Lovecraft's publication, however, Blackwood had surprisingly been neglected among scholars except for a few devotees such as Peter Penzoldt, Mike Ashley, David Punter, and S. T. Joshi. Blackwood scholarship has advanced recently, but the most in-depth engagements with the breadth of Blackwood's oeuvre remain those of the aforementioned scholars. Despite their extensive reach, Lovecraft, Penzoldt, Ashley, Punter, and Joshi collectively overlook a repeated phenomenon within Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror, specifically those published between 1899 and 1914. These narratives evince patterns with their particular physical settings that deploy an amalgamation of Christian soteriological iconography and Mark Fisher's concept of the strange—and its various manifestations via the Freudian uncanny, the weird, and/or the eerie. By using teleological and theological lenses to analyse closely the operation(s) of the strange in Blackwood's narratives set in city, garden, forest, and mountain topographies, this thesis contends that Blackwood's short stories with these types of topographies, Christian soteriological iconography, and the strange encourage his audience to recognise these physical settings as necessary progressive soteriological destinations toward an individual's physical and spiritual advancement from urban to rural spaces because these particular narratives with this arrangement facilitate various appeals to Christian pathos.

Addressing this overlooked area in Blackwood scholarship equips academics to recognise Blackwood's spiritual position and his influential deployment of supernatural horror and the strange to appeal to his audience's emotions in a way that inspires them to accept his idiosyncratic interpretations of the (other)world. As Blackwood aims to instruct his audience, this thesis contributes to the scholarly debate about whether Blackwood is didactic or not by evidencing multiple narratives whose elements align with a didactic purpose.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

DECLARATION

I, Christopher Matthew Scott, confirm that this Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Some material from this Thesis has been published elsewhere and is indicated herein using footnotes. The publication details are Christopher M. Scott, 'Gothic Eden: Gardens, Religious Tradition and EcoGothic Exegesis in Algernon Blackwood's "The Lost Valley" and "The Transfer"'. *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*. Ed. Sue Edney. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. pp. 65-81.

INTRODUCTION

Two years before his death, Algernon Blackwood (1869-1952) revealed to a BBC audience live on the air that his life goals—or what he referred to as "torches"—comprised being a 'poet, a violinist, an explorer and mountaineer, and a holy man' (Ashley 132).[1] Anyone familiar with Blackwood's life knows that he achieved all but his last objective, respectively, or did he? The completion of Blackwood's last goal remains open for discussion. In his autobiographical *Episodes Before Thirty* (1923), Blackwood offers more detail about his 'torch' when he confesses that he carried a 'desire' throughout his life to become a 'monk' (14). Though he remains ambiguous about the type of monk to which he refers, Blackwood's life experiences and fiction offer clues. Blackwood admits that at one stage of his life he considered himself Buddhist, albeit an esoteric one, yet this acknowledgement obfuscates a much larger picture.[2] Blackwood never subscribed to any organised religion, so how could he become a holy man or monk? Over the years he wove a spiritual tapestry, replacing and supplementing his faith as he went along.[3] The terrestrial landscape occupied much of that spiritual space, but along with a focus on the physical environment in Blackwood's fiction, Christian soteriological iconography—that is, any symbolism related to Christian concepts of salvation and/or Christ—often surfaces from within that space. To give an example, isolated in a mountainous terrain, the protagonist in 'H.S.H.' (1913), Delane, must engage with not only a perilous, tempestuous environment but also the evil therein. Materialising from within the setting, Satan visits Delane with the aim of tempting the latter to worship him. Delane eventually summons the courage to cast Satan away, defeating him with pure love (charity) but in the context of Christian symbolic experiences. The protagonist in 'The Sacrifice' (1913) performs what the title suggests and does so for others in Christ-like fashion on a Calvary-esque summit after administering the Holy Sacrament in a scene mirroring Luke 22:19-20. Blackwood's famous story, 'The Willows' (1907), also references the sign of the Cross appearing in the sky. For a supposed believer and practitioner of Eastern mysticism, Blackwood employs myriad Christian

---

[1] All citations of Ashley's biography, *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life* in this thesis refer to the Kindle (e-book) version that displays "locations" rather than "pages." All subsequent references to this text will either cite the chapter or "location."

[2] Some material in this paragraph and in the second paragraph of the section below titled 'Algernon Blackwood and His Fiction' was published elsewhere. That publication also includes material from this thesis's second chapter. See Christopher M. Scott, 'Gothic Eden: Gardens, Religious Tradition and EcoGothic Exegesis in Algernon Blackwood's "The Lost Valley" and "The Transfer"'. *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*. Ed. Sue Edney. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. pp. 65-81.

[3] See page 90 in S. T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale*. Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 1990.

soteriological references attached to the terrestrial topographies in his fiction, especially city, garden, forest, and mountain settings in his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914. This thesis explores the teleological effect of these topographies with Christian soteriological iconography.

WEIRD FICTION, SUPERNATURAL HORROR, THE STRANGE, AND THE ECOGOTHIC

Weird fiction as a critical field has developed considerably since H. P. Lovecraft first delineated the literary mode in his seminal essay 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' (1927; revised 1939). Since then, such literary scholars as S. T. Joshi, Mark Fisher, and James Machin have advanced Lovecraft's pioneering work to reinforce his definition of the weird, classify various works that constitute the weird, and assign value to a literary mode that had traditionally been considered to have very little worth—if any at all.[4] Before proceeding, it is significant to note that weird fiction derives from supernatural fiction. Recent contributions have increased scholarly understanding of the function and impact of supernatural fiction as well as its value within English literature. Such scholars as Dorothy Scarborough, Edith Birkhead, Peter Penzoldt, E. F. Bleiler, and Joshi have contributed meaningful interpretations that distinguish supernatural fiction from other literary modes and aesthetics.[5]

Several scholarly investigations have focused on the individual qualities of weird tales and what classifies them as a unique literary function and aesthetic. Lovecraft's essay not only places this literary mode on the critical map, but it also charts a course for it. Though weird fiction bears a literary genealogy deriving from supernatural fiction, especially Gothic fiction and Horace Walpole's archetypal text, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Lovecraft views weird fiction as its own form. Commenting on its relationship to the Gothic, Lovecraft notes that the weird moves past familiar Gothic trappings and highlights a unique characteristic of some irruption of the supernatural into the natural world, a generic phenomenon that will drive

---

[4] H. P. Lovecraft, 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'. 1927; revised 1939. New York: Ben Abramson, 1945; S. T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale*. Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 1990; Joshi, *The Evolution of the Weird Tale*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2004; Joshi, *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2012; Joshi, *Driven to Madness with Fright: Further Notes on Horror Fiction*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2016; Joshi, *The Development of the Weird Tale*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2019; Joshi, *The Advance of the Weird Tale*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2020; Joshi, *The Progression of the Weird Tale*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2021; Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*. London: Repeater, 2016; James Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain 1880-1939*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.

[5] Dorothy Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*. London: Putnam's, 1917; Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (1921); Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction*. London: Peter Nevill, 1952; E. F. Bleiler, 'Introduction'. *Supernatural Fiction Writers*. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985. Vol 1. pp. xiii-xix; Joshi, *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2012.

investigations in this thesis. After establishing the definitional and categorical foundations of weird fiction, Lovecraft identifies Blackwood as one of its master writers. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, Blackwood employs elements of the weird in some—not all—of his narratives, so any classification of him as only a writer of weird fiction would be inaccurate. Even as Joshi clarifies, a parameter of weird fiction as some all-encompassing category can be problematic, for the weird governs a subset of 'types', and the largest one constitutes supernatural horror (*The Weird Tale* 6-7).[6] Lovecraft and Joshi's identification and categorization highlight something useful for Blackwood scholars, for most of his short stories operate in the vein of supernatural horror.

Supernatural horror as a critical field, since Lovecraft's essay has developed into a broad examination of various literary specimens classified as part of a corpus of work that pivots on a synthesis of otherworldly elements that defy natural laws as well as an emotive provocation of fear. Such scholars as Penzoldt, Les Daniels, Julia Briggs, Glen St. John Barclay, Jack Sullivan, David Punter, Howard Kerr et al., Frank N. Magill, Bleiler, Darrell Schweitzer, José B. Monleón, Walter Kendrick, Faye Ringel, Joshi, and Jason Colavito have charted this literary landscape of supernatural horror in depth.[7] That most of Blackwood's short stories can be classified as specimens of supernatural horror is a principal focus in this thesis, for the texts examined herein adhere to this subcategory of weird fiction. Like supernatural horror, the ghost story and the literary Gothic mode depend on the supernatural. Joshi classifies the ghost story as a 'subset' of supernatural horror that only presents supernatural manifestations as ghosts (*The Weird Tale* 7).[8] Supernatural exhibitions in the literary Gothic mode are also distinct because they operate in tandem with such generic Gothic elements as narratives set in castles, abbeys, prisons, crypts, graveyards, the frontier, old houses, old

---

[6] Joshi also lists quasi science fiction (most of Lovecraft's later fiction comprises this category), non-supernatural horror (of which psychological horror is a subset), fantasy, and the ambiguous horror tale (an exemplar of Tzvetan Todorov's concept of *le fantastique*).

[7] Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction*. London: Peter Nevill, 1952; Les Daniels, *Living in Fear: A History of Horror in the Mass Media*. New York: Scribner, 1975; Julia Briggs, *Night visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*. London: Faber & Faber, 1977.; Glen St. John Barclay, *Anatomy of Horror: Masters of Occult Fiction*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978; Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978; David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to Present Day*. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1996; Howard Kerr et al., eds. *The Haunted Dusk: American Supernatural Fiction, 1820-1920*. Atlanta, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1983; Frank N. Magill, ed. *Survey of Fantasy Literature*. 5 vols. New York: Salem Press, 1983; E. F. Bleiler, "Introduction." Supernatural Fiction Writers. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985; Darrell Schweitzer, ed. *Discovering Classic Horror Fiction*. New York: Starmont House, 1992; José B. Monleón, *A Specter is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990; Walter Kendrick, *The Thrill of Fear*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991; Faye Ringel, *New England's Gothic Literature*. London: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990; Joshi, *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2012.

[8] See also page xviii in Punter and Glennis Byron's *The Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

theatres, and/or aging cities (Hogle 2; Botting 12; Punter and Byron 259-60). Within these Gothic narrative settings lie 'hidden some secrets from the past […] that haunt the characters', and these 'hauntings' occur via such supernatural entities as ghosts, spectres, or monsters […] that rise from within the antiquated space, or sometimes invade it from alien realms, to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view' (Hogle 2). Supernatural horror and weird fiction, however, can operate free from what Lovecraft identified as generic Gothic 'rule[s]' (8). The supernatural can surface within a text of supernatural horror or weird fiction with the sole purpose of causing dread; extramundane reminders of a buried secret or past conflict do not have to operate. This narrative predisposition of supernatural horror—unrestricted by any expectations of the literary Gothic mode—aligns with how Blackwood's narratives operate, as explored in this thesis.[9] There has been scholarly debate about supernatural horror and the literary Gothic mode as they relate to Blackwood's fiction. On the one hand, Punter claims that Blackwood exhibits 'many' instances of the supernatural that constitute the 'property' of previous Gothic fiction writers (*The Literature of Terror* 3). Punter and Byron include Blackwood in their chronological list of Gothic fiction writers (*The Gothic* 90). Joshi, on the other hand, argues that Blackwood adhered more to supernatural horror than any other literary mode (*The Weird Tale* 3; 7). As this thesis will demonstrate, Blackwood's employment of the supernatural aligns more with supernatural horror than with the literary Gothic mode.

But unlike Gothic fiction, the ecoGothic constitutes a relevant point of discussion in the context of Blackwood's work because scholars have identified in his fiction the operation of the ecoGothic. Andrew Smith and William Hughes describe the ecoGothic as an investigation of the 'Gothic through theories of ecocriticism' and a view of 'how the Gothic approaches environmental factors' (1; 3). Smith and Hughes further posit that the 'key issue' in the ecoGothic is finding a relationship between the 'ecological' and 'meaning', for meaning 'is central to the Gothic […] as it variously questions, comprises and challenges the way in which the world has been understood' (3-4). David Del Principe supports Smith and Hughes's description by adding that an 'EcoGothic approach poses a challenge to a familiar Gothic subject—nature—taking a nonanthropocentric position to reconsider the role that the environment, species, and nonhumans play in the construction of monstrosity and fear', and that the 'EcoGothic examines the construction of the Gothic body—unhuman, nonhuman,

---

[9] Though the texts examined in this thesis align with supernatural horror, Blackwood wrote a few tales that seemingly borrow elements from the literary Gothic mode. One text in particular that exemplifies an operation of this literary aesthetic is 'The Empty House' (1906).

transhuman, posthuman, or hybrid—through a more inclusive lens, asking how it can be more meaningfully understood as a site of articulation for environmental and species identity (1).[10] Del Principe concludes that the ecoGothic 'question[s] the affirmation of human dominion over nature, proposing an ecocritical awareness to challenge human-centered views and expose the monstrous anthropocentric gaze' (2). Smith, Hughes, and Del Principe collectively describe the ecoGothic as a synthesis of the Gothic and ecocriticism in which critics review monstrous and fearful presentations of physical environments with all their unhuman, nonhuman, transhuman, posthuman, or hybrid entities; they do so to ascertain some form of meaning that represents those entities in a nonanthropocentric way and simultaneously challenges anthropocentrism in its various forms. As demonstrated in this thesis's second chapter, Blackwood's garden topography in one of the selected narratives embodies monstrosity in a manner that aligns to Smith, Hughes, and Del Principe's description of the ecoGothic, but as this thesis will show, Blackwood's works examined herein are primarily concerned with Christian soteriological phenomena that operate within particular topographies rather than with any topographical monstrosities that ostensibly signify (non)anthropocentric ideologies. Therefore, any manifestation of ecoGothic monstrosity in Blackwood's works investigated in this thesis—particularly in Chapter Two—is acknowledged but plays an ancillary role vis-à-vis Christian soteriology, the strange, and supernatural horror.

Supernatural horror, though it may sound paradoxical, requires reality. The phrase 'supernatural horror' presents a conflation of two lexical entities. 'Supernatural' combines the prefix 'super-' and 'natural.' Latinate in origin, 'super-' means 'above' or 'beyond' and exists in the Latin verb *superare*, which translates as 'to be above' or 'to surpass'.[11] The word 'natural', on the other hand, also finds its etymological origin in such Latinate words as the adjective *naturalis* and noun *natura*. The adjectival expression provides the closest link to the English word 'natural' and represents anything 'normal', 'typical', or 'characteristic'. The supernatural 'belong[s] to a realm or system that transcends nature, as that of divine, magical, or ghostly beings' and could also 'reveal some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature' (*Oxford English Dictionary*).[12] Lovecraft distinguishes the supernatural by contrasting it with what constitutes the 'natural' (13). In its very construct, then, the concept of the supernatural depends on an established reality from which it distinguishes and defines itself

---

[10] Smith and Hughes write "ecoGothic" with a minuscule or lowercase "e" whereas Del Principe refers to the concept by using a majuscule or uppercase "E." Since Smith and Hughes publication precedes Del Principe's, this thesis refers to the concept of the ecoGothic by using a minuscule "e."

[11] All Latin translations are my own.

[12] Further references to the *Oxford English Dictionary* will be abbreviated using "OED."

as any entity above, outside, or surpassing the laws of the natural world—or what humanity classifies as normal.

Although the otherworldly notion of the supernatural may stand benignly on its own in a literary sense, it has formed a symbiosis with the concept of horror.[13] The cover image of Les Daniels's *Living Fear: A History of Horror in the Mass Media* (1975) portrays a scholarly collage of conceptional definitions for horror fiction. The skull and crossbones beneath the inscription *Memento Mori*, Latin for 'remember death', can stand as a case in point. The title proper, 'Living in Fear', stands in bold capitalized red text above a still shot of Victor Frankenstein's monster from James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931). Daniels provides a historical survey of horror fiction from its genealogical roots in Greek and Roman tragedy to the horror films of the 1970s. Despite this wide array of horrific specimens, Daniels fails to offer any kind of definition of horror fiction. The closest he ventures to uttering anything resembling a definition is merely packaged as hearsay from two famous actors of horror films who had concluded that 'horror' refers to 'physical revulsion bordering nausea' (2). Daniels's missed opportunity, however, is remedied by the cover image, for it functions as an indirect definition of the genre through symbolic suggestion, whose concepts become, coincidentally, treated by later scholars of horror. In his *Philosophy of Horror: Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990), Noël Carroll marries the concept of horror fiction, or 'art-horror' as he describes it, to monsters; for Carroll, horror is defined by its various fiends such as Frankenstein's monster and Count Dracula as well as the reactions they elicit from readers and viewers (1-11). Though his definition is more specific than anything Daniels offers, Carroll limits the literary and cinematic horror genre to instances where monstrosities occupy centre stage—an assertion that undoubtedly renders any and all horrific tales without monsters generic pariahs.[14] Xavier Aldaña Reyes traces 'horror' to the Latinate verb *horrere*, which means 'to tremble or shudder' (11). The sole or primary purpose of the horror tale entails the conjuring of 'fear, shock or disgust' in addition to such 'emotional states' as 'dread or suspense' (Ibid.). Aldaña Reyes also points out that horror derives its name as a genre from the 'effects it seeks to elicit in its readers' (12).

Another generic literary form that seeks to elicit an emotional effect in its readers constitutes weird fiction. Paying homage to writers he felt were superior in this literary form,

---

[13] Dorothy Scarborough notes that the supernatural comprises an 'ever-present force in literature' (1).

[14] S. T. Joshi also disagrees with Carroll's bold definition of horror fiction. Not all horror stories involve monsters, so I, like Joshi, find Carroll's definition too restrictive to address the plethora of horror narratives in existence. See Joshi, 'Introduction'. *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2014. pp. 16-34.

Lovecraft essentially provides an outline for a literary aesthetic that he implies is the 'child' of the literary Gothic mode (13). But unlike its Gothic parent, weird fiction ventures further. Lovecraft explains,

> The true weird tale has something more than a secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. (8)

Departing Gothic 'rule[s]', the weird tale must possess an unexplainably dreadful atmosphere as a result of exterior and mysterious forces beside an understanding that the laws of the real world are being manipulated or altogether disregarded. Joshi adds to Lovecraft's definition of the weird by explaining that rather than existing as a genre per se, weird fiction constitutes an aesthetic embodying a 'consequence of a world view', and this point, for Joshi, renders weird fiction a philosophical mode (*The Weird Tale* 1). Mark Fisher builds upon Lovecraft and Joshi's definitions of the weird by viewing it as a literary aesthetic and as a 'sensation of wrongness: a weird entity or object […] so strange that it makes us feel that it should not exist, or at least it should not exist here' (10). It is significant to note, furthermore, that Fisher considers the weird as a representation of the 'strange', a generic category whose definition I include below. Joshi further divides the weird into various strands, and the main category that concerns Blackwood is supernatural horror, for it claims not just the lion's share of his fiction but also of weird narratives in general (*The Weird Tale* 7). Supernatural horror can only exist, Joshi declares, when a narrative presents the 'ordinary world' as the 'norm', and then that same world which mirrors our own in image and function becomes—borrowing Lovecraft's terminology—'violated' (Ibid.). In other words, what humankind considers natural can be invaded by the unnatural, supernatural, or simply anything but natural.

Fisher describes the 'strange' as 'that which lies beyond standard perception, cognition and experience' and provokes an interest that 'usually involves a certain apprehension, perhaps even dread' (4). Fisher adds that the weird, the Freudian uncanny, and the eerie are all 'treatment[s]' of the strange (5). These treatments constitute what makes these three strange literary aesthetics distinct. Whereas the weird embodies 'the presence of that which does not belong', the eerie depends on a 'failure of absence' or a 'failure of presence'; in other words, the 'sensation of the eerie occurs either when there is something present where there should be

nothing, or there is nothing present when there should be something' (45). Fisher argues that the sensational fulcrum of the eerie embodies a sense of 'suspense' and 'speculation', and the substance that eliminates the functionality of the eerie is discovery of the thing (or its nature) that should (not) be absent (45-7).

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD AND HIS FICTION

When compared to such contemporary writers of supernatural horror, Blackwood has historically received the least amount of scholarly attention although interest has increased in recent years. Such critics as Grace Isabel Colbron, Robb Lawson, Henriette Reeves, Lovecraft, Aubrey J. C. Walters, Stuart Gilbert, Arthur Compton-Rickett, Penzoldt, Derek Hudson, J. Russell Reaver, Sullivan, Punter, John Robert Colombo, R. F. Fleissner, Joshi, and Mike Ashley have contributed biographical and/or literary investigations of Blackwood to establish an academic conversation about Blackwood and his literary repertoire.[15] Of these critics, those most knowledgeable with Blackwood's life and most—if not all—of his fiction are Lovecraft, Penzoldt, Punter, Joshi, and Ashley. A comprehensive approach, Joshi remarks, is requisite to understanding Blackwood and his work (*The Weird Tale* 89). This thesis intends to join this sustained conversation about Blackwood and his fiction.

The earliest of Blackwood's critics, Colbron identifies a peculiar spatial 'theme' running throughout Blackwood's texts that champions the 'Unknown' and occupies a 'great realm' between it and what is 'Known' or 'Obvious' (620). This liminal space emerges at the heart of Blackwood's fiction and embodies the physical settings that constitute his narrative *mise en scène*. She concludes that within this constructed 'borderland' space, Blackwood manufactures horror (620). The assembled horrors produce an uncanny phenomenon at the heart of Blackwood's supernatural landscapes. Blackwood's characters are attracted to the horror in this supernaturally liminal space. Sullivan focuses on Blackwood's characterisation,

---

[15] H. P. Lovecraft, 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'. 1927; revised 1939. New York: Ben Abramson, 1945; Peter Penzoldt, 'Algernon Blackwood'. *The Supernatural in Fiction*. London: Peter Nevill, 1952. pp. 228-53; S. T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale*. Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 1990; Joshi, *The Evolution of the Weird Tale*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2004; Joshi, *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction*. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2012; Joshi, *Driven to Madness with Fright: Further Notes on Horror Fiction*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2016; Joshi, *The Development of the Weird Tale*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2019; Joshi, *The Advance of the Weird Tale*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2020; Joshi, *The Progression of the Weird Tale*. Seattle, WA: Sarnath Press, 2021; Mike Ashley, *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life.* New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2001. See also Maude ffoulkes, "Algernon Blackwood." *My Own Past*. London: Cassell, 1915. pp. 186-202. ffoulkes also shared a view of Blackwood and his literary work. Not a literary scholar per se, she positions herself in her publication as Blackwood's intimate friend with an eye of personal appreciation for him and his stories rather than a critic who focuses on the influence of Blackwood's work on any greater movement of literary scholarship.

arguing that his characters are visionaries who seek unknown spaces and discover horror (113). Sullivan also notes that Blackwood himself served as a pattern for his own characters: 'What binds Blackwood's work together is a distinctive vision' that unifies the narrative (113), and this vision verges on the 'mystical' (117). The various characters deployed in Blackwood's tales vicariously live the outlook and beliefs of their mystical master. Blackwood spent most of his years 'continually seeking new places, experiences, and visions' (117). And like Blackwood, his characters often feel 'oppressed by everyday reality' and 'deliberately seek out other worlds' (113). What they eventually discover advances Colbron's conclusion: horror awaits those who cross beyond the threshold. Yet departing slightly from Colbron's position, Sullivan notes a positive rather than negative experience when protagonists return to the quotidian world from the apparently hostile space. Penzoldt first claimed that Blackwood was an anomalously 'positive' author in the genre of supernatural fiction (228-53). Sullivan appears to extend Penzoldt's assertion. Unlike the characters in the supernatural tales of, say, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-73), M. R. James (1862-1936) or Arthur Machen (1863-1947), those in Blackwood's stories find themselves restored to normalcy at the denouement as opposed to being harmed or obliterated. This journey, Sullivan points out, constitutes an 'unfinished circle' where the Blackwoodian protagonist experiences the horror of an alien dimension before returning safely to reality (114). Blackwood's narrative settings lie at the heart of this dynamic, and specific types of landscapes operate in distinct ways to produce idiosyncratic effects on Blackwood's characters.[16]

Blackwood's approach to supernatural fiction, according to Lovecraft, constitutes the 'finest of this or any age' (83). Lovecraft especially notes Blackwood's 'seriousness' invested in orchestrating the strange within the ordinary as well as the supernatural details he constructs in seriatim within his fictional worlds (Ibid.). About these narrative worlds, Lovecraft notices a particular talent Blackwood demonstrates to earn regard as the sole 'master of weird atmosphere' (Ibid.). Lovecraft ranks Blackwood's major works such as 'The Willows' and 'The Wendigo' as superior to what he classifies as his 'lesser work'; these lesser-known narratives bear the mark of an 'ethical didacticism' and 'benignant supernaturalism' among

---

[16] Stuart Gilbert also focused on how Blackwood was instrumental in the progression of supernatural fiction; however, I do not engage with Gilbert's work directly here because he restricts his examination of Blackwood to two of the latter's novels. See Gilbert, 'Algernon Blackwood: Novelist and Mystic'. *Transition*. No. 23 (July 1935) pp. 89-96.

other things (84).[17] Blackwood's most famous tales such as 'The Willows' and 'The Wendigo' exemplify, for Lovecraft, the effective employment of the strange and supernatural in fiction.

Penzoldt agrees with Lovecraft's assertion that Blackwood exhibited serious attention to the craft of supernatural fiction whereas most other writers demonstrate a mere ephemeral interest sometime during their careers (228). Blackwood separated himself from other writers of supernatural fiction because of how he continuously wove the narrative fabric of his tales by using his own personal experiences and sutured them with the supernatural (228). Penzoldt identifies a 'message' inherent in Blackwood's supernatural repertoire powered by his 'sincerity' of purpose, something else that separates Blackwood from his literary peers (228-9). He highlights how imperative it is for the critic to approach Blackwood with this understanding to ascertain the real meaning behind Blackwood's narratives (229). Penzoldt defines what constitutes the recurrent message in Blackwood's literary work by using Blackwood's own words from a personal letter:

> My fundamental interest, I suppose, is signs and proof of other powers that lie hidden in us all; the extension, in other words, of human faculty. So many of my stories, therefore, deal with extension of consciousness; speculative and imaginative treatment of possibilities outside our normal range of consciousness. Also, all that happens in our universe is *natural*; [*sic*] under Law; [*sic*] but an extension of our so limited normal consciousness can reveal new, extraordinary powers etc., and the word 'supernatural' seems the best word for treating these in fiction. I believe it possible for our consciousness to change and grow, and that with this change we may become aware of a new universe. A 'change' in consciousness, in its type, I mean, is something more than a mere extension of what we already possess and know. (229; emphasis original)

In his own words, Blackwood is interested in supernatural powers that relate to change, growth, and the expansion of the human consciousness, yet in a surprising move Penzoldt insists that Blackwood's work is not didactic, concluding that Blackwood 'has a message' but 'no dogma' (229). It should be noted that dogma bears no synonymity with either didacticism or andragogy; they can be mutually exclusive. So, it is puzzling why Penzoldt excises the possibility of didactic purpose from Blackwood's intrinsic message-bearing fiction. In establishing the 'quality' of this message, Penzoldt claims that the extension of consciousness—and the change and growth that it entails—is 'sacred' and something 'God whispered to the author' (230). He

---

[17] To Blackwood's credit, Lovecraft demonstrates an affinity for malignant supernatural entities, as displayed throughout most of his short stories with the antagonistic creature Cthulhu standing as one case in point.

identifies Blackwood as a true mystic who reached the world through 'nature, the essence of nature, and all her hidden aspects' with nature as 'Blackwood's God' (234). Penzoldt concludes by referring to Blackwood's writings as 'accounts of personal experience' and the 'epic of a spiritual odyssey' that 'brought him out into regions of light and happiness' (248). Blackwood's own account, furthermore, as evident in his personal letter, exhibits an implication of weird fiction to some extent. Blackwood admits that his 'fundamental interest' comprised elements and possibilities beyond contemporary comprehension, and the supernatural can manifest itself among the mundane operations within a natural universe. This revelation of interest adheres directly to the central tenet of weird fiction.

In *The Literature of Terror*, Punter writes that Blackwood's fiction is unique because it is 'informed by' and 'contributes to the formation and validation of a single worldview', for Blackwood's supernatural is 'accepted as existent' and pivots on 'explanations which presuppose belief' (80). Punter never divulges what he thinks that belief is; instead, he claims that Blackwood's 'supernatural forces' are 'fundamentally *indifferent* to man' (80; emphasis original). (As this thesis will demonstrate later, Punter's position becomes complicated by supernatural entities in Blackwood's fiction whose sole function actually relies on physically and spiritually saving the protagonist.) Punter identifies an exclusive quality of Blackwood's writing in the latter's affinity for presenting death or near-death with a 'degree of tenderness that is rare in the horror story' as well as regularly working within traditions to 'capitalise on the reader's previous knowledge' (85). Punter leaves the source of that previous knowledge open for interpretation.

In his chapter on Blackwood in Bleiler's *Supernatural Fiction Writers*, Punter articulates Blackwood's biographical relationship with Christianity through his upbringing in a household led by his father, a 'leading light in the evangelical [Christian] movement' sweeping Great Britain at the time (463). Blackwood's experience with this evangelical version of Christianity combined with a separate exposure to a non-evangelical Protestant form of Christianity through the teachings of the Moravian Brotherhood located in Königsfeld, Germany provided Blackwood with an ambivalent relationship to Christianity as a whole, for he detested the 'narrowness' of his evangelical upbringing but enjoyed the religious rituals that the Moravians practiced (463). Punter notes that Blackwood constituted one of the 'few major writers of supernatural fiction who believed in the supernatural' (463). His beliefs, however, never formed into 'any kind of established religion' (464). Though Punter apparently agrees with Lovecraft and Penzoldt's identification of Blackwood's sincere writing technique, Punter parts scholarly company by noticing that Blackwood seems compelled by his own 'perceptions

to find new ways in which to transmit his intimations of immortality' (464). In this approach to immortality, Punter joins Lovecraft's recognition of Blackwood's 'benignant' supernatural entities—to requote Lovecraft—which Punter labels as Blackwood's deployment of 'white magic' (464). Appearing in tandem with the use of this white magic exists the potential for Blackwood's characters to ascend to new heights of human consciousness, often literally in the form of contact with deity in the mountains (466). Punter also notes that Blackwood's approach to writing fiction attempts to advance 'directly into an enlarged vision of the world' (467). Punter concludes that when trying to decipher Blackwood's spiritual source for extended consciousness in his fiction, the 'problem concerns the direction in which we are to look in order to produce this increased availability, up toward the heavens or else inward and downward to the unconscious', but Blackwood suggests that 'mysticism and psychology converge', and he focuses on a 'dialectic of aloneness and togetherness' that culminates in 'roots deep within ourselves in our dealings with life and death and in the constant intermingling of our deepest hopes and fears' (468-9). Punter also notes that Blackwood's work is 'governed by a very peculiar interpretation of the relations between 'nature' and 'spirit', considered in the widest applications of both terms'; there is a kind of 'rapture in the visions which conclude many of Blackwood's stories' ('Algernon Blackwood: Nature and Spirit' 45). Blackwood's 'ultimate concern is constantly with the heart' and by connection, the "constant oscillation between life and death" (Ibid. 55).

Life, death, and writing from the heart, according to Joshi, are all Blackwood ever did. He wrote 'heart-wrenchingly' about his personal experiences, especially those during extreme poverty in New York City (*The Weird Tale* 88). Despite a myriad of negative experiences in his life, Blackwood's view of the world remained 'positive and constructive: he seeks to show how his philosophy can actually *work* in the world, and he seems to have lives by it as much as it is humanly possible to do' (89; emphasis original). Agreeing with Penzoldt and Punter, Joshi admits that Blackwood is a positive horror writer, for his 'predominant message is optimistic in regard to human beings, their souls, and their place in the cosmos' (89). Blackwood's worldview feeds into a construct of his spirituality. Joshi notes that Blackwood's mysticism bears religion of 'Blackwood's own making' yet is 'free of dogma and creed' (89). But unlike other writers of supernatural horror, Blackwood 'did not embody his philosophy in vast numbers of essays or letters; […] he restricted himself principally to fictional composition' and created 'unashamedly philosophical fiction' (90).[18] Something that also distinguishes

---

[18] Joshi emphasizes that Blackwood's version of philosophy is a 'real philosophy' (90).

Blackwood's work from that of many of his contemporaries is its exemplification of the author's 'coherent worldview' (*The Development of the Weird Tale* 50).

      Joshi examines this worldview and its relationship to nature and determines that the term 'nature' itself when deployed by Blackwood is plagued by 'imprecision' and a 'multiplicity of connotations' (*The Weird Tale* 91). The event that shaped the 'whole of [Blackwood's] fictional work', according to Joshi constituted his experience with the 'phantasmagoric civilization' of New York City (91).[19] This momentous occasion proved to be influential to Blackwood's oeuvre. Joshi also observes Blackwood's pursuit of an 'expansion of consciousness' in his fiction, and in some places this phenomenon behaves as if Blackwood 'seeks some mystical merging with the cosmos' (93). Blackwood's expansion of consciousness in his tales of horror is 'humanity's only opportunity for salvation' (114). Joshi notes that during these moments in Blackwood's fiction, the reader experiences a 'direct communion with a larger sphere of entity, one where the distinctions between terrestrial [and celestial] objects are seen to be illusory or nugatory' (94). This type of insight, for Joshi, 'ordinarily requires or results in […] a removal from […] the concentration of modernity represented by the urban environment', which then explains why 'so many of Blackwood's tales take place in remote areas' (94).

      Blackwood's encouraged 'return to nature', Joshi finds, is 'couched in language' throughout his fiction of a return to a period before civilization; using Blackwood's novel *The Centaur* (1911) as a case in point, Joshi shares that this 'call' desires a temporal and physical destination resembling the Earth's 'Golden Age—before men tasted of the Tree and knew themselves separate; when the lion and the lamb lay down together and a little child could lead them' (96). Strikingly, Joshi never comments on any of the conspicuous examples of exclusively Christian iconography conceptually anchoring his own argument for Blackwood's purpose in writing. Joshi instead pursues a spiritual line of reincarnation as the sole theme that 'pervades Blackwood's work' (99). Reincarnation constitutes a form of rebirth, and one of Blackwood's tales, 'By Water' (1914), for instance, features a protagonist's figurative baptism after he's inspired to search for water after receiving guidance from a spiritual source. The ostensible baptism 'by water', as the story's title suggests, liberates the protagonist from his wretched state. Yet Joshi never acknowledges any Christian connotation of spiritual reincarnation in Blackwood's work.

---

[19] Joshi also calls this event in Blackwood's life a 'turning point'. See page 90 in *The Advance of the Weird Tale*.

Though Penzoldt and Punter rule out didacticism operating in Blackwood's fiction, Joshi apparently aligns with Lovecraft and Sullivan, especially the former in the identification of operative didacticism in Blackwood's oeuvre, but the farthest Joshi commits himself to their collective position remains qualified as an implication that Blackwood's work *could*, indeed, be didactic, for Blackwood patterned the eponymous protagonist in the novel *Julius LeVallon* (1916) after himself and equipped the character to embody a source of instruction for his own audience: '[T]eaching…might unify the creeds, put life into the formal churches, inspire the world with joy and hope, and bring on the spirit of brotherhood by helping the soul to rediscover its kinship with a living cosmos' (*The Weird Tale* 101).[20] But like Punter, Joshi notes that the supernatural forces in Blackwood's horror tales demonstrate an 'indifference to human life' (113). Joshi emphasises that Blackwood's 'entire work—and his horror work in particular—had relatively little to do with occultism[;] […] there is, in fact, a systematic repudiation of occultism in Blackwood: like religion and materialism, it is at best a fragmentary view of the world' (116). Joshi concludes that Blackwood employed his supernatural fiction to 'envision a pantheistic unity of all nature' (*Driven to Madness with Fright: Further Notes on Horror Fiction* 12).

Ashley's principal contribution to scholarship about Blackwood embodies a thorough biography of Blackwood's life. In it, Ashley views Blackwood as one of the 'twentieth-century's most creative writers of supernatural fiction' (81). Commenting on Blackwood's fictional oeuvre and how personal its contents were, Ashley shares a letter from Blackwood which claims that all the latter's stories were autobiographical in some form (90). Ashley reveals that though Blackwood lived as a minimalist, whatever personal effects he owned up until October 1940 were destroyed during the Battle of Britain when German bombs obliterated his place of residence (103).[21] Despite this dearth in Blackwood's personal materials that could have proven instrumental in providing deeper insight into his life, aside from his published autobiography, *Episodes Before Thirty*, Blackwood's subsequent fiction, especially his short stories, ostensibly extends his official autobiography, since many of the short stories mirror Blackwood's actual life experiences.

Despite the depth of scholarly research that has been conducted by Blackwood's literary critics, no one to date has investigated the numerous appearances of Christian soteriological iconography in Blackwood's fiction and, particularly, his short stories of supernatural horror—

---

[20] Sullivan calls Blackwood 'didactic'; see page 114.
[21] See also page 88 in Joshi's *The Weird Tale*.

let alone any plausible connections to Christian symbolism and/or Christianity whatsoever. This surprising absence of attention warrants a critical investigation of this literary phenomenon in Blackwood's fictional collection. This thesis, therefore, attempts to address this void by investigating manifestations of Christian soteriological iconography and interrogating them by asking what their teleological effect might be when they appear within strange topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914.

Addressing the question central to this thesis and investigating repeated instances of Christian symbolism related to its doctrine of salvation would enable the scholarly community to understand more profoundly Blackwood's spiritual position and his instrumental deployment of supernatural horror and the strange to appeal to his audience on an emotional level in a manner that encourages them to accept his idiosyncratic view about the civilization and the natural environment. Responding to this thesis's main question would also invite possible explanations that address what Blackwood scholars have noticed about his seriousness and positivity in his fiction. Blackwood is serious and positive because he is trying to employ his work to reach those who have never experienced his version of spiritual enlightenment that requires neither dogma nor official membership to an organised religion, and this possibility could add to the scholarly debate about whether Blackwood is didactic or not by presenting multiple occasions when his writing functions didactically. Answering this thesis's question, moreover, could uncover Blackwood's real view of the natural environment and the value he ascribed to it. He could be encouraging his audience to follow him. Outside of Blackwood's spiritual outlook, addressing this thesis's question will illuminate how Blackwood utilises the modus operandi of the strange and how and why he exhibits natural spaces vis-à-vis a Christian rather than pagan or pantheistic spirituality as identified by Punter. Significance in this thesis's question also lies in addressing how and why Blackwood's incorporation of the strange fits into and contributes to that existing literary tradition (past and present) and what can be learned about the literary mode's development, building on Lovecraft, Joshi, Fisher, and Machin's scholarly contributions.

This thesis argues that Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 that represent such topographies as cities, gardens, forests, and mountains with Christian soteriological iconography encourage his audience to acknowledge these physical settings as necessary progressive soteriological milestones, which constitute an individual's physical and spiritual progression from urban to rural spaces, because these particular

narratives that manifest an arrangement of these types of topographies with Christian soteriological iconography deploy the strange to facilitate various appeals to Christian pathos.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXAMINING BLACKWOOD'S SHORT STORIES BETWEEN 1899 AND 1914

Investigating Blackwood's employment of supernatural horror will naturally guide scholars to explore Blackwood's short stories because, as Joshi points out, 'Blackwood never wrote a horror novel' (*The Weird Tale* 131). And instead of novels, the short story constitutes the 'vehicle' for weird fiction and supernatural horror (Lovecraft, 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'; Joshi, *The Weird Tale* 3). Punter even highlights Blackwood's 'talent for short stories' when compared to the quality of his novels ('Algernon Blackwood' 464).

I set the chronological parameters of this thesis between 1899 and 1914 because the year 1914 marked the commencement of the First World War (1914-8), an event that affected both Blackwood and his literary scene directly. Preceding the war, the Edwardian period in British literature demonstrated advanced science and technology that enacted such human feats and innovations as radio transmission, mechanised flight, polar exploration, and the construction—and subsequent foundering—of the largest maritime vessel known to contemporary humankind. For Anthea Trodd, Edwardian literature is notable for attempting to shake off its Victorian realist influences to adopt a distinct form for the new age.[22] Punter comments that Blackwood 'seems old-fashioned, Edwardian to the core' ('Algernon Blackwood: Nature and Spirit' 53). Michael Bell writes that 'spiritual influences during the Edwardian period and immediately preceding the First World War demonstrated a return to, or a new appreciation of, the archaic' (220). Diane Purkiss also notes an overall change in attitude after the First World War about associating any fictional writing with spiritual or supernatural elements (278).[23] Purkiss's observation emphasises a noticeable eschewal of the supernatural in literature during the war. Francesca Bihet complements Purkiss's claim by adding that the antebellum-writer's mindset moved away from supernatural elements and toward more 'serious adult topics' (162). Bleiler also documents a sizeable decrease in the output of supernatural horror in British literature (xiii-xix). Though these circumstances are significant

---

[22] See pages 1-10 in Anthea Trodd, *A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature*. London: Harvester Wheatshaf, 1991. For a more general history of the period, see George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. London: Constable, 1935; also see Donald Read, *Edwardian England 1901-1915: Society and Politics*. London: Harrap, 1972. For a more literary history of the Edwardian period, see John Batchelor, *The Edwardian Novelists*. London: Duckworth, 1982; also see Samuel Hynes, *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 1972.

[23] Purkiss mentions that 'before the war, fairies were what one wrote about if one was going to be a writer' (278).

and applicable to Blackwood's contemporary situation, they fail to explain any direct effect on his writing. One affected area in Blackwood's life concerned time, for he served his country during the war as an 'undercover agent for British military intelligence' (Joshi, *The Weird Tale* 88). Aside from being overly occupied, Joshi notes that Blackwood's attitude changed sometime during the fighting, for the war 'shattered' his 'sanguine hopes for the regeneration' of humanity (95). Blackwood's quality of writing declined after 1914 with regard to 'intensity and vividness'; his work—especially that of supernatural horror—preceding the First World War is notably superior to subsequent publications of his fiction (Joshi 89-90; 129).[24] Joshi reiterates that after 1914, the 'rest of Blackwood's career, indeed, was a vain attempt to duplicate the potency' of his antebellum output, since 'it seems as if Blackwood's creative energies were dissipating' (*The Advance of the Weird Tale* 93-4).[25]

BLACKWOOD'S AUDIENCE

This thesis's designated period during which Blackwood wrote and published his fiction is significant apropos of his audience. Charles F. G. Masterman's *The Condition of England* (1909) provides a chronological snapshot of a demographical examination of Blackwood's society. Masterman observes that British people at the time became disconnected from faith because supposed leaders of both Church and State exhibited a 'strange mediocrity' and 'strange sterility' in influence (208). Samuel Hynes reinforces Masterman's demographic observation by reiterating that previous sources of faith in modern society were becoming influentially impotent in part because of science's increased encroachment on spiritual ground yet utter failure to provide answers in the metaphysical areas it sought to replace (63). In this era of continuous advances in science and technology, Blackwood 'scorn[ed] science' for what he witnessed as its role in 'decreasing spirituality' (Joshi, *The Weird Tale* 108). Most of Blackwood's Christian audience in the British Empire were ostensibly losing their grasp on faith and spiritual values. Blackwood, for one, addressed this situation by seeking awareness of a 'broader vista' than what contemporary 'science and rationalism' could offer because he believed that 'these limitations can in reality be overcome' (Joshi 93). Joshi concludes that Blackwood writes with 'power and pathos' and 'poignancy and veracity of experience' because

---

[24] One short story was published in 1915 in *The Saturday Westminster's Gazette*, and five short stories were published in 1917 the collection *Day and Night Stories*. Though these tales were published after the breakout of First World War, it is unclear when Blackwood actually composed them, and all of them do not employ supernatural horror.

[25] At one point, Joshi refers to Blackwood's post-war publications as 'relative failures' that 'should be forgiven in light of the transcendent brilliance' of his antebellum publications (*The Development of the Weird Tale* 58). See also pp. 135-6 in Joshi's *The Progression of the Weird Tale*.

he 'has felt the emotions he is describing' (100). Blackwood approaches his audience with this collective appeal to pathos. Blackwood 'chose to express his deepest philosophical convictions' through 'terror' in fiction, for his 'understanding of the precise manner in which human beings react to the bizarre is a triumph of psychological analysis' (Joshi, *The Development of the Weird Tale* 58). Joshi concludes that 'some of Blackwood's horror tales are models for [...] the distinguishing feature of all weird tales—the refashioning of the reader's view of the world' (*The Weird Tale* 118). Refashioning an audience's perception of the world coincides with a writer's didactic purpose.

BLACKWOOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIANITY

Teaching and learning religion were familiar activities in the Blackwood home. A major Christian influence in Blackwood's life was his father, Stevenson Arthur Blackwood (1832-93).[26] Blackwood's youth consisted of 'absorbing the rigid Evangelical teachings of his parents' (Joshi, *The Advance of the Weird Tale* 89). His parents' devotion to a strict version of Christianity eventually proved suffocating for Blackwood, yet he always admired them and their commitment with great affection, especially his father; Blackwood expresses that he had a 'special loving adoration [for him], for he really *lived* his beliefs' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 33, emphasis original). Overall, Blackwood had a 'relatively happy childhood' and even enjoyed his time attending the Christian school of the Moravian Brotherhood in Königsfeld, Germany (Joshi, *The Progression of the Weird Tale* 133). Ashley adds that their school 'follow[ed] the teachings of the Bible, word for word' and had a 'strict regime' that 'had a significant effect on Blackwood' (328). Notwithstanding his positive childhood and loving familial relationships during his youth, Blackwood felt pulled in diverging spiritual directions. He confesses, 'I never shared the beliefs of my parents with anything like genuine pleasure. I was *afraid* they were true, not glad' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 23, emphasis original). Blackwood altogether feared that his parents were simultaneously 'right' and 'wrong' (Ashley Ch. 1).

Blackwood is no stranger to writing about Christianity for a Christian audience. Before publishing fictional narratives, he worked as a journalist and published various-themed articles for magazines and newspapers. Some of the output of this vocation incorporates his own personal experiences that include Christianity. In one example, Blackwood wrote an informative article for *Methodist Magazine* in 1891 about a small Christian sect of devotedly

---

[26] To distinguish between Algernon Blackwood and his father, I will refer to Algernon by his surname and his father by his forename.

religious Protestants who lived and practiced in the Black Forest region of Germany since the eighteenth century. Blackwood reports,

> Count Zinzendorf was the son of parents who were eminently distinguished for their piety and Christian example, and he himself as a child exhibited signs of a precocious piety which has rarely been equalled in one so young. Not only was the Saviour ever present in the events of his daily life, but the young Count even 'wrote letters to Him, in which he poured out his religious feelings'. (166)

Detailing the history of the Moravian Church, Blackwood offers the account of an instrumental figure from the early history of the sect who could be considered one of its founders. Blackwood describes Count Zinzendorf's biographical details in a way that paints the individual as a spiritual and devoted Christian disciple seemingly unequalled in piety. The way Blackwood reports this information feels customary for an article whose purpose is informative, for its description of Zinzendorf aligns with the remainder of the article that offers a historical understanding of the Moravians and their modus vivendi. The final sentence in the excerpt, however, bears significance. Blackwood refers to Christ using Christian soteriological nomenclature: 'the Saviour'. This title is notable because Blackwood could have selected another noun to describe Christ, yet he presents this one. Blackwood's lexical choice here signifies to the reader that the author views Christ as a soteriological figure. But the noun 'Saviour' does not appear on its own; preceding it stands the definite article 'the'. Unlike such indefinite articles as 'a' or 'some', the definite article 'the' specifically identifies its modified noun by assigning it to a particular class or category. Adding a definite article to describe Christ as 'the Saviour', Blackwood makes a grammatical construction to eliminate all ambiguity regarding whom he identifies. For Blackwood—at least for the purpose of this article—there is no other soteriological figure; Christ is *the* saviour.[27]

Blackwood's attention to grammar in his description of Christ invokes other facets of purpose. Through his grammatical construction of the noun phrase 'the Saviour', Blackwood demonstrates awareness of audience and purpose. He wrote 'About the Moravians' (1891) at the age of twenty while living in Toronto and employed at *Methodist Magazine*. Blackwood served a 'literary apprenticeship' under the editor, Doctor Withrow, to produce articles for adolescents and children that describe things and events Blackwood had experienced directly (*Episodes Before Thirty* Ch. 2). Blackwood understood his duties as a writer for this magazine,

---

[27] Though his genuine commitment cannot be proven, Blackwood demonstrates an intimate awareness of a Christian audience, which will carry into his fiction writing.

as expressed in his autobiography, so the audience and informational purpose of his writing the Moravian article are clear. But there looms one discrepancy over Blackwood's authorial choices in this article. The persona that Blackwood-the-author assumes differs from Blackwood-the-person. For a fictional text, this separation between author and authorial persona is understandable, but in an autobiographical context, should not the author's persona bear resemblance to the author's identity?[28] In Blackwood's article, there is no pronounced narrator as they exist in his other fictional narratives.[29] What exist in 'About the Moravians' are Blackwood's authorial choices that demonstrate an intimacy with Christian ideas.

Although he was raised Christian, Blackwood never considered himself a devout disciple. Throughout his life, he assembled a mélange of religious creeds—mostly Eastern—that guided him. A significant portion of this religious fusion stemmed from Hinduism, for Blackwood reveals in his autobiography that his chance encounter at the age of seventeen with *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (*c.* 400 CE), which Blackwood refers to as 'Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms', led to his gaining access to the Hindu Sanskrit scripture *Baghavad Gita* (*Episodes Before Thirty* Ch. 5). In Hinduism, *Yoga Sūtras* could be considered a foundational text of Yoga philosophy, one of the six orthodox schools of Hinduism.[30] The *Baghavad Gita* comprises narrative filaments that discuss the Hindu concept of *moksha* (soteriology), among others, a core tenet of Hindu traditions.[31] The soteriological notion of *moksha* also connects to Buddhism because it directly translates to the Buddhist interpretation of heaven: Nirvana.[32] Around the time he published the article 'About the Moravians', Blackwood revealed that he was a Buddhist; he admits in his autobiography that he wanted to publish an article in *Methodist*

---

[28] An alternative way of addressing this question is one in which Wayne Booth identifies the distinction between a text's author and the authorial persona who presents a text's story. Booth names this persona the "implied author" and posits that the reader experiences this authorial construction through various textual "elements", one of which being the narrator who represents one of these elements—albeit a primary one (73).

[29] Although narration constitutes a primary element that reveals the author, there still exist other avenues where the reader encounters him or her. For Booth, the author and implied author are never the same entity because they could concurrently hold opposing viewpoints (70). Kathleen Tillotson refers to the implied author as the author's "second self." See p. 22 in Tillotson's *The Tale and the Teller* (London, 1959).

[30] See p. 49 in Ian Whicher's *The Integrity of the Yoga Darsana: A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga*. New York: SUNY Press, 1998. See also p. 195 in Stuart Sarbacker's 'Power and Meaning in the Yogasutra of Patanjali'. *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained through Meditation and Concentration*. Ed. Knut A. Jacobsen. Leiden: Brill, 2011. 195-222. For details about the position of Yoga philosophy among the orthodox schools of Hinduism, see pp. 100-1 and 333-40 in Knut A. Jacobsen's *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008.

[31] See p. 34 in John F. Tomer's 'Human Well-Being: A New Approach Based on Overall and Ordinary Functionings'. *Review of Social Economy*. 60:1 (2002). pp. 23-45, where he claims, 'The ultimate aim of Hindus is self-liberation or self-realization (*moksha*)'.

[32] See Steven Collins's *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery, Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Collins states, "This general scheme remained basic to later Hinduism, to Jainism, and to Buddhism. […] The ultimate aim is the timeless state of *moksha*, or as the Buddhists seem to have been the first to call it, nirvana" (31).

Magazine about Buddhism from the perspective of a practitioner.[33] It is unknown when Blackwood converted to Buddhism, but a theological bifurcation occurred in Blackwood's life nonetheless. In *Episodes Before Thirty* he states, 'Without wholeheartedly sharing my father's faith, however, his religious and emotional temperament, with its imperious need of believing something, he certainly bequeathed to me' (9). Though Blackwood fails to find his own purpose in his parents' religion, he still yearned for something to complement it, which is why I question any assertion that Blackwood completely jettisoned Christianity, for he never declared that he had done such a thing. Per contra, his autobiographical confession reveals that he held a lingering belief in Christianity and neither renounced nor denounced it; Blackwood defended his spiritual beliefs against an atheist friend who 'never alter[ed] Blackwood's convictions one iota' (Joshi, *The Weird Tale* 90). Blackwood's spiritual ground at best comprised an eclectic assortment of spiritual and religious content, what Joshi calls Blackwood's 'ersatz religion', so it is odd when critics state that he inflexibly confined himself to one faith alone—be it Buddhism or paganism in the strict sense of these terms (*The Weird Tale* 92).[34] Yet use of the adverb 'wholeheartedly' in Blackwood's confession plays a crucial part in interpretating the quote from Blackwood's autobiography. Because its role in modifying the gerund of the verb 'to share' eliminates the absolute, failing to share his father's faith 'wholeheartedly' allows room for *some* sharing to occur—even if that 'some' remains infinitesimal. Irrespective of the amount of faith he maintained for Christianity, Blackwood viewed himself as a Buddhist at the time he published 'About the Moravians' although he would admit later in life that he 'lost his faith' (Ashley 4644). Yet Blackwood's article manifests a dissimilar identity. Outside of Christianity, Christ would not be considered 'the Saviour', yet for the audience Blackwood refers to him as humanity's soteriological keystone.

Blackwood respectfully refers to Christ again in his lexical constructions of the latter. 'Saviour' appears in 'About the Moravians' with a capitalised 'S' followed by the third-person singular objective pronoun, 'Him', itself with a capitalized 'H'. For Christians, reverential capitalisation applied to words that refer to deity constitutes a common respectful gesture; ergo, this instance raises a question about why Blackwood would show deference to a deity outside of Buddhism. Blackwood's purpose addresses this likely question. Tasked with writing an

---

[33] See Ch. 2 in *Episodes Before Thirty*. Blackwood tells this story to identify a likely change in Dr. Winthrow's demeanour after discovering that Blackwood considered himself a Buddhist.

[34] Nicholas Freeman refers to Blackwood as a "forebear of modern paganism" with no mention whatsoever of any possible Christian influences (26). See also Freeman, 'Nothing of the Wild Wood'? Pan, Paganism and Spiritual Confusion in E. F. Benson's 'The Man Who Went Too Far'. *Literature and Theology*. 19:1 (March 2005) pp. 22-33.

article for Christians—most likely of the Methodist sect—Blackwood understood at the article's inception who constituted his audience. An effective writer must identify and comprehend his or her audience to tailor the text for them. In the case of 'About the Moravians', Blackwood's purpose was to inform his audience about the history and status of the Moravian Brotherhood with whom he positively interacted during his adolescence. Referring to Christ as the only saviour and demonstrating a level of respect through capitalisation of Christ's title and pronouns mimic the collective expectation of Blackwood's Christian audience, and to do so, Blackwood apparently assumes a position of equality among that collective. By respectfully referring to Christ as the only soteriological figure and doing so in a way that applies reverential capitalisation to his title and pronoun, Blackwood demonstrates an understanding of his Christian audience to forge a potentially influential link between himself and them and to establish a position of credibility.

An appeal to credibility engages both the audience and writer. Beforehand, the writer must understand his or her audience's identity and values to fathom which credentials or details would be acceptable as authoritative. When a writer ascertains these audience-specific details, he or she can focus on presenting those details to establish credibility with the target audience. Blackwood presents himself as a fellow disciple through the language he deploys in his text. Viewing Christ as the sole soteriological figure while concomitantly demonstrating respect for him linguistically gestures to his audience that he—the author—is a fellow disciple because he shares the same beliefs and comportment that they do vis-à-vis the role and position of Christ, their saviour. An appeal to credibility in this case renders itself effective in that the target audience might be more convinced of the argument or position that follows this authority-establishing move on the subject in question. To view the author as a pious Christian writer, the audience would be more inclined to accept what he or she has to argue or—in the case of Blackwood's article—report. Once Blackwood establishes unity with his audience, he simultaneously gains a level of credibility about Christianity because he is viewed as a fellow practitioner. Yet that case alone is not as strong as the one where Blackwood appeals to credibility because he—the writer—actually experienced what he discusses in the article. The stronger appeal occurs when Blackwood reveals, 'At Königsfeld, where the writer lived for a year' (170). Blackwood's interjection here apprises his audience that he embodies a primary source for everything that he discusses in the article. Combined with a purpose to inform—which is what Blackwood is doing in this article—writers make some appeal to credibility as a persuasive manoeuvre that seeks to convince the audience to believe the received information. If Blackwood represents a first-hand authority on the history and events

surrounding the Moravian Brotherhood at Königsfeld, then his audience should be inclined to accept and believe his reported information. Overall, establishing unity with the audience through their beliefs and revealing that the source of information supplied in the article stems from personal experience demonstrate Blackwood's appeal to credibility as either a fellow Christian or at least someone intimately familiar with Christianity. Presenting an authorial persona of authority constitutes an effective attempt to persuade the audience to believe the material encountered in Blackwood's 'About the Moravians'. The establishing of his authority in this text reflects Blackwood's authorial awareness of audience and the textually-influential benefits it bestows when employed strategically.

Blackwood's lexical and grammatical handling of the article 'About the Moravians' represents an early text that displays his familiarity with the employment of Christian concepts for a Christian audience. Mindful of this purpose and audience, Blackwood sets out to inform the latter about an intimate subject with which he has personal experience. Though in real life not a devout Christian disciple, Blackwood presents an authorial persona who demonstrates a strong Christian position. Doing so illustrates an author who is a credible figure on the article's subject matter through making an appeal to credibility that simultaneously establishes a convincing foundation on which the informational material is based. Blackwood's purpose in writing this nonfictional text depends on this foundational credibility to produce an effective report that would convince the audience to believe something new. Blackwood's 'About the Moravians' ultimately shows his intimacy with influential writing at an early age of his life that predated the entirety of his fictional repertoire. As a selective practitioner of authorial purpose, Blackwood demonstrates tactical handling of the textual artifacts he produced, and exposure to his later oeuvre of fiction provides a bounty of material deployed to construct the narrative settings, characters, and appeals to the audience that populate Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914.[35]

THESIS OUTLINE

The arrangement of this thesis's chapters follows a sequence that commences with city topographies before progressing to garden, forest, and—finally—mountain topographies, respectively. This topographical trajectory aligns biographically with Blackwood's personal

---

[35] Booth agrees with Aristotle that, ideally, the author should aim to employ "as little *recognizable* rhetoric" (109; emphasis added). An overabundance of conspicuous rhetoric could burden a reader's experience with a text, so if the rhetoric remains clandestine, an author can employ it without overburdening the overall reading experience. Blackwood seemingly follows what Aristotle and Booth identify as artful rhetoric by opting for the subtle approach.

journey. New York City represented a 'crucial turning point' in Blackwood's life, for he viewed its 'urban life' as the embodiment of 'all evil' (Joshi, *The Advance of the Weird Tale* 89-90). The city pulled Blackwood into the 'depths of hell' (Ashley 893). Blackwood's first site of refuge during his hellish urban experience comprised New York City's gardens before travelling to forests outside the metropolis; when he finally departed North America in 1899 to reside in his native Britain, Blackwood began travelling regularly to the Alps.[36] The order of this thesis's chapters follows Blackwood's topographical trajectory.

The first chapter commences this thesis's examination by analysing city topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914. Cities in Blackwood's fiction, specifically those in 'A Case of Eavesdropping' and 'Carlton's Drive', embody spaces in which the protagonists encounter a threat to their physical and spiritual wellbeing. Strange phenomena occur and conjure imagery related to Christian soteriology in the form of demons, Satan, and hell. The operation of the strange encourages protagonists to question the irregularities they encounter within the city space. Whether those anomalies constitute neighbouring ghosts or a black vehicle that carries its riders into hell, the urban location of these strange encounters identifies its topography as a source of Christian fear. An appeal to Christian fear for a Christian audience leads them to question the possibility for salvation in a space that demonstrates a predisposition to induce physical danger and spiritual uncertainty.

Chapter Two outlines an escape into garden topographies. Gardens in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror function as liminal landscapes that exhibit the strange. Gardens—specifically those in 'The Lost Valley', 'The Transfer', and 'The Damned'—can demonstrate spiritual consciousness that can provoke an awareness of attainable salvation. Nestled in the urban space, gardens defy being characterised as a single entity and portray themselves as concurrent reminders of sin and redemption. Blackwood's gardens can resemble Edenic ones in aesthetic and function to present the concept of Original Sin. Combined with the operation of the strange, Adam and Eve's fall serves as a reminder for a Christian audience that despite the horrors of sin and damnation, spiritual deliverance is possible; the garden serves as the first step on this redemptive route toward such increasingly rural topographies as forests and mountains.

---

[36] Ashley's biographical investigation of Blackwood portrays the latter's travel experiences among the various topographies examined in this thesis. See Chapters 5-13 in Ashley's *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*.

Chapter Three explores forest topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror. Forests embody sources of light and dark as well as strange phenomena. Blackwood's 'Ancient Lights' and 'May Day Eve' showcase strange forests that present a threshold dividing the terrestrial region from a celestial one. Christian soteriological iconography emerges during these instances and signifies human agency regarding spiritual development that eventually leads to one's salvation. Blackwood's employment of Christian soteriological iconography appeals to a Christian audience familiar with Christ's teachings about salvation. Unlike those in the previous chapters, the topography in Chapter Three is entirely rural and demonstrates a completely optimistic purpose that appeals to a Christian audience's emotions to recognise humanity's liminal location between terrestrial and celestial influences. Blackwood's appeal in this chapter ultimately encourages his Christian audience to acknowledge forest topographies as a necessary stop on one's spiritual journey toward salvation.

The final chapter in this thesis terminates the spiritual trajectory in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror. Mountain topographies in these tales represent not only grand terrestrial bodies but also exalted celestial ones capable of providing salvation. As in previous chapters, Christian soteriological iconography surfaces in Chapter Four's topographies. Together with a deployment of the strange, Blackwood's stories facilitate an appeal to Christian hope with the objective to encourage Blackwood's Christian audience to recognise the mountains as a necessary terrestrial endpoint on one's physical journey toward spiritual immortality. Resembling biblical mountains, those in Chapter Four present soteriological phenomena. Protagonists in Blackwood's mountains discover liberation from both physical and spiritual death. Like the other protagonists' situations examined in previous chapters, those in Chapter Four experience the importance of agency. An appeal to Christian hope encourages those to exercise agency righteously and obtain individual salvation through overcoming evil.

CHAPTER ONE

Strange Cities: Soteriological Insecurity and Uncertainty in Urban Topographies

And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.
- Genesis 19:25

The hum of the city could not reach me, though its glare was faintly visible in the sky. There were no signs of men; no sounds of human life.
- Algernon Blackwood

Algernon Blackwood was a terrestrial wanderer. Since his youth, he rarely stayed in one location for long. His experience with communities and cities stems from his travels, first with his father and then solitarily. Blackwood's first sustained experience within a city topography occurred when he left his family to reside in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1888. At nineteen years of age, Blackwood attended Edinburgh University to pursue a degree in agriculture.[37] Without finishing his studies, Blackwood travelled to Toronto to reside there for approximately two-and-a-half years before arriving at New York City on 13 September 1892 and settling there for just under seven years. Blackwood continued to travel. While employed in the city, he escaped from urban spaces during holidays to visit rural environments. Though little information exists about his experience in Edinburgh, Blackwood's time in Toronto and New York City are documented at length in his autobiography, with the latter location provoking his most poignant response:

> I seemed covered with sore and tender places into which New York rubbed salt and acid every hour of the day. It wounded, not alone because I felt unhappy, but of itself. It hit me where it pleased. The awful city, with its torrential, headlong life, held for me something of the monstrous. Everything about it was exaggerated. Its racing speed, its roofs amid the clouds with the canyon gulfs below, its gaudy avenues dripping gold that ran almost arm in arm with streets little better than sewers of human decay and misery, its frantic noise, both of voices and mechanism, its lavishly organized charity and boastful splendour, and its deep corruption […]—it was all this that painted the

---

[37] See Chapter 3 in Ashley's *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*.

horror into my imagination as of something monstrous, non-human, almost unearthly. (124-5).

New York City, for Blackwood, embodied monstrosity, deprivation, and desolation. S. T. Joshi notes that Blackwood recognised 'evil in the teeming labyrinths of modern urban life' (*The Advance of the Weird Tale* 90). Yet, surprisingly, Blackwood lived there for approximately six and a half years, rendering Blackwood's total time residing in major cities up to that point in his life eight and a half years.[38] Blackwood struggled to earn a living in New York City for his duration there but found hope in his employment as a journalist for several major newspapers. His personal experiences in the monstrous metropolis with its 'moral corruption' constitute sources from which Blackwood borrowed to establish similar urban loci in his short stories of supernatural horror (Joshi, *The Development of the Weird Tale* 51).[39] This chapter explores the teleological effects of presenting strange city topographies with Christian soteriological iconography in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, particularly 'A Case of Eavesdropping' (1906) and 'Carlton's Drive' (1909).

Rob Latham examines cities through the lens of urban horror and highlights the negative connotations associated with life in the city (591). He observes that the city is notorious for the 'lurking threat of crime, the squalor of crowded slums, the incessant sensory blitz of nameless faces and alien sounds' along with a 'deep-rooted fear of the city, with its menacing shadows and sheer looming mass' (591). Latham concludes that 'world literature is filled with tales of small-town travellers whose hopeful sojourns to the metropolis result in tragedy and dissolution' (592). For Latham, the city constitutes a site of horror.

The characterization of the city as a negative site is not a novel concept in literary scholarship. David Seed analyses James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* (1870-3) and focuses on the latter's negative terminology when describing the city, especially that of 'death' and a 'black abyss' (88-9). Seed ultimately argues that the ugly images of life, particularly death, remain inseparable from the image of the city. Glennis Byron, in her examination of Gothic fiction of the 1890s, attributes negative urban imagery and the incapability of the city to bury its ugly realities of urban living to its innate Gothic geographical characteristic. '[T]he new Gothic landscape of the city', she claims, 'is an equally appropriate source of desolation and menace' (188). Byron identifies the cities of *fin-de-siecle* Gothic works in Britain—such as those in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar

---

[38] Blackwood departed New York City on 22 February 1899. See the final paragraph in Chapter 7 of Ashley's *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*.

[39] See also p. 91 in Joshi, *The Weird Tale.*

Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894), and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897)—as geographical sites from which these negative realities surface. Continuing with the view of cities as Gothic loci, Robert Mighall admits that the idea of Gothic cities or urban Gothic should be oxymoronic because the inaugural generation of Gothic literary works maintained their settings far from the reaches of the city (53). Victor Sage highlights this 'journey' from cities to the countryside as a 'paradigm' of horror fiction (8). In many ways, Mighall notes, the early Gothic novels exhibited this paradigm and showcased evil among the rural landscapes in continental Europe far from London, yet the urban space eventually becomes the locational focal point for many of the social ills that exist in canonical Gothic texts (54-62).

Sara Wasson investigates further the Gothic as it operates within cities and its suburbs and notes that even the edges of urban zones can foster terror even though they are located outside of the condensed edifices of a constricting city centre. Like Mighall, Wasson concludes that despite the early Gothic novels' focus on the rural settings of some foreign countryside, later Gothic literary works exploited the city as the main setting to display the underbelly of urban reality (128-39).

In his exploration of the urban underworld, Peter Hutchings focuses on London as an exemplar of horror. The focus of his analytical approach portrays Britain's capital as a fallen city and ostensibly beyond redemption (190-1). Almost reflective of its characters, a city such as London, according to Anne Witchard and Lawrence Phillips, 'becomes implicated in the motives, desires and conflicts of the characters' (2). If London's denizens are irredeemable, the city seems to follow suit.

Yet not everyone who ventures into the city or resides therein is necessarily attached to it. Julian Wolfreys looks to Charles Dickens and his fictional subjects as being 'estranged by London' (9). What Wolfreys highlights in his study of the Dickensian story set in cities is that the urban space regularly stands as its own separate and alienating entity in contrast to those who engage with it. Jamieson Ridenhour provides further support for Wolfreys's observations about the estranging nature of London. He notes that by the end of the nineteenth century, London becomes the dominant setting for 'narratives of terror' and attributes this phenomenon to real-world events such as the sordid living conditions in working-class East London and the Whitechapel murders. These events contributed to an understanding of London—and massive cities in general—as 'areas of poverty and crime' that defy familiarity (x). Alexandra Warwick contributes to this imagery with her examination on fictional renditions of London as direct associations with apocalyptic themes that terrify and disappoint those who enter its urban area

(74). This depiction of London can also translate to Edwardian observations. Ranald C. Michie reveals how London's notoriety stretched into Blackwood's period (163-228).

London is not the only metropolis portrayed as a repository for horror, vice, and violence. New York City, as Elizabeth Kelly Gray points out, exemplified the horrid characteristics of growing cities in the United States (137). She notes that American authors often focused on negative conditions within the city by comparing its residents to pejorative foreign stereotypes that conjure fear, primarily libidinous ones and others that lacked social mores (138). Like London, New York City became the preferred setting in American literature to showcase the vices of society and life.

The vices and horrors of the city relate to Christianity. As Gerald B. Guest argues, the image of cities as threatening entities to one's salvation dates to the religious art of the Middle Ages. Medieval narratives that borrow content and imagery from the biblical parable of the prodigal son employ cities as loci of 'deception' and 'corruption' only combated by one's 'penitence' and 'renunciation' to attain 'salvation'; thus, the city played an integral part by functioning as a 'powerful model of Christian identity' (35). Guest concludes that this historical art and literary history eventually demonstrated how a 'prodigal's salvation' necessitated an eschewal of the 'earthly city' whose 'dangerous spaces' pose a threat to one's Christian identity (65).

Collectively, these literary scholars have identified an overwhelmingly pejorative image and function of the city space in English literature. Often associated with poverty, crime, vice, death, and possible damnation, the city bears characteristics that set it apart from other geographical loci in fiction. Such literary modes as the Gothic have adopted the city as a focal point to showcase the ills of societal reality that cannot simply be buried from view. These lingering moral stains on an urban façade demonstrate that exterior images can be deceiving. The internal focus becomes significant in this scholarly conversation as the city evinces an apparent connection to Christianity and its soteriology. Parables that appear in a biblical context have been transmuted to apply to cities to serve as a warning for Christian inhabitants to flee the moral squalor of urbanity. Having resided in New York City and London, Blackwood personally experienced the horrible aspects of cities.[40] For most of his time in New York City, for example, Blackwood eked out an existence in abject poverty and witnessed crime transpire among the alleys of the urban underworld. Though city topographies in

---

[40] Blackwood identifies New York City as a place that introduced him to 'new emotions, each of which, separately, held horror' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 1).

Blackwood's narratives align with many depictions of them in other horror or Gothic narratives, they function disparately and in a manner not mentioned in the extant scholarship.

Scholars of Gothic and horror fiction, particularly those who have examined Blackwood's fiction, have overlooked an interpretive focus on the possible teleological effect(s) of presenting strange city topographies with Christian soteriological iconography in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914. Leaving this inquiry unaddressed forfeits a deeper understanding of the city's purpose and function in Blackwood's multifarious portrayals of disparate landscapes in his fiction. City topographies occupy a sequential place of importance in Blackwood's fictional repertoire, and a firm comprehension of their teleological employment and significance invites a nuanced understanding of horror's paradigmatic trajectory that leads away from cities and toward topographies of increasing rurality, for Blackwood employs this trajectory distinctively. This chapter, therefore, argues that Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 that occur in city topographies with Christian soteriological iconography, particularly 'A Case of Eavesdropping' and 'Carlton's Drive', deploy the eerie to facilitate an appeal to Christian fear that emphasises the need to escape soteriological uncertainty.

Blackwood had resided in major cities on both sides of the Atlantic. Cities feature in many of his narratives, and several of his short stories of supernatural horror are set only within cities. But like the ones Blackwood called home at various points of his life, cities vary in aesthetic and size.[41] Alisdair Rogers et al. provide a geographical definition of a city as an 'agglomeration of people, businesses, and governmental institutions whose activities service a wider region'.[42] Blackwood, in his article 'The Psychology of Places' (1910), refers to cities as 'towns and the inhabited spots of the world' (15). As this chapter will demonstrate, Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 set in strange city topographies pattern their geographical spaces according to his definition of 'city'.

---

[41] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a city as a "town or other inhabited place" in one sense and a "large or important municipality" in another. Taking the first sense into account opens the synonymic range to include towns and other locations that are inhabited. A "town" is denoted as a small group or cluster of dwellings or buildings" with "little or no local government" (*OED*; all references to the *OED* refer to the online version). Towns, according to this definition, constitute the smaller end of the spectrum. But the latter half of the first definitional sense of "city" poses a problem. An "inhabited place" fails to dispel any ambiguity, for there exists no clarity apropos the quantity of inhabitants or spatial size of the area within which they reside. The second sense offers additional specificity: a city must be large or an important body of self-government. Juxtaposing these two senses provides an opportunity to attain a practical definition of "city." A lexical understanding of "city," then, could constitute an inhabited space large enough to require self-government. This definitional rendition, however, remains too broad.

[42] *A Dictionary of Human Geography*, accessed online via Oxford Reference (www.oxfordreference.com; unpaginated). Rogers et al. attempt a collective definition of "city" spanning multiple periods and also differentiate cities from other commonly confused definitions of them, such as the megalopolis, mega-city, and global city.

Blackwood wrote candidly about his views of and experiences in cities. In 'The Psychology of Places' Blackwood admits, 'Going from one town to another is similar to going from one person to another for conversation in a room. Each in turn draws out a different aspect of the personality, and, whether you like it or no, an unconscious readjustment of your inner world and forces takes place automatically' ('The Psychology of Places' 15). From magazine articles to his own autobiography, Blackwood observed cities in two ways: (1) their characteristics and (2) their effects on those who enter them. He intimately experienced New York City and London. Aside from one account when a young Blackwood and his father were impressed with the aesthetics of Toronto, all of Blackwood's other autobiographically documented experiences with cities are negative. Yet Toronto still failed to redeem the image of cities, for Blackwood reflected how Toronto caused him to 'betray' his values by being 'willing to sell [his] soul for filthy lucre' (*Episodes Before Thirty*, 18-9). Even London, where he stayed throughout much of his life, resulted in being negatively referenced as the 'murk of heavy London' ('The Psychology of Places' 15). On any occasion when recounting Blackwood's life post-1900, it is difficult to claim that Blackwood lived or resided anywhere, let alone London, for he travelled frequently and punctuated his stays with changes in scenery. Living or residing somewhere connotes a permanent—or quasi-permanent—situation. Blackwood avoided living in one place. Prior to 1900, however, Blackwood autobiographically recorded his experiences during a time in his life when he resided in locations for long periods, most of which transpired in major North American cities.

Cities, for Blackwood, are harmful. From Vancouver on Canada's west coast to Toronto, New York City, Edinburgh, and London, Blackwood's experiences in cities associate them with disappointment, guilt, poverty, and damnation. Being accompanied by his father on his first trip to Canada, an early appalling experience within urban spaces occurred when the duo arrived in Vancouver via the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Blackwood and his father became disappointed with their stay upon witnessing the inconsiderate expansion of Vancouver and subsequent nonchalant destruction of the surrounding natural spaces. Their disappointment with western Canadian cities became compounded when Blackwood and his father visited a town near Vancouver and encountered an excess of opium dens and poor sanitation. Suffering physical illness because of the latter, both men became desirous to begin their journey home (Ashley, Ch. 2). In addition to causing disappointment, the city also embodies a source of guilt for Blackwood. Attempting to become self-sufficient, Blackwood arrived in Toronto to earn a living through entrepreneurship. He confesses that upon entering the venue in which to establish his business in the city, Blackwood felt guilt in the empty property and shared that he

felt worse knowing his father was against Blackwood's choice of occupation. Toronto made Blackwood feel like he was 'entering a downward path' full of 'worldly temptation' and invoked in him the biblical quote 'get thee behind me, Satan' (*Episodes Before Thirty* Ch. 4). The threat of sin and guilt followed Blackwood beyond Toronto, especially when he settled in the worst city of all: New York City. A source of horrors for Blackwood, this specific city constituted the climax of his urban escapades. It was here where he suffered loneliness, abject poverty, homelessness, quasi-starvation, illness, drug addiction, and frustration. Blackwood writes how the city was 'monstrous, nonhuman, and unearthly' which was also 'killing something in [his] soul' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 43 and 90, respectively). Like his biblical references associated with Toronto, Blackwood's account of New York City is reminiscent of hell as he focuses on his time as a news reporter when he witnessed the 'darkest aspects of human nature' while working within the urban underworld (*Episodes Before Thirty* 36). Altogether, Blackwood's personal account and views of cities are bleak and render them as sources of physical and spiritual misery. His experience in the city topography colours his fictional interpretations of them in his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, especially 'A Case of Eavesdropping' and 'Carlton's Drive'.

The concept of spiritual misery in cities connects to Blackwood's emotional appeal in his short stories of supernatural horror. By positioning his fictional urban creations as strange centres that appeal to emotion, what exactly denotes the Christian fear to which he appeals? Fear appears throughout the Old and New Testaments with two connotations. On the one hand, scripture refers to fear as the 'fear of the Lord' or 'godly fear' (Psalm 111:10 and Heb. 12:28, respectively).[43] This type of fear is portrayed throughout the Bible in a positive light equivalent to a reverent posture toward deity. This connotation of Christian fear signifies the object of fear as the source of the damage that could befall an individual. On the other hand, fear constitutes a negative biblical connotation that reflects uneasiness caused by a source other than God. The third chapter of Genesis reveals Adam's first postlapsarian condition: 'I was afraid' (Gen. 3:10). Adam expresses fear after eating the forbidden fruit and engaging in his first corporeal experience. Change can be intimidating; mortality for Adam became a new experience, and his new life included the possibility of experiencing evil. The state of being afraid in a postlapsarian condition is one that aligns closer to Blackwood's appeal to fear than the other biblical connotation of a godly fear, for Blackwood's sense of fear is one replete with

---

[43] See also Ecclesiastes 12:13, Isaiah 11:2-3, and Luke 1:50 for additional references to the fear of God. 'Fear', without any ecumenical connotation, signifies 'the emotion of pain or uneasiness caused by the sense of impending danger, or by the prospect of some possible evil' (*OED*).

apprehension for impending evil. Adam's postlapsarian state and bequeathal of agency to the human family highlights a source of fear in Christian disciples. The Old and New Testaments address this type of fear as one that can be avoided through obedience and righteous living. The Book of Jeremiah declares, 'And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord' (Jer. 23:4). Christ also constitutes an antidote to this type of fear: 'And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last' (Rev. 1:17).[44] The connection between fear and Christ in this instance bears significance through its connotational connection to soteriology. Christ's identity as the 'first and the last', elsewhere in Revelation referred to as 'Alpha and Omega' and the 'beginning and the end', revisits Adam's immediate postlapsarian state (Rev. 22:13). Whereas Adam's first condition after Original Sin comprised one of fear, Christ will be with him in his last or final condition if he is saved, dispelling all instances of fear. The conditional 'if' represents the interpretive endeavour of isolating a definition of Christian fear for this chapter. If Christ dispels fear through salvation, disciples outside of his soteriological reach (either through agency or ignorance) would remain in a state of fear through damnation. The emotional state of uneasiness caused by impending danger or evil because of damnation, then, renders a precise definition of Christian fear to be used throughout the remainder of this chapter.

'A CASE OF EAVESDROPPING'

Published in *Pall Mall* in December 1900 and republished in Blackwood's collection *The Empty House* in November 1906, 'A Case of Eavesdropping' constitutes a story set in a 'large American city' about Jim Shorthouse and his encounter with the ghosts of previous tenants (3235). Shorthouse's supernatural confrontation enacts a series of events that leads him to encounter horror, confusion, and fear for his own spiritual wellbeing. To establish this causal sequence in the narrative, 'A Case of Eavesdropping' employs the elements of supernatural horror. The first instance of them occurs when Shorthouse first encounters strange happenings in the room adjacent his:

> He turned to go back to his room, and the draught closed the door slowly in his face as
> if there were someone pressing against it from the other side. When he pushed it open
> and went in, a hundred shadowy forms seemed to dart swiftly and silently back to their

---

[44] Though he responds to John in this verse individually, Christ consistently dispels fear for all his disciples. See other references to this negative connotation of fear in 2 Timothy 1:7, Luke 21:26, and Revelation 2:10.

corners and hiding-places. But in the adjoining room the sounds had entirely ceased, and Shorthouse soon crept into bed, and left the house with its inmates, waking or sleeping, to take care of themselves, while he entered the region of dreams and silence. (3241)

Before his actions in this scene, Shorthouse had heard a loud conversation between two men in the neighbouring room. He had exhibited patience with the men and the disturbing volume of their conversation until they continued without regard for anyone else. This scene details Shorthouse's experience when attempting to make contact with the two men. Shorthouse finds nothing in the room but fleeing shadowy forms and silence. The observation of movement in the dark places of the room conveys the presence of indescribable entities. The narrator can only characterise them as nebulous forms. Their behaviour, however, the narrator does describe. They dart swiftly into the corners of the room; this movement confirms the presence of something. Interpretation at this point in the scene could lead one to believe that Shorthouse encounters nothing more than rats or other common household pests. Yet this speculation is undermined by the fact that the room is 'miserably empty' (3247). What are the shadowy forms then? One of them eventually approaches Shorthouse yet remains indiscernible: 'Out of the corner of his eyes he thought he caught sight of something moving. He was sure of it, and turning his eyes in the direction, he found he was not mistaken. Something was creeping slowly towards him along the floor' (3246). Though he remains certain that he sees something, Shorthouse cannot identify what it is. This cycle of visual confirmation apropos of a thing's action but failure to identify the thing itself repeats throughout the narrative. Shorthouse confirms that he hears voices, sees forms scurrying in his room, and encounters one of them at an intimate distance, yet he fails to define the things rationally. Without logic or reason to support Shorthouse's observations, the only explanation remains supernaturally sourced.

Shorthouse further investigates the source of the otherworldly activities in his neighbouring room. In a separate encounter with the voices of the two men, Shorthouse does not have to enter their room to interact with them anymore. Their conversation leads to a phenomenon that enters Shorthouse's own room:

With shaking fingers but a determined heart he lit the gas, and the first thing in which his eyes corroborated the evidence of his ears was the horrifying detail that the lower portion of the partition bulged unnaturally into his own room. The glaring paper with which it was covered had cracked under the tension and the boards beneath it bent inwards towards him. What hideous load was behind them, he shuddered to think. All this he saw in less than a second. Since the final lurch against the wall not a sound had

proceeded from the room, not even a groan or a foot-step. All was still but the howl of

the wind, which to his ears had in it a note of triumphant horror. (3246)

After previously attempting to discover the source of the loud voices next door and finding only an empty room, Shorthouse now combines what he hears with what he sees. The partition—that the landlady installed to divide the original room into two—gives way under the weight of one of the men on the other side of it. Shorthouse witnesses not only the bulging inward but also the cracking of the wood. These effects confirm the presence of an entity beyond rational explanation. The room—and floor, for that matter—are empty, so how can these events transpire without some supernatural explanation? An opposing interpretation of the perceived supernatural events Shorthouse experiences could call into question his own mental state. A psychological interpretation in this sense, nevertheless, does not apply because any evidence of Shorthouse's mental instability is missing entirely. The landlady serves a corroboratory function in the narrative: 'I reckon you've only seen and heard what the others did. I never can keep folks on this floor long. Most of 'em catch on sooner or later—that is, the ones that's kind of quick and sensitive' (3248). In this instance, the landlady confirms that Shorthouse is not the only individual to experience the supernatural events in his room and in the adjacent one. She divulges that the events found their way into the city's newspapers: '[H]e found twenty years back the detailed story, substantially as the woman had said, of Steinhardt & Co.'s failure, the absconding and subsequent arrest of the senior partner, and the suicide, or murder, of his son Otto. The landlady's room-house had formerly been their private residence' (3250). Not only does she confess that Shorthouse is not alone in experiencing the ghosts, but she also leads Shorthouse to attain the newspaper reports about the previous death in the room responsible for the current poltergeist.

The operation of the supernatural in 'A Case of Eavesdropping' subsequently effects horror and Shorthouse's fear. In the same scene, the narrator describes Shorthouse as physically shaking when attempting to light the lamp in his room. The narrator's closing remarks also describe the ambience of the scene as a horror that surrounds him. Shorthouse displays fear, and the narrator confirms that horror surrounds him. The narrator later emphasises the operation of horror and fear in this narrative when revealing that Shorthouse preferred to walk the city streets during a storm rather than endure the concentrated 'horrors of that top floor' (3249). The extent to which Shorthouse avoids the supernatural phenomena in his room and in the adjacent one demonstrates the presence of supernatural horror and his experience with it.

Amid the operation of supernatural horror in 'A Case of Eavesdropping', Christian soteriological iconography emerges. The narrator reveals that Shorthouse only experiences

dreams about distant fields of grain and sheep on a father's estate (3242). Mentioning this characteristic about Shorthouse bears significance for two reasons. First, Shorthouse resides and works in a large city, so repeated dreams focused on these subjects diverge from his current experiences. Second, Shorthouse dreams of nothing else. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Sigmund Freud posits the purpose and meaning of dreams and associates them with wishes: '[T]he dream represents a wish as fulfilled' (104). If Shorthouse's repetitive dreams function in this manner, his ultimate wish constitutes existing amid those distant fields of grain and sheep on a father's estate. This likely interpretation would make literal sense, but Shorthouse possesses no connection to agriculture. Details regarding farming or any relationship to it are absent in the narrator's quasi-biography of Shorthouse at the beginning of the story; actually, the information that appears depicts Shorthouse as the product of a seemingly wealthy, non-agricultural genealogy (3235-6). What, then, could a wish related to these dreams signify? An analysis of Shorthouse's dream-content isolates three principal elements: grain, sheep, and a father's estate located far away. Observed together, these elements indicate three corresponding elements in Christ's parables. In one of these parables, Christ teaches about a grain of wheat:

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. (John 12:24-6)

Christ compares himself to a grain of wheat to signify the benefit his impending death will provide for his disciples and humankind. He also applies this principle to his disciples in the form of a binary between loving and hating one's life and its connection to eternal life. Granting someone access to eternal life appears dependent on hating his or her own life, namely prioritising eternal life over mortal life. Shorthouse's own life, the narrator reveals, is not one that Shorthouse appreciates. Repeated emphasis is placed on how his life has been a continual 'mess' with a 'big "M" stretching all the way to his "babyhood"' (3235). Currently a penurious adult 'stranded high and dry', Shorthouse must eke out a paltry living in the city (3236). Given these details, the narrator altogether implies that Shorthouse has not been pleased with his life, and this reality renders Shorthouse an ideal candidate (as a sinner and possible prodigal son) for Christ's suggested path toward eternal life.

Further details in Christ's parable signify points of alignment between it and Shorthouse's dream. Wishing to exist amid a field of grain points to Christ's instruction about

candidates for eternal life and their serving and following Christ where he is. If Christ associates himself with and is likened to grain of wheat, their fields would be a desired destination for Christ's followers. A final detail in Christ's parable tethers this field to the approval of a father—in this case, God the Father. Shorthouse's dream includes a father's estate as a principal characteristic of the setting. This element, too, corresponds with Christ's parabolic teachings. Speaking to his disciples, Christ explains, 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know' (John 14:2-4). Christ describes God's place of residence as an area of massive size larger than any terrestrial estate. The estate in Shorthouse's dream aligns with Christ's parable because of its ability to accommodate expansive fields of grain and sheep. Other details in this parable support the understanding behind Shorthouse's desire for that specific location in his dream. He can know where to find Christ.

The final element of Shorthouse's dream embodies sheep. Sheep and shepherds are commonly recognisable icons among Christians; three of Christ's total parables focus on them. In the parable about sheep and goats, for example, Christ explains that his sheep (his righteous followers) are the blessed ones which will 'inherit' eternal life (Matt. 25:32-4). In the parable about the lost sheep, Christ articulates the individual value of his sheep when one goes astray and is found (Luke 15:3-6). Finally, the parable about the good shepherd aligns with the previous ones by portraying Christ as the shepherd (John 10:1-17). This parable, however, offers an additional detail that aids the interpretation of Shorthouse's dream. Christ describes himself as the sole figurative entrance into where his sheep can exist: 'He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. […] I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved' (John 10:1; 9). These biblical references to sheep provide material to interpret Shorthouse's dream by explaining why sheep appear in it and why Shorthouse desires to dwell among them. Residing far away in a city, Shorthouse feels lost and yearns for the day when he can reunite with the other sheep of his metaphorical shepherd. His repeated dream comprises an amalgamation of Christian soteriological icons specific to Christ, discipleship, and—ultimately—salvation.

Salvation and father-figures resurface in 'A Case for Eavesdropping' to reaffirm the existence and function of Christian soteriological iconography. Shorthouse's contact with the story's poltergeist initiates an encounter with his landlady that leads him to recognise a personal connection to God. The landlady interrogates Shorthouse about his emotional state during the

supernatural event by seeking details about possible signs related to cold, fatigue, weakness, and death he could have observed (3249). The round of questioning ostensibly seeks to satiate the landlady's own appetite for signs of the otherworldly. Immediately before these questions, a panicked Shorthouse tried to show the landlady blood on his finger, but nothing appeared. The absence of a physical sign presumably did not satisfy the landlady, who then proceeds with her current interrogation. In a more tranquil state this time, though, Shorthouse neither provides her with additional clues nor confirms her interpretations of the event; instead, he refuses to respond to her specific inquiries and concludes, '[W]hat I felt God only knows' (3249). Refusing the landlady's temptation, Shorthouse chooses to defend and maintain his personal connection to God rather than confirming possible signs the landlady seeks about the supernatural experience.

Shorthouse's spiritually reverent behaviour in this scene mirrors biblical ones in which Christ or his disciples are tempted to produce signs of the supernatural. In the New Testament, Christ warns that a 'wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it' (Matt. 16:4). Christ's indignant position against those who seek signs is clear. Though Shorthouse's reverent reaction apparently follows Christ's position by refusing to entertain the landlady with signs of the supernatural event, righteous indignation seems to be absent in Shorthouse's discussion. Additional context surrounding the scene, however, helps this interpretation. Shorthouse loathes the landlady during her sign-seeking attempt. At one point in their conversation, he 'felt ready to pick her up and drop her over the banisters' (3248). He never commits any violence against her, but eventually when she departs, Shorthouse describes her as a 'black, ugly, unwholesome object […] as she disappeared into the darkness below' (3249). Description of Shorthouse's thoughts on these two occasions manifest adversarial feelings against the landlady. She commits, in Shorthouse's perspective, a grave mistake by ignoring his wellbeing and, instead, interrogating him about the possible signs he experienced during the supernatural event. His description of the landlady as a dark hideous thing which retreats below into the darkness also conjures imagery of the wicked or demons retreating downward into the abyss of hell. Combined, Shorthouse's desire for action against the landlady and his depiction of her as wicked or devilish reveal an instance of righteous indignation that aligns with Christ's position against sign-seekers.[45]

---

[45] The Old Testament also reveals God's position about inquiring about supernatural things. Admonishing the Israelites, God declares, "Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day:

    In his repertoire of short fiction between 1899 and 1914, Blackwood seldom describes the exterior and interior characteristics of buildings unless there exists some connection to the strange. This technique is evident when Blackwood's narrator invests time to describe the exterior structure of an edifice. In 'A Case for Eavesdropping', Shorthouse resides at what he describes as a 'room-house' (3236).[46] This centre of urban hospitality exhibits normalcy initially, but Blackwood's protagonist learns that the residential space demonstrates something more. Shorthouse's place of residence manifests abnormalities from the moment he encounters its exterior. At first glance, he notices the decrepit state of the building: 'It was a large, gaunt-looking place […] with dirty windows and a creaking iron gate' (3237). These uninviting characteristics provide an initial observation that colours the reader's continuing interpretation of the residence as the protagonist progresses from external spatial frames to internal ones, but the position of these initial characteristics of the room-house identifies it as a problematic space. Blackwood engages in a bit of wordplay when his narrator describes the building as 'gaunt'. This adjective could describe people, buildings, or places. When functioning to describe the latter two entities, the adjective conjures up an understanding that the target location resembles something desolate or dismal. This reading of the building constitutes the sense that the narrator conveys. But when deployed to designate a person, the sense shifts to the idea that the person is lean and haggard, perhaps due to suffering, hunger, or age. At first glance, one would ignore this sense of 'gaunt' attributed to people. The narrator, however, has another intention. Later in the story when Shorthouse meets the building's landlady, the narrator explains that she is 'gaunt […] as the building' (3237). By describing both the building and its landlady using the same adjective, the narrator jumbles the attributable senses. An inanimate locus can neither suffer nor hunger, and nobody would typically describe a person as 'desolate'. The narrator paints the building and its landlady with the same descriptive brush to conflate the two, and by so doing, sentience becomes injected into the characteristic of the building Shorthouse encounters and in which he decides to reside temporarily. Surprisingly, there is no other description of the building's exterior—only one sentence in the entire narrative. This dearth of description places emphasis on the sole report to apprise the reader's imagined impression of the building.

---

and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you" (Ezek. 20:30-1).

[46] The narrator explains that a room-house differs from a boarding-house in that the latter provides meals while the former does not, adhering more to the expectations of a hotel than a boarding-house. See page 3236.

As the description of the building's exterior contributes to a sense of the strange, so does the depiction of its interior. Though the room-house boasts spacious quarters, nobody exists to occupy these spaces. This discovery is made apparent toward the end of the narrative, but the narrator proleptically reveals the vacant state of the residential building. Throughout his stay, Shorthouse never encounters another guest in the building because his 'unusual hours kept him from meeting any of his neighbors' (3237). Upon an initial reading, one understands that Shorthouse is merely a victim of circumstance: his source of employment inhibits him from meeting any of the other inhabitants. Yet this preliminary interpretation becomes complicated when Shorthouse seeks the landlady but fails to find her all day. The narrator never learns where she exists throughout the story, and she only reappears after the plot's climax. Shorthouse's progression in the narrative occurs, much like his physical situation, in solitude, and the narrator emphasises this seclusion by focusing on the concept of silence in three phases. The first phase consists of the protagonist's introduction to the room-house. Shorthouse's first impression of the building's interior results in the initial comment that it 'seemed a very quiet house' (3237). The second phase functions as an additional layer of familiarity while Shorthouse becomes accustomed to his residence. Upon arrival after work, Shorthouse observes that the building 'was utterly quiet' and concludes that '*probably* everybody was asleep' (3237; emphasis added). In this second phase, 'probably' functions as a qualifier, and its conditionality matches the linking verb 'seemed' from the narrator's description of the quiet house. Its position, nevertheless, shifts from identifying the building to identifying its inhabitants because Shorthouse accepts that the space 'is', rather than relying on the uncertainty of the verb 'seems'. The third phase in the construction of silence occurs toward the end of the story when Shorthouse has experienced the strange phenomena within the residential space's interior and concludes that the silence is impossible to ignore. The narrator explains that the 'silence of the house began to impress [Shorthouse] disagreeably' (3240). Up until this third phase in the story, the reader never bears the impression that the silence refers to anything pejorative; one concludes that either there are not many boarders, or they are asleep whenever Shorthouse tries to interact with others. Shorthouse's vocational situation encourages one to lean toward the latter interpretive possibility. Because he works late hours, Shorthouse habitually arrives at his room after midnight and finds the space quiet, but the narrator complicates this probability. Disallowing the reader to find comfort in this conclusion, the narrator explains that Shorthouse searched the building when seeking the landlady, yet nowhere during the search does the narrator describe any interaction with another guest or even any evidence of the presence of other guests as manifested in possessions, refuse, and so on.

Finding complete silence in the urban building, Shorthouse finds the interior space without sufficient lighting. When he returns home from a long, tiring day at work, however, Shorthouse encounters a surprising phenomenon occurring in the building meant to serve its patrons at all hours of the day: 'The lamp that usually stood all night in the hall had burned itself out, and he had to stumble upstairs in the dark. He made considerable noise in doing so, but nobody seemed to be disturbed. […] There were no lights under any of the doors. All was in darkness' (3237). Shorthouse returns to his temporary residence during the night, and the time here proves to be what is striking in this scenario. The landlady lives onsite and supposedly has other residents to serve. Why, then, are all the lights extinguished in the interior of the building and to the extent that Shorthouse must 'stumble' up the stairs noisily in complete obscurity? The narrator offers no explanation yet gives a clue when explaining Shorthouse's clumsy ascent up to his room. Despite Shorthouse's making 'considerable noise' up the stairs, the narrator reveals that notwithstanding this aural disturbance Shorthouse makes in the hallways, nobody notices. More importantly, the narrator describes Shorthouse's surroundings, and it is here where the interior of the entire building comes into focus. The narrator could have described only the hallway in which Shorthouse finds himself; instead, the building's entirety is identified using the deployment of the pronoun 'all'. At this moment, the narrator describes the interior of the building as an entity unto itself. Not only are 'any' of the interior doors without light, but the narrator also conclusively reveals that all of the interior of the entire building rested in complete and collective 'darkness'. The concept of ambient darkness in this narrative hinges on the balance of life and death. Shorthouse and the landlady constitute the only living residents in the story. Shorthouse's enigmatic neighbour never appears, so his sole de facto companion in the building remains the landlady. At this moment, though, she is absent. Shorthouse, then, embodies the only representative of mortality—and light—in the building. Though he stumbles up the dark ascent to his room, he brings light with him. His room is the only space that is illuminated while he is present, and because of this light and representation of life in the building, it becomes conclusive that the rest of the building's interior remains in a gloomy deathlike state of darkness.

Besides darkness and silence, the building interior demonstrates another sensation. Blackwood creates a fusion of the senses when he adds temperature to incorporate the tactile form of perception. While Shorthouse attempts to sleep in his room at the same time as his ghostly neighbours argue in the adjacent room, the narrator explains that 'Shorthouse stood shivering in the darkness' (3241). The details in the description are critical to understand the type of temperature experienced in Shorthouse's room at this moment. The interior atmosphere

is so chilling that being in a building that caters to paying guests cannot exempt one from trembling with cold. The position of Shorthouse's room is also important to note here. His room was not located on the coldest floor of the room-house; instead, it exists on the topmost floor. Because heat naturally rises, presumably the top floor is the warmest in a building. This understanding conjures the idea that if Shorthouse's room experienced a cold as extreme as penetrating one's own bedding and blankets, then it becomes ascertainable that the rest of the building's interior would have been—at least—as cold or colder. The room was so uncomfortable for Shorthouse that after his experience, he 'preferred' walking outside into inclement weather rather than enduring the unwelcoming atmosphere of his room (3249). This idea compares the conditions experienced in the room to unpredictable conditions experienced during a tempest. What is more, Shorthouse remains outside walking in the storm until daylight to avoid returning to the shivering conditions of his room. Blackwood's employment of the tactile sense of temperature adds to an aural and visual grouping that, together, synergize themselves to form an understanding that matches—and stems from—the semblance of the building's exterior. The deathly look of the exterior is combined with the tomb-like characteristics of the building's interior. Together, these physical descriptors demonstrate that buildings within the city topography mimic the physical features found within and without the edifices of death—even the lifeless corpses which populate them. Nobody should expect to find life residing within the dark and freezing confines of this space. Surprisingly, however, Shorthouse realizes that he has neighbours and hears them during the night. The normal suddenly becomes abnormal. Julian Wolfreys discusses a concept of 'disruption' that occurs with similarly abnormal ghostly visitations (4).[47] For Wolfreys, these phantasmal visitations 'displace us in those places where we feel most secure, most notably in our homes, in the domestic scene' (5). Though the narrator never divulges the identities of all the building's inhabitants, their sudden appearance is ghostlike. In other words, they simply materialize from nothing. This sudden appearance and resulting reaction by Shorthouse coincide with Wolfrey's notion of disruption and displacement. Shorthouse fails to recognise what should be a secure space. Given these uninviting conditions of the building, the eerie surfaces with the unexpected presence of beings within a space where they should not belong.

---

[47] Though his text primarily reads ghosts and hauntings through a Derridian lens that explores the ways in which the text itself represents perpetual spectrality and hauntings, Wolfreys identifies the nature of ghostly visitations and their "disrupt[ive]" effect. See *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature.* New York: Palgrave, 2002. See especially pages 4-5.

An eerie-instigated atmosphere dominates Shorthouse's situation in 'A Case of Eavesdropping'. The operation of the eerie in this narrative prompts its protagonist to experience fear related to the state of his own salvation. Details of Shorthouse's soteriological uncertainty inhabit some changed characteristics of his reoccurring dream. The narrator explains,

> For a few minutes Jim's dreams were coloured only—tinged, as it were, by this impression of fear approaching from somewhere insensibly upon him. His consciousness, at first, refused to be drawn back from that enchanted region where it had wandered, and he did not immediately awaken. But the nature of his dreams changed unpleasantly. He saw the sheep suddenly run huddled together, as though frightened by the neighbourhood of an enemy, […] and in his dream an awful sound came somewhere from the clouds. (3242)

Some enemy has trespassed into Shorthouse's desired destination and injected fear into the hearts of the sheep. In response to these startling events in the dream, the final act constitutes sound that emanates from the heavens. The previously reoccurring dream in Shorthouse's psyche demonstrated a peaceful pasture resembling a heavenly destination through Christ. This altered dream, on the other hand, displays the encroachment of an enemy into the righteous elements of Shorthouse's dream. The enemy of Christ and all righteousness in Christianity is Satan. The New Testament explains, 'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; […] [a]nd the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him' (Rev. 12:7; 9). Satan, assaulting God's righteous representatives, constitutes the principal enemy of God and all righteousness. He serves as a hindrance to mortals' progress, for even after his defeat he roams the earth as a source of temptation. The New Testament portrays Satan as a literal obstacle: 'Wherefore we would have come unto you […]; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?' (1 Thes. 2:18-9). The manner in which this verse terminates adds an understanding from which Satan could hinder Christ's disciples. The juxtaposition of one's being hindered by Satan and a place in the presence of Christ is significant, for it forges a relationship between the obstructing function of Satan and the desired destination of a Christian disciple. This significance helps the interpretation of Shorthouse's altered dream. He and the other sheep (Christ's followers) demonstrate fear by huddling together for safety in the face of the enemy. The enemy in this dream, Satan, stands between Shorthouse and his ultimate destination. The other element in

the altered version of Shorthouse's dream constitutes celestial intervention. Shorthouse hears something emanating from the clouds. There exist numerous biblical instances of sounds—either dreadful or pleasant—originating from the sky.[48] To align the closest with Shorthouse's dream, an interpretative sense of the adjective 'awful' used to describe the sound is needed. 'Awful' would connote a negative sense when viewed in context with the fearful situation in which Shorthouse finds himself, but the fear of God does not necessarily stem from only negative sources. According to Walter C. Kaiser, the 'fear of the Lord was […] the response of faith to the divine word of promise and blessing' (170). Kaiser's explanation presents the possibility for a positive source that could lead to the fear of God. A sound described as 'awful' in Shorthouse's situation, then, should be interpreted as 'awe-inspiring'. Shorthouse hears the awful sound emanating from the heavens, so his inspired awe derives from an apparent reaction to a celestial phenomenon. The biblical example that most closely aligns with elements in Shorthouse's altered dream exists in the New Testament:

> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. (1 Thes. 4:14-6)

The sounds that emanate from the heavens in these verses signal the ultimate triumph of Christ against his enemy. These verses also mention the position of those who sleep. Shorthouse is literally sleeping when the narrator presents the altered dream to the reader. As if speaking about Shorthouse directly, these verses portray optimism for the Christian disciple, and heralding the advent of Christ's return, the sound should be positively awful, further coinciding with Kaiser's concept of fearing God. Why, then, does Shorthouse's dream cause him nothing but consternation?

---

[48] Revelation presents a negative experience when hearing a sound from the heavens: "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and afire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood" (Rev. 8:6-8). The remaining angels all sound their trumpets in a negative manner followed by negative consequences. Conversely, the ninth chapter of Luke presents a pleasant experience stemming from a sound the originates in the sky: "[T]here came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared […] [a]nd there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Luke 9:34-5). Another positive instance of a sound from heaven occurs when God speaks directly to Christ: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:27-8).

The enemy's proximity to the possibility of delivery through Christ could offer an interpretive clue. Throughout the poltergeist visitation, Shorthouse never truly acts without hesitation. He dithers until he loses all his patience and cannot tolerate any more of the ghosts' mischief. And at the climax of his encounter with the ghosts next door, Shorthouse hesitates even when the evil that exists there approaches him directly:

> Something was creeping slowly towards him along the floor. It was something dark and serpentine in shape, and it came from the place where the partition bulged. He stooped down to examine it with feelings of intense horror and repugnance, and he discovered that it was moving toward him from the other side of the wall. His eyes were fascinated, and for the moment he was unable to move. Silently, slowly, from side to side like a thick worm, it crawled forward into the room beneath his frightened eyes, until at length he could stand it no longer and stretched out his arm to touch it. (3246-7)

Shorthouse is approached by a dark ophiological form immediately after filicide occurs next door. Though homicide is forbidden and ranks fifth in the Decalogue, filicide is ostensibly even more severe.[49] In the Old Testament, God instructs Abraham to sacrifice his own son by killing him on an altar, yet at the moment when Abraham was ready to stab his son, Abraham responded to the voice of God and withdrew from the act (Gen. 22:9-12).[50] The attempted filicide in Genesis demonstrates the severity of an act that warrants Godly intervention. In 'A Case for Eavesdropping', Shorthouse's neighbour follows through with the act and stabs his son. The emergence of a snake from the site of the killing is significant because it approaches Shorthouse directly and places emphasis on his reaction. Rather than flee in horror, Shorthouse watches the dark serpent's approach which ultimately tempts Shorthouse to investigate and touch it despite any fear he experiences in the moment. This climactic scene demonstrates Shorthouse's hesitant disposition when confronting a source of evil. Listening to the heinous act committed next door, he imagined what had occurred yet did nothing. When a dark serpentine form approaches him, he watches and approaches it rather than escape. Shorthouse's fearful disposition leads him to act ambivalently. Combined with details from his alternate dream, his ambivalent actions lead to a situation where the sound or voice of God is awe-

---

[49] See Exodus 20:3-17 for all ten commandments.

[50] The Old Testament conveys Abraham's attempted filicide and turning point in more detail: "And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. […] And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:10-12; 16-17).

inspiring and simultaneously fear-inducing. Shorthouse finds himself in awe of God yet fears his disapproval and does not know what will happen. Living in a city far from the other sheep in the pasture, Shorthouse constitutes a figurative lost sheep in a state of soteriological uncertainty.

'CARLTON'S DRIVE'

Published in *The Westminster Gazette* in July 1909 and republished in Blackwood's collection *The Lost Valley and Other Stories* the following year, 'Carlton's Drive' presents the experience of a hedonistic man whose urban transportation becomes hijacked by a black-clad diabolical driver who attempts to drive him into hell located at the edge of the city. 'Carlton's Drive' transparently utilises the narrative accoutrements of supernatural horror. The narrative first implies this understanding at the onset of the plot while Carlton attempts to walk home after a night of alcohol and gambling:

> In a line with the trees opposite stood a solitary hansom. A faint surprise that it should be there at such an hour jostled in his sodden brain with the idea that he might as well drive home — when, suddenly, he became aware that the man perched on the box was looking at him across the street with a fixity of manner that was both singular and offensive. Carlton felt his own gaze, blear-eyed and troubled, somehow caught and held —uncomfortably. The other's eyes were fastened upon his own—had been fastened for some time—sinisterly, and with a purpose. (4192)

The narrator attempts to establish the supernatural underpinnings of this story by introducing anomalies. Preceding events make it clear that Carlton only observed denizens walking en route to places of employment, yet a lone hansom appears out of nowhere and operates at an unexpected time. Granted, this occurrence could just be a coincidence, but the narrator's further explanation uncovers activities beyond the ordinary. Not only did the hansom appear suddenly and unexpectedly, but its driver has been staring at Carlton from across the street and doing so with a penetrative gaze that the narrator describes as odd, unrelenting, sinister, and with reason. At this stage of the narrative, the purpose of this situation is unclear, but the scene's narrative function sows an element of the supernatural that germinates into a clearer manifestation of it later.

The narrative then progresses in its cultivation of the supernatural when feelings of something beyond the mundane emerge when Carlton begins to experience dissonance because of the increasing speed of the hansom. The incessant passing of familiar faces would be improbable and beyond the comfort of mere coincidence:

>Yet he saw on the pavement, from time to time, more friends and acquaintances, and somehow at the moment it did not strike him as too peculiar that they should be there, all moving hurriedly in the same direction. He had an odd feeling that they all knew of some destination agreed upon; that he, too, knew it; but that it was not 'playing the game' to admit that he knew. Yet about some of them — their hurried steps, their gay faces, their waving hands — there was a queer fugitive suggestion of sadness, even of fear. One or two touched the source of horror in him even. (4194)

Carlton's confusion emerges in this scene, but the narrator reveals that he still does not suspect anything peculiar about witnessing repeated encounters with his friends traveling hurriedly along the city pavement in the same direction as the speeding horse-drawn vehicle inside which Carlton finds himself trapped. Despite Carlton's oblivion to his current circumstance, the narrator's use of 'somehow' implies that Carlton should have known; in other words, the situation is peculiar because of its synthesis of contributing events: a hansom conjures the supernatural trappings at play.

Having established its supernatural operation, 'Carlton's Drive' pivots on the function of the supernatural to conjure fear within its narrative structure. The narrator quickly instantiates the existence of horror in the story in the final line of the above excerpt when Carlton exhibits the perception of horror. His journey progresses along a growing plot of horror as his hansom races hastily toward a gaping hellmouth adjacent to London. The supernatural elements in 'Carlton's Drive' operate synchronously to establish and develop the presence and function of horror and do so to a degree that the story could not be regarded as anything but a narrative example of supernatural horror.

A short story of supernatural horror, 'Carlton's Drive' is set entirely within a city topography. The first page of the narrative commences its plot when revealing that the eponymous protagonist stands on the 'pavement beside St. George's Hospital' (4191). In south London adjacent the northern end of Colliers Wood (Tooting), a hospital bears the same name, yet the narrator later divulges that Carlton's hospital stood next to 'Piccadilly' (4191). St George's Hospital originated at Hyde Park Corner in 1733 and operated until its relocation to Tooting in 1980 (Crellin 327). 'Carlton's Drive' is set in a city. The narrator establishes this understanding when Carlton witnesses shortly after standing near St. George's Hospital 'buses' and 'pedestrians going to work' (4191).[51] It is within this city setting that 'Carlton's Drive'

---

[51] Cities and hospitals have seemingly become geographically synonymous: "In the twentieth century, hospitals have dramatically expanded […] and were usually launched in response to perceived needs in their surrounding

transpires, commencing and terminating its plot at the same hospital. The rising action and climax also occur within the city topography as Carlton travels down London's labyrinthine network of streets at racing speeds in a black hansom toward the outskirts of the city. At every stage of the story, the protagonist finds himself within the same city topography or at its edge.[52]

The urban topography in 'Carlton's Drive' bears Christian soteriological iconography. The narrative reveals various ties to Christianity and the posthumous possibility for salvation through its characterisation and topographical features. The strongest example manifests itself during Carlton's journey to hell when he encounters his past mentor:

> It was a man, twice his own age, who more than any other had helped him in his evil living, not by doing likewise, but by smothering his first remorse with a smile and a sentence: 'Of course, my boy, sow your wild oats! You'll settle down later. No man is worth his salt who hasn't sown his wild oats!' He was sliding along — a kind of crawl, with something loathsome in his motion that suggested the reptile. (4196)

Details in this excerpt reveal that the older man influenced Carlton at a crucial time when the latter was close to repenting of his actions. The concept of immorality in sexual promiscuity highlights the significance of Carlton's mentor in the story.[53] The New Testament directly addresses the subject of sexual activity outside marriage: 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind' (1 Cor. 6:9). Paul's epistle to the Corinthians clarifies that fornication is tantamount to unrighteousness that prevents one from accessing heaven. He later addresses in the same epistle how to prevent the problem: 'Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband' (1 Cor. 7:2).[54] Marriage, according to Paul, inhibits fornication. Views on sexual activity among Christians in late nineteenth-century Britain remain aligned to the New Testament's Pauline account. Charles Taylor explains that for devout Christians

---

populations" with "urbanization" as the key ingredient (Risse 7). Contemporaneous with the publication of "Carlton's Drive," hospitals constituted expected fixtures within city topographies.

[52] When the hansom carrying Carlton passes all the city's houses and races downhill toward the hellmouth, the narrator describes the path as a "country road," yet immediately after Carlton passes the urban homes, he encounters the hellmouth on this "country road." It is unclear why the narrator calls this road a "country road" when it is directly connected to and adjacent the city. It appears that Carlton arrives at the edges of the city in which the narrative is set.

[53] 'Sowing ones wild oats' comprises an expression in the English language with a meaning beyond the literal. David Haldane Lawrence explains the idiomatic expression of sowing one's wild oats as it applies to upper-class men in late-Victorian Britain and associates the linguistic expression as one connoting immorality through sexual promiscuity (896).

[54] Fornication is also addressed elsewhere in the New Testament. See Matt. 5:32, 15:9, 19:9; Acts 15:20, 21:25, 1 Cor. 6:13, 10:8; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thes. 4:3.

throughout the religion's history, 'sex still had its primary goal in procreation' and sexual activity outside of marriage was viewed upon during and immediately after the Victorian era as both 'dangerous and questionable' (Taylor 12).[55] For a Christian audience at the time Blackwood wrote and published 'Carlton's Drive', engaging in sexual intercourse outside of marriage would have constituted sinful behaviour. Blackwood even shares in his autobiography that contemporary Christian teachings caused him to view dancing with women and holding them around the waist as 'worse than immodest' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 8).This notion of a violation of Edwardian Christian mores is inherent in the narrator's shared details from Carlton's past. In the above excerpt, the narrator reveals that Carlton could feel remorse for engaging in fornication. Since one cannot experience deep regret or guilt unless he or she believes that a committed act is egregious, the narrator confirms that Carlton erred.

Additional support surfaces in the reaction of Carlton's former influencer. Rather than console Carlton by helping him grow from his mistake, the narrator shares that the influencer enticed Carlton to continue in his sinfully promiscuous ways. After the narrator shares the sinful nature of the man's influence on Carlton, he describes him as seemingly slithering along the pavement in reptilian form. A figure who persuades others to commit sin and does so in a form resembling a slithering reptile bears striking similarity to the notorious serpentine influencer in the Old Testament's third chapter of Genesis. Lucifer (Satan) presented himself in Eden as a serpent and conversed with Eve to persuade her—and Adam—to commit Original Sin (Gen. 3:1-6). This serpentine connection between 'Carlton's Drive' and the Old Testament is significant for the characterisation of Carlton's mentor in this scene. Without describing anyone else in the text as a slithering reptile, the narrator places emphasis on the only one in the story who is described as such, and combined with his actions, the characterisation of this individual for Blackwood's audience conspicuously conjures Satanic imagery.

Iconographic references to Satan in 'Carlton's Drive' resurface in the plot. After Carlton enters the black-clad hansom, its driver asks for a destination. Fatigued from nocturnal revelry, Carlton requests his final destination for the day:

> 'Same address, sir?' the man called down through the trap. His voice was harsh 'like iron'; and Carlton, supposing that he recognized a fare, replied testily, 'Of course, you fool! And let her rip — to the devil!' The spasm of strange pain had passed. He only felt tired to brokenness, sick with his corrupt and unsatisfying life, a dull,

---

[55] Taylor's study focuses heavily on a Catholic tradition, but in this case he equally presents Protestant views of sex during the same period in Britain and America. See page 12.

incomprehensible anger burning in him against the world, the driver — and himself. (4191)

The driver's question creates an enigma, for it suggests the notion of familiarity between him and Carlton. The previous description of Carlton's encounter with the hansom, however, suggests otherwise. When he first observes the hansom as it waited for him on the other side of the street, Carlton stares at the vehicle and its driver peculiarly as if he had never seen the pair before. The narrator also expresses that Carlton felt uncomfortable upon entering the horse-drawn vehicle: 'As he got in, too, the effort strained him. But, more than that, something that was cold and terrible — "like a hand of ragged steel," he described it afterwards— clutched his heart' (4191). Carlton finds difficulty entering the hansom both physically and emotionally. He strains to enter it; he feels uncomfortable inside it. These characteristics do not describe a common situation; on the contrary, Carlton's experience defies any familiarity. Had he known the driver, he would not experience feelings of difficulty and alienation upon entering the vehicle. The driver's question, then, suggests that he knows Carlton more intimately than permitted by a situation limited to a superficial drive through the backstreets of London. Could the driver truly know Carlton's needs? Carlton's reply provides an answer. He affirms the destination as being the same one and terminates his reply with specificity that identifies the ultimate diabolical destination: the devil's location.

Hell constitutes another icon of Christian soteriology in 'Carlton's Drive' and appears at the climax of the plot when the titular protagonist reaches a 'gulf that yawned dreadfully" and is "blacker than night, deeper than all things' (4198). A gaping abyss in the ground that is dreadful and superlatively dark and deep conjures imagery of hell. Christian art during the Middle Ages commonly portrayed hell in a similar way. The *Winchester Psalter* (c. 1150), also known as the *Psalter of Henry of Blois* (see Figure 1), constitutes an illuminated manuscript psalter that depicts various scenes from the Old and New Testaments. One scene from the Last

Figure 1: 'Hellmouth Locked by an Archangel'. *Winchester Psalter* (c. 1150). The British Library, London.

Judgement showcases a gaping mouth full of fearful people surrounded by bestial demons. The title of the piece identifies the mouth as a pit that leads to hell. Though soft colours encircle the abyss, black dominates both the amount of available colour and the space in the work. Renaissance art portrayed hell in similar fashion. Doménikos Theotokópoulos (1541-1614), also referred to as *El Greco* ("The Greek"), painted *The Adoration of the Name of Jesus* (1577-9) with gaping black jaws located at the bottom of the canvas and seemingly descending lower

Figure 2. El Greco's *The Adoration of the Name of Jesus* (1577-9). The National Gallery, London.

than anything else depicted in the painting (see Figure 2). Aside from the black cloak worn by a genuflecting King Phillip II (1527-98) in the foreground, the hellmouth comprises the darkest colours in the work. When juxtaposed with the narrator's description of the abyss in 'Carlton's Drive', these images bear striking similarities.[56] Though the narrator in Blackwood's story never describes the abyss as mouthlike, its characteristics match not only Christian art from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance but also biblical description. The Old Testament explains that the 'wicked shall be turned into hell' (Ps. 9:17). The Hebrew word for 'hell' translates as *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל) and denotes a 'subterranean realm' that serves as the 'biblical place of the dead' (Suriano 2).[57] The verb phrase 'be turned' in the verse can be interpreted in more than one way.[58] Context in the biblical verse aids with definitional clarification.[59] When applying the context to a reading of verse seventeen, the wicked shall be directed into hell. When applying the second definition, the wicked become hell. Because hell constitutes a place, directing objects toward that locus provides a logical interpretation of that verse, but reading it to

---

[56] Other Christian art from the Middle Ages portray hell as a gaping bestial mouth. Also see *Hell Mouth* (c. 12th century) and *Last Judgment* from *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry* (c. 1440).

[57] *Sheol* is comparable to the Hellenic mythological underworld, Hades. Translation of Hebrew scripture to Greek replaced the word "*Sheol*" with "Hades." The term "Sheol" represents the "abode or state of the dead before the Last Judgment, or before the resurrection, sometimes a hell-like place of punishment" (Patte 490, 1150).

[58] The verb "turn" can denote a directional definition, that is, one who changes ("turns") the direction or movement of something (*OED*). Another sense of the same verb can be interpreted as some subject or object that changes or becomes something else (*OED*).

[59] The *Oxford English Dictionary* presents sixty-four senses, out of which only three denote the latter definition while all the others denote the former definition.

understand that individuals become hell, that is, a place, remains less sensibly comprehensible. It is more logically interpretive, then, to imagine people being directed toward a place rather than becoming the place itself. This reading aligns with the New Testament's description of hell: 'And thou […] shalt be thrust down to hell' (Luke 10:15). Hell is a place toward which a person or object can be physically directed, and the direction is only one: down. Downward into the hellmouth is the intended direction to take Carlton. His driver and the hansom fall into the pit, yet Carlton succeeds in ejecting himself from the hell-bound vehicle at the last moment and climbs out of the hole to safety. Though Carlton avoided eternal damnation, the threat of being thrust down to hell remains and is located within the city topography of 'Carlton's Drive'.

The presence of Satanic figures, serpentine tempters, and a hellmouth or entrance to hell demonstrate the presence of threats to Christian salvation. The location of these soteriological hazards on the outskirts of the city implicates the city topography in 'Carlton's Drive' as being interlaced with some of the most prominent iconography in Christian soteriology.

Christian soteriological iconography and a supernatural characteristic in 'Carlton's Drive' synergize with the strange. Peculiarity in the narrative commences with the appearance of the black hansom on the other side of the street, yet any strange feelings dissipate immediately when Carlton ties the vehicle's existence to the flurry of pedestrian traffic on the street. Once inside the hansom, nonetheless, a strange quality operating in the text manifests itself sequentially. Carlton begins witnessing all the known people from his social circle and all in the same place at the same time, but the narrator reveals that Carlton remains oblivious to the peculiarity of the occurrence. Dramatic irony functions in this scene and does so to emphasise the details that the reader advantageously gathers at this moment of the plot. Though Carlton remains initially unaware of the strangeness of the scene, the narrator establishes the presence of something unexpected. How could all these different people from Carlton's life exist in this same space and at the same time? Fisher's concept of the eerie addresses this narrative phenomenon. During moments when there operates some failure of absence, that is, when something exists or appears where and when it should not do so, the eerie manifests itself and does so often alongside trepidation. This scene in 'Carlton's Drive' exhibits the beginnings of the eerie. All the familiar people from Carlton's life would not expectedly appear in the same space simultaneously; therefore, a failure of absence manifests itself. These people should not be there. The narrator's description of Carlton's experience in this scene seemingly leads the reader through the operative machinery of the eerie. The reader first learns that something is odd that Carlton should have noticed. Next, the narrator reveals that Carlton briefly tries to

understand the situation through speculation and becomes increasingly aware of the peculiarity through feelings of trepidation. He ultimately senses queer suggestions of sadness, fear, and horror. Fisher explains that the eerie operates in this same sequence. A subject experiences a failure of absence before beginning to speculate about the agency at work, yet to no avail. Sensations of fear and dread then surface until speculation leads to some rational explanation about the agency and cause of the failed absence. In Carlton's case, he cannot explain the eerie phenomenon occurring around him, so the fear and horror he perceives lingers throughout the narrative until his climactic experience with the hellmouth explains why these individuals appear and run alongside his hansom toward damnation.

A fear of damnation would probably exist among most Christians, and Blackwood's appeal to this emotion is facilitated by the eerie in 'Carlton's Drive'. The events in the plot guide attention toward the agency behind the eerie event. As Carlton attempts to ascertain how and why so many familiar people are running alongside him in the same direction as his hansom, the narrator inserts additional details to shape the investigation of the possible source of agency. In other words, who—or what—is orchestrating this eerie event? The nature of transportation renders Carlton a passenger on this journey. The immediate suspected agent, then, would naturally be the hansom's driver. The text never divulges the identity of the man who drives Carlton to hell, but there are some clues. The driver appears dressed entirely in black, and when Carlton attempts to engage with him for explanation or a change of course, he receives neither:

> Carlton knew a spasm of pain that was terrible. He sat up. He flung open the doors, and his eyes measured the leap. But the faculty of mind that had all the time been in suspension returned a little, and he saw that to jump was—impossible. He smashed the trap open with his fist and cried out, 'Stop! I tell you, stop!'
>
> 'Can't stop here, sir,' the driver answered, peering down at him out of the square opening that let in — darkness. 'It's not allowed. It's not usual, either.'
>
> 'Stop, I say,' thundered Canton, trying to rise and strike him. But the driver laughed through that square of blackness. (4197)

When Carlton realizes he cannot jump off the hansom, he attempts to direct the driver's actions. Yet the driver, undeviating in his course, refuses Carlton's requests. Carlton's exchange with the black-clad driver in this scene reveals more about the latter's identity than any prior scenes in the text. When Carlton tries to view the driver through the hatch at the rear of the hansom's roof, all he sees is darkness or blackness. Carlton's predicament and interaction with his driver of darkness is heavily reminiscent of a scene in Charles Dickens's novella *A Christmas Carol*

(1843): "[S]hrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form," the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come guides Ebenezer Scrooge on a journey to reveal the latter's future (68).[60] Like Carlton, Scrooge goes willingly with his transportive host yet wishes to alter course after experiencing troubling details along the way; he even reaches to make physical contact with the spirit: "[H]e caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him" (Ibid.). Unlike Carlton, Scrooge actually makes physical contact yet like Carlton fails to achieve any immediate reaction. Both Carlton's driver and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come succeed in leading their respective protagonists to a final destination: death. Yet Scrooge and Carlton cheat death. The former promises to change his ways and returns to his mundane existence; the spirit then disappears. Carlton escapes death by leaping from the hansom at the last moment and climbing his way out of the hellmouth to return to his mundane existence; the driver then disappears. This literary correlation helps identify the driver in 'Carlton's Drive' as an incarnate omen or spirit of death responsible for delivering Carlton his fate—that is, of course, if he fails to change his sinful ways.[61]

But Carlton, like Scrooge, changes his ways. This drastic change in one's life reflects the teleological force behind an appeal to emotion. During the exposition of the narrative when the narrator characterises the eponymous protagonist, Carlton's transformation becomes clear:

> Those who know his face as it is today, serene and strong, yet recall how it was scored and beaten with the ravages of dissipation a few years before (so that the human seemed almost to have dropped back into the beast), can scarcely credit his identity. Now — its calm austerity, softened by the greatest yearning known to men, the yearning to save, proclaim at a glance the splendid revolution; whereas *then!* The memory is unpleasant; exceedingly wonderful the contrast. His life was inoffensive enough, negatively, at least, till the money came; then, with the inheritance, his innate sensuality broke out. Yet it seemed a prodigious step for a man to make in so brief a time: from that life of depravity that stained his face and smothered his soul, to the Brotherhood of Devotion he founded, and himself led full charge against the vice of the world! (4191; emphasis original)

---

[60] Carlton's situation is also similar to Jonathan Harker's journey toward Dracula's castle.
[61] Death is also personified in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) as the son of Satan. The satanic figure in 'Carlton's Drive' runs behind the hansom and pushes it toward hell. Satan and death work in tandem to try and cause Carlton's death (physical) and damnation (spiritual).

Though Carlton lived a sybaritic lifestyle prior to the telling of his tale, he reformed himself physically and spiritually because of his hell-bound drive. His serene countenance and crusade against worldly wrong portray a changed man, one who desires an outcome opposite of damnation.

Damnation and death in 'Carlton's Drive' stand as possible outcomes within the city topography. The figures of death and Satan as agents behind the operation of the eerie in 'Carlton's Drive' arrests attention to emphasise the situation as an appeal to a Christian reader's fear. One finds this possible outcome as a result of living a spiritually errant life within the city topography. The ability for Blackwood to contrive the eerie in these urban spaces supplies a focal point on the agents and action in the narrative. Tracing commonalities among Blackwood's short stories that employ the strange highlights similar authorial moves occurring throughout each text to depict unexpected presences or absences that produce feelings of emotional and spatial insecurity. Causing speculation about the agency behind an eerie event and learning that the source of that agency could lead one to his or her doom initiates a powerfully pathetic appeal to change one's ways and eschew the soteriological uncertainty inherent in the city.

Conclusion

Blackwood's intimate experience with cities is adverse and paints them as sources of misery on both physical and spiritual levels. After departing Britain to reside in Toronto and subsequently New York City, he became employed as a journalist for magazines and newspapers and produced articles. In his early nonfictional texts, Blackwood shares his personal experiences with his audience, and his views of cities similarly translate into his fictional renditions of them in his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, especially 'A Case of Eavesdropping' and 'Carlton's Drive'. In these narratives, Blackwood establishes communal loci within which deployments of the eerie present scenarios where failures of presence and absence manifest themselves to evoke an emotional appeal to feelings of dissonance and Christian fear among Christian readers. Blackwood demonstrates a design at play in his fiction that illuminates for scholars an abundance of interpretive material and appeals to the reader that populate his short stories of supernatural horror. City topographies and the eerie in these narratives coexist. References to Satan and diabolical deviants, snakes that tempt characters, and a gaping entrance into hell exemplify menaces to Christian salvation. The teleological effect of this narrative operation in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural

horror ultimately suggest an unavoidable understanding that permanency in the city topography remains utterly uncertain and detrimental to one's salvation.

The location of these soteriological dangers within the city implicates its topography as a problematic and unsecure space. Whether it be uninviting conditions of a building, its filicidal poltergeist, and a serpent as in 'A Case of Eavesdropping' or the demonic drive toward an entrance to hell as in 'Carlton's Drive', the eerie operates unhindered. This function of the eerie underlines probable agency and the identity of the probable agent. Coupled with the figures of death and damnation, this interpretive synthesis appeals to a Christian reader's fear. Appeals to Christian fear in these types of short stories produce feelings of emotional and spatial insecurity that inevitably lead to soteriological uncertainty in city topographies. Blackwood's cities portray protagonists who finds themselves either headed toward hell (at worst) or suspended in a quasi-purgatorial state of limbo (at best). These uncertain soteriological outcomes emphasise the city as an urban space beyond redemption. For Blackwood, the solution for this uncertain situation is physical escape; the first and nearest destination is the garden.

CHAPTER TWO
Strange Edens: Christian Guilt and Redemption in Garden Topographies

The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins;

he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.

-Isaiah 51:3

Like his cities, Blackwood's gardens are ominously strange topographies. But gardens should be pleasant, at least according to principal horticultural views in the early twentieth century. For the contemporary botanist and horticulturalist Luther Burbank (1849-1926), gardens should constitute both a *locus amoenis* ('pleasant place') and a *locus fertilis* ('fertile place') that 'serve an aesthetic' and 'productive purpose' (37-68). Other horticulturalists at the time shared Burbank's positive view of gardens.[62] Though not a professional gardener or horticulturalist, Blackwood still cultivated a relationship with gardens since his childhood (discussed later in this chapter). As an adult, particularly before his thirties, Blackwood's contact with gardens occurred primarily with ones situated amid urban settings. The most impactful of these settings constituted New York City. In his autobiography, *Episodes Before Thirty*, Blackwood shares how he sought happiness on Sundays in New York City's Bronx Park (a section of the city chartered for use as a botanical garden); Blackwood referred to this garden as a 'veritable Eden of delight' (83).[63] The Edenic garden represented an intimate religious concept for Blackwood. When discussing the significance of that garden, he quotes a poem by Alfred H. Louis, a man he met in New York City who became one of the most influential men in Blackwood's life (Ashley 1213). Louis's poem alludes to Eden and the Fall. This religious iconographic distinction is further illuminated in Blackwood's relationship to Louis, for he referred to the latter using the Latinate term *Padre* (father), as a Christian patron might refer to a parish priest. Alfred ostensibly functioned as Blackwood's de facto spiritual leader, for according to Blackwood, Alfred served as an 'unfailing and inspiring counsellor' for him in New York City (*Episodes Before Thirty* 103). Ultimately for Blackwood, the garden, especially the one at Bronx Park, functioned as some inaugural point on a journey toward his

---

[62] See William Cobbett, *The American Gardener* (1819); Sir Reginald Blomfield and F. Inigo Thomas, *The Formal Garden in England*, 3rd ed. (1901, reprinted 1972); Alicia Amherst, *A History of Gardening in England*, 3rd ed. (1910); and Marie Luise Gothein, *A History of Garden Art: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. 1928. Trans. Laura Archer Hind. Ed. Walter P. Wright. 2 vol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

[63] At one point when he made no money, Blackwood slept in New York City's Central Park during an entire month (*Episodes Before Thirty*, Ch. 32).

own understanding of salvation (*Episodes Before Thirty* Ch. 25). Connecting to his autobiographical experience in New York's garden, Blackwood's literary repertoire—particularly his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914—feature garden topographies with Christian soteriological iconography. This chapter will examine 'The Lost Valley' (1910), 'The Transfer' (1912), and 'The Damned' (1914) to investigate the possible teleological effect(s) of presenting strange garden topographies with Christian soteriological iconography.

For Michael Waters, most literary gardens appearing in the nineteenth century comprise positive settings (310). Michael Marder, however, posits that plants in general—including those found in gardens—could suffer a negative classification because of a devaluing of plants that stems from an incapability of viewing any human likeness in them (3). William Hughes seems to align with Waters and Marder's observations. On the one hand, Hughes identifies a function of the literary garden as seeming to 'represent the antithesis' of 'cruelty' and 'transgression' (xiv). He also notes that the garden is a 'moral space' in which 'vices', that is, 'disorder, weeds, imperfection' are 'variously avoided, discouraged, or perhaps even eradicated' (xiv). On the other hand, Hughes identifies Gothic propensities inherent in negative horticultural elements expressed within the literary garden space by narrative 'design' and 'quality' rather than by definition (xiv-xv).[64] Sue Edney reinforces Hughes's Gothic view of gardens through her interpretation of them as sites that 'create opportunities for uncanny deeds and presences' (1). She also agrees with Hughes's dualistic classification of literary gardens (2). These dualities and binaries that comprise the narrative garden setting cultivate it, according to Edney, as a liminal space (7). Liminality positions the garden setting in fiction as a potential 'spectral presence'.[65] Jonathan Smith also views the garden as a liminal entity because it straddles both domesticated and wild spaces. He argues that in 'sensation fiction, gardens tended to be both familiar and domestic on the one hand' and 'vaguely ominous and foreboding on the other' (101). Francesca Bihet seemingly supports Hughes, Edney, and Smith's position by claiming that the garden is a 'liminal space between the wild landscape

---

[64] Hughes also writes that the garden constitutes "something of a paradox and embodies […] central Gothic imperatives within its façade of floristic orderliness and managed arboreality" (xv). "[G]ardens […] are perversely sites of rebellion against the natural world from which they have been carved out" (xv). Representing order to human perception, they are interpositions upon what humanity might perceive as chaos—this itself being a place/non-place that by its very impersonal, inhuman nature has no conceptuality of order, chaos or morality" (xv). "The Gothic garden is a knowing place" (xv). Ecocriticism has eschewed the Gothic generally" (xvi). "Gothic textuality […] is, arguably, seldom unequivocally redemptive or regenerative" (xvi).

[65] Edney further posits that "humans are (blissfully) unaware of gardens' secret knowledge and subversive power" (1). She also sees a "disordered garden" as "unsettling; it is also stimulating, vital and provocative, filled with creative growth at the core of decay" (8).

and the domestic; it can be expressive of both nature and civilization' (148). Gardens, she argues, 'straddle the human and the more-than-human world' (149).

Joanna Crosby further explores the relationship between gardens and the Gothic aesthetic but focuses on orchards. Though Crosby clarifies that orchards and gardens are not synonymous, she highlights an intimate link between them through their liminal characteristics and the literal fruit they can bear. The representation of the apple and apple tree recalls a culturally-entrenched spiritual association to the Garden of Eden; the Edenic apple was regarded by Victorians as a symbolic representation of the 'sacred' as well as the 'forbidden' (48). The garden-orchard apple, Cosby argues, constitutes a Gothic site that pivots on the operation of the uncanny (49-50). She concludes that associations of the apple and its gardenlike orchard present liminal notions of 'risk' and 'reward', 'danger' and 'refuge' through 'sin, myth, and magic' in addition to 'mystery' (62). Though her argument coincides with Hughes, Edney, Smith, and Bihet's arguments about the liminal characteristic of literary gardens, Crosby diverges by identifying Christian iconographic elements attached to the garden setting. Gardens and Christian symbols comprise an area explored by Dawn Keetley. In her examination of plants in horror fiction and film, Keetley focuses on horrifying plants and how vegetal agents can embody monstrosities.[66] She notes that vegetal monsters derive from contextual meanings within Christianity that stem from 'evil, sin, and the amorality of the nonhuman' (2). The horror of monstrous vegetation derives from their 'strangeness' and 'uncanny likeness' (5). Keetley identifies Blackwood's 'The Willows' (1907) as 'one of the most beautiful renderings of plant horror' for its depiction of alien trees (7). Keetley claims that plants 'transect ontological boundaries' in ways that render them 'uncanny' (25). Lisa Kröger, in her ecoGothic reading of late eighteenth-century novels, views Matthew Lewis's 'Abbey-Garden' in *The Monk* (1796) as an uncanny urban garden space that simultaneously demonstrates Edenic and sinful qualities (23). Sins committed within the garden contribute to its characterisation as a 'perversion of Eden' though the garden can also function as a refuge (24). She sees physical nature in the Gothic literary mode as either a prelapsarian Eden or a perverted one (23).

Ruth Heholt investigates Blackwood's uncanny gardens which she describes as 'uneasy and disrupted' in the latter's supernatural fiction. Heholt identifies a garden at the heart of the narrative's forest setting in 'The Man Whom the Trees Loved' (1912) and notices that the

---

[66] Timothy S. Miller argues that the image of monstrous plants of specimens of speculative fiction from the late nineteenth century derives from the botanical studies of Charles Darwin (460-1).

garden in this setting is supposed to be safe yet functions as a Gothic setting with the operation of the uncanny (82). Heholt eventually concludes that 'gardens cannot protect' from the wilderness, material and metaphorical (95). Blackwood's gardens are 'always-already a part of the wildness that roars further out', and his narratives 'interrogate the boundaries of the "foreign and the colonized"', the 'wilderness' and the 'garden', respectively (96). Ultimately, Blackwood's gardens remain near the wilderness and can be 'invaded' (97). Invasions of unexplainable entities into physical settings, especially gardens, identifies the function of weird fiction. Jessica George examines the role of plants in weird fiction and argues that Arthur Machen, Blackwood, and H. P. Lovecraft focus on 'evolutionary degeneration' to inform their explanations of how plants and other vegetal agents challenge any notion of 'human pre-eminence' (11-13).

Notwithstanding these developments in literary scholarship about literary garden spaces and/or Blackwood's fictional gardens, scholars have generally overlooked the teleological function of the garden in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, not noticing specifically how and why Edenic settings constitute strange spaces and what their *mise en scène* illustrates.[67] Scholars have also disregarded iconographic references to Christian soteriology permeating or emanating from Blackwood's narrative garden topographies.[68] This chapter will thus argue that Blackwood's 'The Lost Valley', 'The Transfer', and 'The Damned' present garden topographies with Christian soteriological iconography that deploy the strange to appeal to Christian guilt (Original Sin) that emphasises possible redemption. Blackwood's fiction during this period in British history anticipates late twentieth-century ecotheology by elucidating an extant liminal landscape separating the terrestrial/celestial or mortal/immortal worlds where humankind might transcend postlapsarian paranoia through embracing rather than subduing the fallen world. How to 'understand the nature of another, particularly when that other may be [...] multiple, obscured, invisible', as Elizabeth Chang notes (179), was a pressing concern for Blackwood, demonstrated here.

The garden holds a particular place in the cultural imagination. Gradually, the enclosed ground, or garden, came to be recognised as a space synonymous with anything that adjoined

---

[67] Other scholars who explore literary gardens not mentioned above are Pauline Fletcher, *Gardens and Grim Ravines* (1983) and Shelley Saguaro, *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* (2006). These horticultural explorations overlook any strange, uncanny, and/or Gothic dimensions in their readings.

[68] From this section onward, I am following elements of my research that have been published elsewhere (as also noted in this thesis's introduction). See Christopher M. Scott, 'Gothic Eden: Gardens, Religious Tradition and EcoGothic Exegesis in Algernon Blackwood's "The Lost Valley" and "The Transfer"'. *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*. Ed. Sue Edney. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. pp. 65-81.

an edifice, especially 'private property' and often demonstrated a locus replete with 'grass, flowers, and trees', generally reserved for leisure.[69] The pleasurable locus full of multifarious forms of vegetation, mostly cultivated and reserved to an enclosed space, constitutes a definition of a garden. Alicia Amherst (1865-1941), renowned horticulturist and a contemporary of Blackwood's, published a historical compendium on gardening and summarises that the garden and the populace are inseparable, having coexisted symbiotically throughout history (1). Specifically, Amherst traces horticultural history to ancient Rome, where the *hortus*, or garden, consisted of a means of plebeian food-production (2). As a source of nourishment, the garden survived the fall of an empire via monasticism, where horticulture acquired a functional versatility that would develop an etymological definition of garden that endured the centuries; it is through this horticultural genealogy that Amherst arrives nearest to setting a definition of garden as an 'enclosure' of a 'distinct' landscape that surrounds a structure and exhibits 'order' in its presentation (5).[70] This chapter will apply this definition when referring to garden topographies, especially those resembling Eden.

Depictions of Eden enjoy a rich history within Occidental literature although bearing little resemblance to the sparse account of the garden in Eden as described in Genesis. The proposed Edenic landscape was conjured through subsequent texts and paintings, from Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* (1320), for example, through Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) and most famously John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Dante's Edenic paradise is a spiritual habitation in an 'ancient holy wood' at the summit of Mount Purgatory (Purgatorio: XXVIII: 1-21); Spenser depicts an Arcadian landscape; and Milton re-creates English landscapes and georgic virtue in his *Paradise Lost*. Edenic construction also permeates the settings in Blackwood's 'The Lost Valley', 'The Transfer', and 'The Damned'. When the protagonists experience and interpret their respective settings, the *mise en scène* reflects an atmosphere generally considered 'Edenic', as mentioned in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*. The garden in 'The Lost Valley', for example, consists of lush but recognisable vegetation: 'Lawnlike grass, wild lilac bushes, willows, pines, beeches' and 'flowers; ... tall, graceful blue flowers' (3996-7).

---

[69] A "garden" denotes a "piece of ground, usually enclosed, where flowers, fruit, or vegetables are cultivated" (*OED*).

[70] Amherst also denotes the growing functional multiplicity of the garden as not only a pleasurable place but also a source of medicine in the *herbularis*, that is, portions of the garden devoted to the cultivation of medicinal herbs. See p. 5.

---

positive childhood experiences reflect a gestational period for interpreting physical landscapes that emerges in narratives with ethereal settings springing to life.

Blackwood reveals his view of the terrestrial world by infusing elements of the celestial into his fictional settings: the supernatural space in his fiction ostensibly reflects his own interpretations of what constitutes the physical environment. David Matless, Esther Rey Torrijos, and Nicole M. Merola identify preternatural literary landscapes in their examinations of certain writers who utilise narrative settings to convey—through haunting—interpretations specific to either the author's personal views or the contemporary cultural milieu (335-57, 131-44, and 23-40, respectively).[73] Supernatural elements can be deployed among narrative settings with a purpose beyond causing fright. Matless, Torrijos, and Merola collectively view these narrative landscapes with instances of the supernatural as interpretive vehicles that can illuminate an author's message. Narrative settings with the supernatural can function didactically. Blackwood's praxis seemingly fits this mould, for the supernatural space in 'The Lost Valley' depicts this type of setting through the protagonist's perspective. Walking alone during his descent into the heart of the valley, Doctor Stephen Winters (referred to throughout the text simply as 'Stephen') observes myriad elements of floral beauty surrounding him. From 'lawnlike grass' to 'wild lilac bushes' to 'blue flowers', Stephen encounters botanical elements that paint a colourful landscape comparable to a floral garden (3996). Yet despite a natural presentation of beauty, this ostensible garden space functions as a nexus between Stephen's familiar world and the unfamiliar essence of the valley. Stephen experiences a strange characteristic of the landscape he neither expected nor ever experienced in his life. Rustling and fluttering around him, the trees of the eponymous valley make themselves known: 'From the whole surface of the woods rose a single murmur; like the whirring of voices heard in a dream, he thought. The individual purring of trees was merged' (3996). The forest erupts into what Stephen describes as a cacophony of murmuring, whirring voices, and purring. Stephen's unnatural experience in this supposedly natural terrain mirrors Blackwood's childhood excursion in and around the gardens at his Bromley house. Like Stephen, Blackwood described his vegetal surroundings as sentient entities. These similar experiences with the cohabitation

---

[73] David Matless, "A Geography of Ghosts: The Spectral Landscapes of Mary Butts." *Cultural Geographies*. 15.3 (Jul 2008): 335-357. Esther Rey Torrijos, "The Ghosts around the House: Repressed Fears and Literary Images in Elizabeth Bowen's Descriptions of Place." *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 64 (Apr 2012): 131-144. Nicole M. Merola, "'For Terror of the Deadness Beyond': Arctic Environments and Inhuman Ecologies in Michelle Paver's 'Dark Matter.'" *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*. 5:2 (2014): 23-40. Torrijos also investigates this phenomenon as it occurs in writings of Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973), concluding that the author's set interplay between landscape and the supernatural uncovers her own personal reflections of Anglo-Irish history and how the land can serve in the formation of identity.

of familiarity and unfamiliarity evoke Sigmund Freud's concept of *unheimlich* (the uncanny) where an observed object causes momentary dissonance in the viewer's mind because it simultaneously embodies something familiar and unfamiliar ('The Uncanny' 1-2). Freud's essay 'The Uncanny'(1919), according to David B. Morris, is significant to the literary Gothic mode and its posterity because the concept lays out a 'theory of terror' that depends on 'something strangely familiar which defeats our efforts to separate ourselves from it' (307). Mark Fisher identifies Freud's uncanny as one of three components comprising the collective concept of the strange. The version of the strange demonstrated by the Freudian uncanny is distinct because it represents the 'strange *within* the familiar, the strangely familiar, the familiar as strange—about the way in which the domestic world does not coincide with itself' (5; emphasis original). Fisher concludes that the Freudian uncanny 'operates by always processing the outside [the unfamiliar] through the gaps and impasses of the inside [the familiar]' (6). The familiar appearance of botanical materials in 'The Lost Valley'—and particularly in Stephen's case—conflicts with the unfamiliar behaviour they exhibit. Unexpectedly for Stephen, trees are seemingly audible. The notion of arboreal audibility resurfaces in another of Blackwood's short stories titled 'Pines' (1914). In this tale, the protagonist believes sound emanates from adjacent pine trees, but he then rationally attributes the aural source to the wind in the trees (4771). Narrative situations in which sound emanates from material objects and elements exist in canonical Gothic texts. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), for instance, personifies the wind in her novel *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), in which Adeline finds herself alone in an ominous passageway where the wind's contact with the physical structure of the building emits lifelike sounds throughout its interior (155). Like Radcliffe, Blackwood accentuates the sound of wind in 'The Lost Valley' but does so through a cooperative relationship between the wind and the trees.

In contrast to Radcliffe's narrative, 'The Lost Valley' depends on the understanding that the trees function without rational explanation. Tzvetan Todorov proposes that, in an empirical reality,

> there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination—and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality—but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. (25)

Todorov describes a phenomenon occurring during the moment of narrative ambiguity: the 'fantastic' (25). S. T. Joshi sees Todorov's conception of the fantastic (*le fantastique*) as belonging to the supernatural horror category of weird fiction (*The Weird Tale* 7). A 'child' of the literary Gothic mode, weird fiction amplifies fantastic moments where the otherworldly irrational thing irrupts into the mundane rational space to arouse feelings of dread (Lovecraft 14). During Stephen's experience with the fantastic in the forest, neither he nor the narrator attempts to explain the outlandish events, oscillating between supernatural phenomena as they occur and a description of Stephen's dreamlike recognition of the forest sounds. This weird uncertainty lingers until the story's climax when Stephen discovers an inherent connection between the supernatural events and those in the 'real' world, something natural and material. Todorov explains that this literary function highlights what he calls the 'fantastic marvellous; an embodiment of the narrative's ability to suspend certainty until the end, when supernatural phenomena are accepted as connected to reality (41).[74] 'The Lost Valley' finally pivots on this concept and does so to tether the supernatural phenomena associated with the physical landscape to authenticity. Trees in this weird story are audible because they possess emotions; they move because they are alive.

The concept of a fantastically marvellous liminal setting resurfaces elsewhere in Blackwood's oeuvre. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, unexpected physical movement among plant species became a topic of scientific investigation. Following such publications in 1875 as *On the Movements and Habits of Climbing Plants* and *Insectivorous Plants*, Charles Darwin (1809-82) presents theories on plant mobility in *The Power of Movement in Plants* (1880), in which he concludes that plants react to external sources, namely the sun, and exhibit movement for survival. Plant locomotion became part of the 'monstrous' as demonstrated in such literary examples as Phil Robinson's 'The Man-Eating Tree' (1881) and H. G. Wells's 'The Flowering of the Strange Orchid' (1894). A decade later, Blackwood's fiction replicates this literary botanical trend. 'The Transfer' depicts a physical landscape through the perspective of Miss Gould, the protagonist, governess for the Frene family, and would-be 'professional clairvoyante' (4470). The story's plot hinges upon events connected to a prohibited portion of the family's garden, referred to as the 'Forbidden Corner' (4471):

---

[74]Todorov also describes two subgenres nestled between the uncanny and marvellous. Viewed in sequence, the fantastic continuum would appear as uncanny, fantastic uncanny, fantastic, fantastic marvellous, and marvellous, respectively. What distinguishes the two subgenres constitutes their hybrid nature for harbouring uncertainty throughout the majority of a narrative, only to address this fantastic oscillation at the end through explanation of the illusion or confirmation of its reality. For a more thorough explanation of the fantastic continuum, see Todorov 44.

>It stood at the far end of the magnificent rose garden, a bald, sore place, where the black earth showed uglily in winter, almost like a piece of dangerous bog, and in summer baked and cracked with fissures where green lizards shot their fire in passing. In contrast to the rich luxuriance of death amid life, a center of disease that cried for healing lest it spread. But it never did spread. Behind it stood the thick wood of silver birches and, glimmering beyond, the orchard meadow, where the lambs played. (4472)

In the narrator's description of the 'sore place', a notion of spatial liminality already surfaces. Located at the border of the garden, a bald patch represents a threshold between two influences. The description, ostensibly from Miss Gould's perspective, highlights a broad juxtaposition between an idyllic garden space and a repulsively deserted one; there are other oppositional points that straddle the overarching liminality of the scene: winter and summer, death and life, fire-breathing lizards and frolicking lambs. Even the positioning of the words delineates the location of the patch in relation to the rest of the garden. From the perimeter, the reader is led across the garden with another description of the hideous bald patch that lies beyond the beautiful section before concluding with another peaceful image of a blissful orchard meadow. There are metaphorical Christian elements in the fire-breathing lizards and galivanting lambs. Leviticus 11:29 designates lizards as 'unclean' creeping things whereas in the New Testament, lambs are associated with Christ.[75] The employment of these oppositional Christian metaphors along with a physical presentation of their description demonstrates the relational topography of the garden. Though each individual piece stands opposite to its neighbouring one, collectively they form the expanse of the garden. There are borders and boundaries that function to structure the textual description of the garden's various thresholds which may or may not be transgressed. Liminality, then, permeates the setting in 'The Transfer' and affects not only the appearance of the garden's elements but the latter's behavioural characteristics as well, especially that of the barren patch.

Despite Gould's own ability to sense the notorious patch, it connects personally with the seven-year-old family heir under her care: Jamie. On several occasions, for instance, he 'heard it crying' and 'swore' that the spot 'shook its surface […] while he watched it' (4473). Jamie is the main witness to the garden's physical activity, but because of Gould's age, position and confidence within the Frene family, she occupies a place of credibility in the story; her conveying of Jamie's experiences testifies to the ominous garden's unfamiliar qualities. The

---

[75]For additional metaphorical connections between lambs and Christ, see John 1:29, 1 Pet. 1:19, Rev. 5:6, Rev. 5:12, Rev. 7:14, Rev. 12:11, Rev. 13:8, Rev. 14:1, Rev. 17:14, Rev. 19:7-9, and Rev. 21:23.

garden's uncanny characteristics—mirroring those of the trees in 'The Lost Valley'—resist rational explanation and become grafted into the narrative's fantastically marvellous reality. But unlike 'The Lost Valley', the supernatural garden patch bears deeper anthropomorphic qualities. Blackwood's garden patch demonstrates an ability to cry and react to human interaction, and this evolving presentation of borderland establishes a new level of consciousness inherent in Blackwood's narrative settings.

Blackwood was familiar with the conflation of consciousness and nature, sharing his inspiration in *Episodes Before Thirty* for understanding the mystical features of nature in this light. Gustav Fechner (1801-87) comprehended the natural world in a mystical manner that served as one of Blackwood's sources of inspiration that influenced his interpretation of physical landscapes. Fechner's *Zend-Avesta: On the Things of Heaven and the Hereafter* (1906) examines the intersection of consciousness and nature and ultimately argues that all nonhuman terrestrial life bears—together with humankind—an innate form of consciousness.[76] William James (1842-1910), whose own philosophical positions also demonstrate Fechner's influence, echoes the latter's idea that the 'whole universe […] is everywhere alive and conscious' (70). Crediting Fechner as a source of inspiration, Blackwood perceives nonhuman nature as 'alive' and with a 'consciousness' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 11).[77] This interpretation of the world informs Blackwood's fiction in which terrestrial landscapes emit a palpable sense of cognisance. When Stephen, in 'The Lost Valley', finds himself detached from society and alone within the physical setting, his senses awaken among a multitude of conscious nonhuman life around him. Likewise, Jamie's interaction with the garden in 'The Transfer' demonstrates cognisant qualities otherwise believed to be non-existent in a landscape. Blackwood's interpretation of Fechner's theory of nature-consciousness translates into fictional settings that stand apart from those in other stories of supernatural horror and emphasise the living characteristics of nonhuman objects typically viewed as static and bereft of feeling.

Though the topographical atmosphere assumes otherworldly characteristics in Blackwood's tales, nothing depicts a supernatural setting in the light of Fechner's theory as explicitly as the garden in 'The Transfer'. The story's emphasis on the diabolical garden patch

---

[76] See Michael Heidelberger's *Nature From Within: Gustav Theodor Fechner and his Psychophysical Worldview*. Trans. Cynthia Klohr. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.
[77] Though Fechner became an atheist during adulthood, he was raised Christian by a clergyman father (Heidelberger 21). Despite Fechner's transition into atheism later in life, it is clear that his views of nature are shaped by his earlier Christian exposure. Fechner's principal contribution to Blackwood's understanding focused on the concept of consciousness within nature. Blackwood's other influential figure regarding this topic is Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902), who was also raised Christian by his father, a parish curate. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1901) comprises a treatise on extramundane experiences, and one of the main figures on whom the text focuses is Christ.

directs attention to the qualities that separate it from other entities—human and nonhuman—in the plot. Even though Gould represents the source of information in the narrative, Jamie constitutes the point of contact with the ostensibly nefarious portion of the garden. After experiencing the unknown life force in the ground by way of its sounds and movement, Jamie 'secretly gave it food in the form of birds or mice or rabbits he found dead upon his wanderings' (4773). Not only is he aware of the garden's unique features, but Jamie also understands that the nonhuman entity—whatever it may be—experiences hunger and yearns for something to satiate its appetite. Darwin's *Insectivorous Plants* primarily examines the carnivorous plant species *Drosera rotundifolia*, the common sundew, and discovered that it, along with other carnivorous plants, digests its prey using a similar process to animals and humans (135). Though Blackwood never explains the digestive process of the garden patch, Jamie slakes its hunger by fetching it prey. Jamie's connection to this nonhuman being becomes real through its own consciousness. Nobody besides Jamie understands the strange phenomena in the garden, but in the light of Fechner's nature-consciousness, 'The Transfer' reveals a supernatural space in which the fantastic marvellous inverts logic through the presentation of an alternative understanding of the physical landscape—presented as reality—where the setting is consciously alive, experiences hunger, and must eat to survive.

Dead animals, however, are not the only prey that this garden consumes. Upon the arrival of the reprehensible Uncle Frank, known for his scheming and manipulation of innocent people, the garden patch exhibits behaviour that supersedes any occurring earlier in the plot. Jamie, standing on one side of the garden patch, maintains his distance from Uncle Frank, who approaches him from the opposite side and attempts to lure Jamie into the patch. Meanwhile, the patch mysteriously pulls Uncle Frank directly towards it:

> One moment on the edge he wobbled horribly, then with that queer sideways motion, rapid yet ungainly, he stepped forward into the middle of the patch and fell heavily upon his face. His eyes, as he dropped, faded shockingly, and across the countenance was written plainly what I can only call an expression of destruction. He looked utterly destroyed. (4481)

Such words as 'destruction' and 'destroyed' describe Uncle Frank's final condition after his fall, for the 'emissaries of the two kingdoms, the human and the vegetable, had met' (4478). But was his destruction due to physical collapse? The text is not explicit yet offers a clue as to the true nature of his experience. After Uncle Frank's fall, Gould hears a 'gulp' that sounded 'deep and muffled' as it 'dipped away into the earth' and senses a 'pungent smell of earth' (4481). The garden patch apparently consumes Uncle Frank as a sundew digests its insectile

prey, and all the vitality that Uncle Frank had leeched from his innocent victims has now transferred from him into the garden patch. Uncle Frank never returns to the house; the narrator, Gould, confirms, 'It seemed as if he dropped suddenly out of life. The papers never mentioned him. His activities ceased, as it were' (4481). The garden patch, on the other hand, flourishes: 'It had changed. It lay untouched, full of great, luscious, driving weeds and creepers, very strong, full-fed, and bursting thick with life' (4481). Unlike in the setting of Blackwood's 'The Lost Valley', vegetal material in 'The Transfer' consumes the human-ness of beings without killing the body. Although he also toys with this idea in the story 'The Man Whom the Trees Loved' (1912), Blackwood never places such a robust emphasis as he does in 'The Transfer' on the ability of a vegetal being to digest and reform a human or nonhuman animal while its material body survives.[78] This focus on material ground and its appetite attaches a palpable level of consciousness to Blackwood's supernatural landscapes.

In the light of eating, falling and (psychically) dying within a supernatural space, let alone garden, these Blackwoodian topographies conjure up biblical imagery of Earth's first ecological locus. Eden, familiar to Blackwood through his strict Christian upbringing, constitutes the root element of the landscape within which converge physical and supernatural characteristics. A spiritually charged Edenic landscape would primarily stimulate the locations in Blackwood's oeuvre between 1899 and 1914.

'THE LOST VALLEY' AND 'THE TRANSFER' APPEAL TO EDEN AND REDEMPTION

I would like to reconsider both these stories in the light of how uncanniness, through the process of revelation and defamiliarization, leads to redemptive conclusions for human collaborators and works with ecoGothic tropes in order to 'expose the monstrous anthropocentric gaze' (Del Principe 2). One major Christian influence in Blackwood's life was his father. Stevenson Arthur Blackwood (1832-93) experienced his life-altering conversion to Christianity while serving in the British military during the Crimean War (1853-6).[79] A firm adherence to the Bible embodied the atmosphere in which a young Algernon and his siblings were raised, and his childhood memories retrieve mixed feelings. Like many of the protagonists in his texts, Blackwood found himself straddling borders. Despite his parents' suffocating zeal, he admired them affectionately, especially his father. Blackwood expresses that he had a 'special loving

---

[78] Blackwood's "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" also juxtaposes Christianity with the concept of a cognizant and sentient physical landscape that can interact directly with human beings. This narrative could serve as another interpretation of Christian concepts emerging within topographies in Blackwood's fiction.
[79] To avoid confusion, any subsequent references to Blackwood's father by name will use 'Stevenson Arthur'.

adoration [for him], for he really *lived* his beliefs' (*Episodes Before Thirty* 33, emphasis original). Notwithstanding a loving familial relationship during his youth, Blackwood felt pulled in diverging directions. He confesses, 'I never shared the beliefs of my parents with anything like genuine pleasure. I was *afraid* they were true, not glad' (Ibid. 23, emphasis original). Young Blackwood's devotion to his parents' faith seemingly rested on a foundation of fear rooted in the negative aspects of Christianity (sin and damnation) rather than positive theology (forgiveness and salvation). Ultimately, he feared that his parents were simultaneously 'right' and 'wrong', leaving Blackwood to mature with a nagging feeling of guilt that followed him throughout his working life (Ashley Ch. 1). Blackwood neither renounced nor denounced Christianity but incorporated into his belief system various spiritual concepts, and as his mystical landscapes demonstrate, he constructed his fictional settings using biblical scaffolding he would have intimately known and remembered from his youth.

An example is depicted in 'The Lost Valley', which is portrayed as a new world of beauty that resembles both the Edenic one in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Elysium where immortal Homeric heroes lived 'in the Isles of the Blest ... for whom the life-giving Earth / Bears sweet fruit' (Hesiod; Lombardo 28). Milton paints his Paradise as a recognisable garden-estate landscape, filled with 'Flow'rs' which nature 'Pour'd forth profuse':

> Groves whose rich Trees wept odorous Gums and Balm,
>
> Others whose fruit burnisht with Golden Rind
>
> Hung amiable, Hesperian Fables true,
>
> If true, here only, and of delicious taste:
>
> Betwixt them Lawns, or level Downs, and Flocks
>
> Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd,
>
> Or palmy hillock, or the flow'ry lap
>
> Of some irriguous Valley spread her store. (*Paradise Lost*: IX. 248-55)

Juxtaposed with 'The Lost Valley', Milton's Edenic 'valley' lends such materials as flowers, trees, and lawns to help Blackwood plant his own version. Visual and sensory attributes, nevertheless, are not the only facets that comprise Blackwood's mysteriously novel landscape. The setting in Blackwood's narrative provides Stephen with a refuge in which to seek shelter from the maelstrom ravaging his conscience because of his internal conflict over his and his brother Mark's relationship with the same woman. In this seclusion, Stephen had '[n]ever before […] experienced anything approaching the wonder and completeness of it […]. It was a peace unchangeable—what some have called, perhaps, the Peace of God', not to be found in the everyday world (3997). In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Satan describes the garden's potential

as 'Heaven on Earth: for blissful Paradise / Of God the Garden was' [IV. 208-9]. However, unlike in the Garden of Eden, human inhabitants apart from Stephen but including his brother are dead while the trees are actively alive. Stephen has been allowed a vision of Elysium that brings no Edenic comfort although earthly beauty is aligned with spiritual harmony in this unplaced place.

When Gould describes the setting in 'The Transfer', she leaves no ambiguity as to what type of terrain she experiences: 'The haze of June lay over that *big garden* like a blanket; the wonderful flowers […] hung motionless; the lawns, so soft and thick, cushioned all other sounds; only the limes and huge clumps of guelder roses hummed with bees' (4471, emphasis added). In 'The Lost Valley', the garden-like enclave is tucked away in the tresses of endless vegetation—hidden, minute. Yet Gould in 'The Transfer' describes the garden as if it were the only world she ever knew. This interpretation is fitting because the epicentre of the story's action and climax is embedded in this lush space. And like 'The Lost Valley', Blackwood emphasises the paradisiacal nature of this garden through allusion. According to Jack Sullivan, Blackwood prefers to 'suggest' rather than 'define' and appears to do so here (121). The garden embodies Edenic characteristics not through narrative explication but through character action. Only three characters can experience the full spectrum of the garden: Jamie, Gould, and Uncle Frank. David Punter and Joshi highlight the interpersonal triangles in Blackwood's fiction characteristically among two males and a female (Punter, "Algernon Blackwood: Nature and Spirit" 45-6; Joshi, *The Weird Tale* 110), as in 'The Lost Valley', there is a case for interpreting these three individuals as allusions to the trio of the Fall (Adam, Eve, and Satan), which is not in itself a Freudian uncanny association but in 'The Transfer' is threaded through the significance of familiarity—middle-class gardens, tea on the lawn, and children playing—with uncanny and shocking effects.

To explore the story's triangle further, Jamie is portrayed as a perceptive child, innocent and dependent on his father; his sole actions in the narrative occur within the garden he visits. Gould is a clairvoyant young woman who shares Jamie's innocence in the narrative and whose main actions likewise remain confined within the garden. Uncle Frank, on the other hand, is described as a supernaturally antagonistic force who 'vampires' the vitality of others, according to Miss Gould, and tempts his victims with his 'Eastern eyes' (4477). Sullivan reads 'The Transfer' as a vampire tale (112), but Uncle Frank is not a vampire in the sense of John William Polidori's 'The Vampyre' (1819) or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Blackwood's tale concentrates on Jamie, Gould, and their interaction with the garden. Uncle Frank only enters the plot immediately before his climactic contact with the barren patch. And when his

characteristics and behaviour become evident, they stand in opposition to those of Jamie and Gould, who are innocent and united in the face of Uncle Frank's worldly evil as long as they are contained within the bounds of the garden. Uncle Frank, conversely, bears striking satanic features. He reflects a devilish image and actions: he is described as having a diabolically wide face, a dangerously persuasive demeanour, and lives off the bodies and lives of others as if he is missing something himself. In the Book of Revelation, and as depicted in Milton's version of the story, Satan is thrust out of heaven and loses all his status, thereafter depending on evil manipulation to gain any power over humankind. Like Satan, Uncle Frank suffers a relegation of sorts after the climactic event in 'The Transfer', for he loses any cultural status he previously held and utterly disappears from normal society. And, by incarnating evil, Uncle Frank simultaneously facilitates the Gothic aesthetic. As an antagonist similar to that of Horace Walpole's Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Uncle Frank uncovers a buried secret that resurfaces to plague him physically. All these components operate in the container of the narrative's garden, and in so doing, 'The Transfer' ultimately gestures toward an Edenic setting in which Adam, Eve, and Satan confronted one another.

Although Blackwood's gardens in both tales attempt to resemble Eden in the Christian sense, they remain anomalous Edenic representations. When juxtaposed with the biblical garden in Genesis, the Edenic settings in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer' fail to constitute paradise. Perhaps that was never Blackwood's intention, since they show some parallels only.[80] Though Blackwood's complex Edenic landscapes in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer' are not replicas of the biblical Eden, they demonstrate equivalences. The Edenic landscape in 'The Lost Valley' is hidden after the beginning of the plot or becomes so after the story's climax. When Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) describes the Edenic setting in *De Civitate Dei* (426 CE), he emphasises a spiritual (that is, hidden-from-view) rather than physical landscape (XIV. 10; 26). Blackwood's tales apparently adhere to this Augustinian depiction because initially, their Edenic landscapes are difficult to locate by material means. In 'The Lost Valley', for example, the valley is tethered to legend and may or may not exist: Professor Samarianz 'tells […] of a charming and exquisite legend of a "Lost Valley" that exists hereabouts' (3972).

---

[80] William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) similarly presents a paradisiacal setting that bears similitude to Eden yet ultimately offers something unexpected. The island in Golding's novel has been viewed as an Edenic allegory (Whitley 1970: 11, Friedman 1997: 65) although it could also be a 'prison' rather than paradise (Reilly 1999: 186). Though likeness exists between the island and Eden in Genesis, Golding's version is no mirror image of the familiar peaceful story. Violence and death coexist on the island until they culminate with the murder of innocent Simon, followed by the buffetings of a raging tempest. While the island exhibits paradisiacal elements analogous to those in Eden's garden, Golding's depiction of an Edenic setting remains complicated and illuminates Blackwood's construction of complex Edenic settings.

Samarianz's status as a scholar in legends and mythology hints at the valley's true elusiveness, for he should have discovered its whereabouts long before the untrained Stephen ever did. But Stephen did not find the valley by himself, he did so only with spiritual help:

> The cool wind […] followed him down, urging him forwards with deliberate pressure, as though a thousand soft hands were laid upon his back. And there were spirits in the wind that day. He heard their voices; and far below he traced by the motion of the tree-tops where they coiled upwards to him through miles of forest. (3996)

Spirits guide Stephen towards the hidden Edenic setting in the narrative, which would typically affect a story's protagonist and characters by heightening their level of anxiety, yet they operate as guides in an act that ostensibly saves Stephen from becoming lost. They become familiars in unfamiliar landscapes. Stephen never accomplishes anything in the plot to warrant such encouraging intervention, so it becomes apparent that the uncanny in 'The Lost Valley' identifies a hidden, supernatural source of grace responsible for redeeming those who enter the Edenic landscape.

Supernatural guidance and the redemptive qualities of the Edenic setting also exist in 'The Transfer'. When Uncle Frank arrives for tea, he senses an uncanny presence and feels drawn towards the centre of the narrative's Edenic garden:

> 'Wasn't it char—?' and then broke off abruptly, stammered, drew breath, stood up, and looked uneasily about him. For a second there was a gaping pause. It was like the click which starts some huge machinery moving—that instant's pause before it actually starts. […]
>
> He pointed to the empty patch. Then, before any one [*sic*] could answer, he started across the lawn towards it, going every minute faster. (4478)

Spiritually prompted and interrupted mid-speech, Uncle Frank follows the presence to the garden's centre, where he meets Jamie and Gould (who followed closely behind him). The only way he discovers the disturbed garden in the story depends on spiritual influence, for without it, the garden's ontological secret would remain hidden from the uninitiated. The supernatural force that is the garden intervenes to consume Uncle Frank's evil and save Jamie. Like Stephen, Jamie never achieves anything worthy of this supernatural intervention on his behalf other than all the small offerings of nourishment he provided the garden patch beforehand. Even so, Jamie receives grace through the uncanny Edenic garden in 'The Transfer': 'Without the fullness of grace', writes Willis Jenkins, 'a Christian environmental ethic will falter. Without its environmental dimensions, the Christian story of salvation will falter' (18). Jenkins illuminates an extant symbiotic nexus among grace, the natural environment, and soteriology. Blackwood

appears to anticipate this ecotheological arrangement when his Freudian uncanny Edenic gardens in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer' exhibit an elusive landscape that fosters supernatural intervention through the administration of grace. This spiritually redemptive function in Blackwood's writing underlines the prominence he places on the Edenic garden in his fiction, yet he does so through the medium of uncanny, even distressing experiences, similar in effect to many of the Christian stories.

'THE DAMNED', THE GARDEN, AND THE STRANGE

Like 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer', a strange garden topography with soteriological Edenic imagery appears in Blackwood's short story 'The Damned'. Published in his collection titled *Incredible Stories* in 1914, 'The Damned' portrays a protagonist named Bill who accompanies his sister, Frances, while they stay at a London suburban mansion that belongs to a widow named Mabel. The expansive residence seemingly harbours a diabolical mystery that emanates from within and underneath its garden.

'The Damned' resembles 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer' by functioning as a tale of supernatural horror. Bill experiences otherworldly operations upon arriving at Mabel's mansion. The singular presence that ostensibly dominates the house, grounds, and Bill's experience constitutes some intruding presence of darkness: '[T]here flashed across me, vanishing instantly again before I could consider it, a large, distressing thought that I can only describe vaguely as a Shadow. Dark and ugly, oppressive certainly it might be described, with something torn and dreadful about the edges that suggested pain and strife and terror' (4912). Bill describes the Shadow as an unwelcome presence with undesirable features and one responsible for sensations of dread within the grounds of Mabel's mansion. He offers additional details: 'There were the same stupid meals, the same wearisome long evenings, the stifling ugliness of house and grounds, the Shadow settling in so thickly that it seemed almost a visible, tangible thing' (4967). Bill's account explains that life at Mabel's home and experience with the Shadow became routine. The hovering presence of the Shadow seemingly becomes associated with the routines as Bill's experience with the Shadow depicts it as a quasi-material manifestation that lingers. Its lingering existence is so noticeable he confirms that he is not the only one who notices its strange presence:

> But for all our care and all our calculated silence, each knew that something had, in these last moments, come very close; it had brushed us in passing; it had retired; and I am inclined to think now that the large dark thing I saw, riding the dusk, probably bird of prey, was in some sense a symbol of it in my mind—that actually there had been no

bird at all, I mean, but that my mood of apprehension and dismay had formed the vivid picture in my thoughts. It had swept past us, it had retreated, but it was now, at this moment, in hiding very close. And it was watching us. (4941)

Bill's articulation of his experience with the Shadow demonstrates a collective perspective through his use of the plural possessive pronoun 'our' followed by the plural personal pronoun 'us'. Throughout this excerpt Bill includes other witnesses who could corroborate what he experiences throughout the plot. The lingering—and more audacious—Shadow interacts with everyone in the narrative and continues intruding into their lives with its penetrative gaze. Though Bill at times feels that the Shadow is almost tangible, the latter never assumes physical form, preferring instead to haunt the garden, mansion, and grounds like a revenant.[81]

A short story of supernatural horror, 'The Damned' matches 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer' in including in its narrative setting a garden topography. Located in the suburbs of London, the parcel of land on which Mabel's mansion stands contains an 'overgrown suburban garden' (4930). The garden in 'The Damned' also aligns with those in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer' in that it exhibits Christian soteriological iconography. The prominent source of this iconography comprises the notorious Shadow. The more Bill becomes acquainted with the ghostly malign force that invades his privacy and overall experience at Mabel's mansion, the more he understands about its identity: '"The Shadow", my thought hurried on to completion, "is a manifestation of hate; and hate is the Devil." And then I sat back frightened in my chair, for I knew that I had partly found the truth' (4918). Bill's connecting the Shadow and all its related evil to hate while reciprocally connecting hate to the Devil constructs a logical link between the Shadow and its primary source: Satan. The juxtaposition of the Shadow and a reference to Satan conjure comparison that provides an interpretive prism through which to view the identity and function of the Shadow as a dominant force within the garden in 'The Damned'. The Shadow functions as a figurative Satan in

---

[81] Contemporary works of supernatural horror commonly feature revenants or ghastly apparitions which terrorize their protagonists. The short stories of M. R. James, especially those in *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904) and *More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1911), frequently depict the supernatural visitation of some malign source. 'Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book' (1895; 1904), for instance, presents the experience of a British antiquary named Dennistoun who obtains an ancient book whose diabolical image on its final page invites the demonic presence of an evil entity and its hideous hand. Defying the natural laws that govern the diegetic world, Dennistoun unlocks a door to the otherworld and invites an ugly presence with an accompanying sensation of fear. The supernatural visitation also exists in James's 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' (1904) in which the protagonist, Parkins, encounters an apparition in his room that appears draped in linens. The ghostly visitor lingers in Parkins's room long enough to effect fear. The supernatural presence in Blackwood's 'The Damned' bears similitude to those in James's 'Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book' and 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad'. Taken together, these texts exhibit the existence of preternatural apparitions that exist in their respective narratives to elicit fear. 'The Damned' seemingly aligns with the textual machinery of these contemporary tales of supernatural horror.

another way through its effect on the women in the story. Alone and trying to write about his experiences at the mansion, Bill witnesses the Shadow interact with Mabel:

> [T]hese slight hints came back and helped to frame the big, vague Shadow I have mentioned. Up to the neck in this Shadow, almost drowned, yet just treading water, stood the figure of my hostess in her walking costume. Frances and I seemed swimming to her aid. The Shadow was large enough to include both house and grounds, but farther than that I could not see.... Dismissing it, I fell to reading my purloined book again. Before I turned another page, however, another startling detail leaped out at me: the figure of Mrs. Franklyn [Mabel] in the Shadow was not living. It floated helplessly, like a doll or puppet that has no life in it. It was both pathetic and dreadful. (4915)

The scene portrays the Shadow as fluid-like, inundating everything in its path with Mabel almost drowning in it. Bill reveals in this description that he and Frances are also directly affected by the Shadow, for they, too, are swimming in its seemingly aqueous influence. The final detail in this excerpt, however, exclusively characterises Mabel and her interaction with the Shadow. Almost clinging to her essence while she walks in the garden, the Shadow's influence renders her a helpless puppet. This dynamic between the Shadow and Mabel in the garden evokes imagery of Eve's being tempted in the Garden of Eden. Lucifer (Satan) targets Eve in Eden and inundates her with his influence until she submits to his diabolical design. This event transpires over six verses in Genesis, and of those verses, Eve commits action in only one of them (that is, the sixth verse). All preceding verses focus on Lucifer and his smothering influence that ultimately results in what he desires. Eve, then, resembles an object that is acted upon and one that responds to the influence of another, more powerful, force. When viewed in this light, Eve and Mabel resemble each other. When Mabel walks in her garden, the Shadow—the figure of Satan in the story—encircles her to the extent that Bill describes her as almost drowning in its influence and appearing as a mere doll or puppet, lifeless in the sense that she is unable to choose anything for herself. Mabel's interaction with the Shadow and its dominant influence over her in the narrative's garden portrays the Shadow as a presentation of Satan in 'The Damned'. As with other figurative representations of Satan in Blackwood's fictional gardens and cities, this one functions as a reminder of evil and a threat to one's wellbeing and salvation. Its overwhelming presence and function in the narrative's garden positions it in the text's interpretive foreground as a noticeable icon of Christian soteriology.

Like 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer,' Blackwood's 'The Damned' presents a garden that hosts an episode of devilish influence that results in unexpected consequences for

those involved. Bill, like the other protagonists examined earlier in this chapter, experiences situations that defy expectations. When he encounters the story's garden, Bill reacts by identifying its dominating peculiarity:

> I found myself looking straight into the face of a Strangeness that defied capture at close quarters. 'There's something here that never happens,' were the words that rose in my mind, 'and that's why none of us can speak of it.' […] I realised sharply that […] indeed everything large and small in the house and grounds, shared this strangeness, and were twisted out of normal appearance because of it. […] Nothing in the garden danced or sang. (4918)

To understand the place in which he finds himself, Bill realizes that the garden is strange, and his description in this scene reveals the type of strangeness that saturates the setting. His pointing out the failed happening or presence of things in the garden summons a failure of presence associated with the eerie. For the eerie to exist in a failure of presence, something that is expected to exist is unexpectedly absent from the scene, causing consternation in the one who experiences the failure of presence. In Bill's circumstance, he senses a presence that should manifest itself yet fails to do so. His added detail at the end of the excerpt identifies the dancing and singing that would be expected in gardens. Though he never identifies which type of life, Bill emphasises the generality of the failure of presence in this scene. The garden in 'The Damned' fails to present *any* life, and this characteristic renders it an eerie topography.

'THE DAMNED' AND AN APPEAL TO EDEN, CHRISTIAN GUILT, AND REDEMPTION

The operation of the eerie in 'The Damned' directs focus toward the agent responsible for the failure of presence. Who or what prevents action, life, and joy in Mabel's garden? Looming over the grounds and narrative as a malignant spirit exists the infernal Shadow. The satanic force stands at the forefront when examining the source of the eerie in 'The Damned'. Nothing happens or thrives in the garden because the Shadow smothers it with its evil influence. Characters who enter the garden become affected by the Shadow's role; Mabel is one of its victims. Throughout the plot, she displays signs of guilt. Someone who regrets his or her past actions can demonstrate forms of sadness, anxiety, and/or disappointment. Mabel's pre-climactic comportment in the narrative reflects an unchanging saturnine disposition. She walks the garden of the mansion in a state of melancholy by day, and she is found 'weeping' with 'gnashing of teeth' by night (4947; 4962). Mabel's nocturnal actions of weeping and gnashing of teeth are significant because they reference an act specifically discussed in the New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew, for instance, presents Christ's Parable of the Talents and

highlights a servant who hid his talent and essentially accomplished nothing with it: 'And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matt. 25:30). Weeping and gnashing of teeth in this verse is caused by punishment. Punishment that leads to a state of weeping and gnashing of teeth occupies other parts of the New Testament that align with the previous verse in Matthew.[82] Zoltan L. E. Erdey and Kevin G. Smith interpret the act of weeping and gnashing teeth throughout Matthew as a state of suffering for wicked individuals who receive eschatological punishment (141). Eschatology as a Christian theological concept concerns post-mortal judgement and its resulting placement of souls in either heaven or hell. As Erdey and Smith discuss, the wicked are those assigned to damnation, and they perform the act of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Why does Mabel do it, then, if she is not in hell? Her surroundings, however, remind her of hell and the damnation that awaits her.

Damnation, as hinted in the title of Blackwood's tale, hovers in the background of the narrative's action. While Bill, Frances, and Mabel interact with one another throughout the plot, portentous booming sounds penetrate the silent diegetic atmosphere of the garden. Bill describes the event in detail:

> 'Like huge doors closing,' [Mabel] said softly in her colourless voice, 'enormous metal doors shutting against a mass of people clamouring to get out.' The gravity, the note of hopelessness in her tones, was shocking.
>
> […]
>
> 'We could escape!' She lowered her tone a little, saying it hurriedly. The 'we' amazed and horrified me; but something in her voice and manner struck me utterly dumb. There was ice and terror in it. It was a dying woman speaking—a lost and hopeless soul. (4938)

Attributing the interrupting noise to the sound of enormous metal doors bears significance when taken in connection with the revealed purpose of the doors. Whereas doors allow one access into a place, the gigantic metal doors in 'The Damned' do not, and Mabel divulges that people are trying to escape. While describing the attempted escape, Bill flags Mabel's use of 'we' as she describes the plight of the trapped souls. Mabel includes herself as a member of the group directly affected by the enormous imprisoning doors. But what exactly is she

---

[82] 'Weeping and gnashing of teeth' is also referenced in Matthew 8:12, 22:13, and 24:51; it reappears in Luke 13:28.

describing in this scene? Near the plot's climax, Bill reveals the reason for the trapped souls beneath the garden:

> And the multitude, it came to me, was not a single multitude, but many; for, as soon as one huge division pressed too close upon the edge of escape, it was dragged back by another and prevented. The wild host was divided against itself. Here dwelt the Shadow I had 'imagined' weeks ago, and in it struggled armies of lost souls as in the depths of some bottomless pit whence there is no escape. (4953)

The souls are imprisoned in hell, for Bill's account of the happenings beneath the garden illustrate imagery pertaining to this infernal location. He describes the location where the souls are trapped as some infinite abyss in which resides the satanic figure of the story: the Shadow. The countless multitudes of souls also wrestle with one another to flee from this place of imprisonment, yet they can never escape. Bill's description of the state of these souls aligns with similar description of those destined for doom in the New Testament. When he addresses the Pharisees, Christ associates them with hell: 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' (Matt. 23:33). Christ's rhetorical question terminating the verse aligns almost perfectly with Bill's explanation of the souls trapped in hell beneath the garden in Blackwood's narrative. Ostensible alignment with the biblical explanation of hell as an inescapable location strengthens the interpretation of Bill's account as one that identifies the existence of hell directly beneath the garden in 'The Damned'.

The placement of a garden directly above hell instantiates a nexus between the two loci. The biblically familiar garden of Genesis constitutes a similar setting associated with hell when, first, Lucifer, the lord of hell, invades it, and second when Original Sin committed in the garden ejects Adam and Eve onto an ontological path toward hell that necessitates Christ's interceding sacrifice. In 'The Damned', the garden demonstrates this connection through its physical appearance:

> [T]he garden grew into the house, the house into the garden, and in both was this idea of resistance to the natural — the spirit that says No to joy. All over it I was aware of the effort to achieve another end, the struggle to burst forth and escape into free, spontaneous expression that should be happy and natural, yet the effort for ever frustrated by the weight of this dark shadow that rendered it abortive. Life crawled aside into a channel that was a cul-de-sac, then turned horribly upon itself. Instead of blossom and fruit, there were weeds. This approach of life I was conscious of—then dismal failure. There was no fulfilment. Nothing happened. (4931)

The garden is a vestibule of hell, for Bill's description tethers it to infernal sources. The most powerful evidence surfaces in the explanation that the satanic shadow dominates the space in a state of permanence. Additional evidence points to the notorious house, with all its lurking sensations of anxiety and damnation, that borders the garden in a contaminated cycle of symbiosis. The garden feeds off of the house's infernal energy and vice versa. Bill describes the entire predicament as one bereft of joy. The absence of happiness combined with infernal imagery has been made apparent in the earlier references to weeping and gnashing of teeth; it also exists in the New Testament: 'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever' (Rev. 20:10; emphasis original). John's Book of Revelation exhibits the conditions of hell as a state of imprisonment in a locus of perpetual torture and gloom. These same hellish conditions surface in Blackwood's garden. Rather than display flowers and fruit it produces only unsightly weeds. Horticultural failure in the garden owes its manifestation to Mabel's home and the subterranean pit of damnation from which Bill hears the incessant moans of imprisoned souls.

But despite the seemingly eternal condition of the garden and its subterranean hell in 'The Damned', Blackwood demonstrates, as he does in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer', that redemption via grace in this topography is possible. Mabel's desperate soteriological condition dominates the plot, yet during its denouement she finally finds the beginnings of a spiritual reprieve. Bill and Frances invite Mabel for dinner at their London flat after their stay at her suburban home, and her countenance and demeanour have noticeably changed:

> She dined with us only the other night, […] and a jollier, saner, more interesting and happy guest I could hardly wish for. She was vital—in the best sense; the lay-figure had come to life. I found it difficult to believe she was the same woman whose fearful effigy had floated down those dreary corridors and almost disappeared in the depths of that atrocious Shadow.
>
> […]
>
> It was clear, however, that the woman had in herself some secret source of joy, that she was now an aggressive, positive force, sure of herself, and apparently afraid of nothing in heaven or hell. She radiated something very like hope and courage about her, and talked as though the world were a glorious place and everybody in it kind and beautiful. Her optimism was certainly infectious. (4978)

Mabel has become a better version of herself. When compared with her past self who roamed the narrative's garden and mansion in a hopeless state of fear, guilt, and sadness, this new

Mabel exhibits positive traits that have replaced all their negative counterparts caused by the presence and influence of the story's satanic figure. Mabel no longer fears hell, and her influential optimism has seemingly replaced the Shadow's pessimistic impact. Bill observes Mabel's spiritual rebirth; there is hope for the imprisoned souls of the damned in even fallen gardens. Like those in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer', the garden in 'The Damned' is not the site of one's soteriological terminus; on the contrary, Blackwood demonstrates that there exists hope for redemption.

Opportunity for redemption exists in Blackwood's garden topography. Mabel embodies proof that someone associated with souls destined for hell can still spiritually escape. The garden alone, however, fails to possess the power to enact this soteriological transformation. Bill explains repeatedly that nothing ever happens in Mabel's garden. So what instigated Mabel's infernal escape? An outside force visits the garden and mansion. Bill observes,

> Footsteps on the stairs, and the sound of voices, interrupted our odd impromptu conversation, as the Grenadier came up, followed by the tall, grave gentleman who was being shown over the house. My sister drew me along the corridor towards her room, where she went in and closed the door behind me, yet not before I had stolen a good look at the caller—long enough, at least, for his face and general appearance to have made a definite impression on me. For something strong and peaceful emanated from his presence; he moved with such quiet dignity; the glance of his eyes was so steady and reassuring, that my mind labelled him instantly as a type of man one would turn to in an emergency and not be disappointed. I had seen him but for a passing moment, but I had seen him twice, and the way he walked down the passage, looking competently about him, conveyed the same impression as when I saw him standing at the door—fearless, tolerant, wise. 'A sincere and kindly character,' I judged instantly, 'a man whom some big kind of love has trained in sweetness towards the world; no hate in him anywhere.' A great deal, no doubt, to read in so brief a glance! Yet his voice confirmed my intuition, a deep and very gentle voice, great firmness in it too. (4972)

The stranger who visits Mabel's property casts a positive impression on Bill. Later described as the leader of a religious community, the nameless man exhibits qualities of strength, peace, dignity, reliability, trust, courage, tolerance, wisdom, and love. And there was no hate in him. Bill's description of the man's demeanour who visits Mabel's garden bears striking similarity to that of Christ. There exist numerous references to Christ's characteristics among the Synoptic Gospels and Pauline epistles. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke, for instance, speak of Christ-like love and kindness:

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

[…]

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and blend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (Matt. 22:39; Luke 6:35)

Christ teaches his disciples to love one another as well as their enemies. He also stresses kindness in how they should treat one another. To love his enemies and be kind to the unthankful and evil, the biblical description of Christ presents a man without hate. Taken collectively, these characteristics match the man who visits the garden in 'The Damned'. Bill also observes peace in him. One of Christ's titles in the Bible is 'The Prince of Peace' (Isa. 9:6). And when he visits his disciples in the New Testament, Christ declares, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' (John 14:27). These biblical verses forge a synonymatic link between Christ and peace. Equally exhibiting peace, then, the man who visits Mabel and her garden emits another characteristic of Christ. When compared to the qualities of Christ in the Old and New Testaments, those of the nameless visitor in 'The Damned' strengthen the inference that he embodies a Christ-figure in the story.

The visitor in 'The Damned' represents a Christ-figure through not only comparable characteristics but also comparable action. The man's action and its consequence in Blackwood's narrative effect a drastic change that serves as the plot's resolution. Speaking about the story's spiritual solution, Frances conveys to Bill the consequences of the man's visit:

The beliefs of this man […] vigorously thought and therefore vigorously given out here, will put the whole place straight. It will act as a solvent. These vitriolic layers actively denied, will fuse and disappear in the stream of gentle, tolerant sympathy which is love. For each member, worthy of the name, loves the world […]; Mabel, too, if she joins them out of real conviction, will find salvation—. (4975-6)

The layers to which Frances refers in this excerpt comprise the infernal space below the garden that is teeming with damned souls, and the source of their salvation—and that of a converted Mabel—is the Christ-resembling figure who has arrived on Mabel's property. Blackwood's narrative terminates with Bill's explanation that Mabel along with her entire property were purified in consequence of the man's spiritual intervention. The visitor in 'The Damned' brings salvation to Mabel and all the souls trapped beneath her fallen garden. As the bringer of salvation in Blackwood's narrative, the man's soteriological action and role mirror those of Christ and, therefore, functions as a source of redemption in a garden topography.

The garden topography in 'The Damned' functions concurrently with those in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer'. It resembles a strange rendition of Eden and harbours a source of satanic evil that haunts the characters like a revenant with diabolical influence perceived primarily in that Edenic garden space. The strange garden fails to present any life or anything else expected. This key characteristic renders the garden in 'The Damned' an eerie topography. The function of the eerie in the garden calls for examination upon the agent behind the eerie phenomenon. The Shadow, that is, the figure of Satan in the narrative, embodies an incessant reminder of Original Sin and the possibility for damnation of the soul. This appeal to Christian guilt and redemption opposes the presence of hell beneath the garden and corresponds with the biblical depiction of hell as an inescapable location. Despite its portrayal in 'The Damned', the garden, like those in 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer', is not the site of soteriological impossibility. Quite the reverse, redemption is attainable. With the arrival and help of a Christ-figure, the eponymously damned souls in Blackwood's narrative receive salvation in and around its fallen garden topography and are encouraged to flee toward more distant topographies beyond the reach of gardens within urban spaces.

CONCLUSION

Blackwood's fictional narratives constitute an intersection of life and landscape on a higher supernatural plane where his interpretation of the physical environment operates. From a young age, Blackwood stole opportunities for solitude in the wilds, even if his only experience at the time limited itself to the gardens and grounds adjacent the family home. During his horrible experience living in New York City, the garden became Blackwood's sanctuary. From Blackwood's reflections during his lengthy journey by train through the Canadian frontier, the physical setting exemplified a higher sense of life in his fictional worlds. As an author, Blackwood creates garden topographies that defy common expectations; his landscapes are strange. These liminal locations operate with their own set of rules that fail to adhere to those in the quotidian world. Through Fechner's influential notions of the natural environment, Blackwood interprets physical settings as potential carriers of consciousness, and these cognisant landscapes in his narratives separate themselves—through their living and sentient qualities—from other literary settings. The Blackwoodian garden becomes a space in which Todorov's concept of the fantastic marvellous, operating under the veil of the conceptual strange, functions as the vehicle through which Blackwood presents a nuanced understanding of the physical environment. This unconventional concept ostensibly reaches its apex in moments where the garden topography experiences such inexplicable anthropomorphic

qualities as active cooperation from vegetal agents, or hunger and sensual satisfaction caused by the literal fall and psychic death of a human.

The concepts of falling and dying in a garden are undeniably recognisable in the context of Christian soteriology, something with which Blackwood was intimately familiar. A feature of Blackwood's life and work is that although he studied other spiritual texts over the course of his life, he never shunned Christianity or the Bible. His path always led to learning new concepts and synthesising them with what he found already familiar. Sullivan is correct to call Blackwood 'didactic', since the latter's fiction ostensibly serves as the vehicle in which he delivers his synthesised spiritual knowledge (114).[83] Blackwood packages this knowledge and delivers it to his Christian audience as a surreptitious suggestion to interact with gardens as sites in which one initiates redemption from the soteriological threats in a (sub)urban setting. In an increasingly modernising industrial society, Blackwood seemingly felt the weight of responsibility to warn his generation against forsaking spiritual engagement with bliss or dread in entangled Edens. Gardens—especially Edenic ones—struggle to demonstrate just one identity whereas Blackwood's cities equate solely with hell. Horticultural hell comprises only one half of a hybrid identity that straddles the liminal divide between damning urbanity and redemptive rurality. Though redemption is possible in the garden, it is only initiatory, for individuals must continue their soteriological journey into increasingly rural topographies, specifically the forests and mountains in the chapters that follow.

---

[83] Sullivan notes that Blackwood is more 'didactic' than his contemporaries. See page 114.

CHAPTER THREE

Strange Woods: Christian Spiritual Recognition and Terrestrial/Celestial Liminality in Forest Topographies

And [the Lord] shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body.

-Isaiah 10:18

Like gardens and the Edenic trees that can appear therein, forests can be strange. The forest encounter by Occidental literature's first protagonist, Gilgamesh, constitutes one of metaphorical darkness.[84] The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (c. 2100-1200 BCE) presents an early example of dark or fearful literary forests. This embodiment seems to have been championed especially by stories of supernatural horror (Lovecraft 8; Leffler 144; Goho 1).[85] Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820) presents a fearful encounter between Ichabod Crane and a forest that ostensibly groans as it sways in the wind. Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859-60) describes the woods as a suffocating force that surrounds the house and casts its shadows. Angela Carter's 'The Erl-King' (1979) portrays the forest as a looming presence that surrounds the protagonist endlessly. A tradition of dark and fearful forests runs throughout the fiction of supernatural horror. But are forests always dark and fearful? The complex characteristic of forests exists elsewhere in literature when light, not darkness, can also occupy a forest. J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) displays this sylvan separation between the threatening spider-infested Mirkwood in *The Hobbit* (1937) to the hope-filled Fangorn Forest in *The Two Towers* (1954), where Merry and Pippin receive help from the forest's Ents whereas Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas discover the luminous appearance of Gandalf reborn and more powerful than before. Forests in literature, then, simultaneously carry light and dark—both literally and figuratively. Figurative darkness and light operating simultaneously in a forest might seem unfamiliar in a literary sense. When metaphorically dark forests defy expectations in stories of supernatural horror, characters and readers alike can experience sensations of the uncanny. Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny depends on this manoeuvre of upending the expected

---

[84] A dark forest, or *selva oscura*, also captivates the hero-traveler in Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* (1320).
[85] See page 144 in Yvonne Leffler's 'The Devious Landscape in Contemporary Scandinavian Horror'. *Gothic Topographies*. Routledge, 2016. 155-66.

(familiar/homely) with what is unexpected (unfamiliar/unhomely).[86] Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror set in forested spaces portray these dark/light forests through this Freudian phenomenon.[87] Though Blackwood devotes some of his narratives to the arboreal dark side as in, for instance, 'The Willows' (1907) and 'The Wendigo' (1910), other tales present a conspicuous simultaneity with darkness and light.[88] Inviting the light into the forested space seemingly matches Blackwood's personal experience with forests during his life. Though he encountered fearful experiences while camping in the forest with a supposed homicidal fugitive, he also sought a nearby forest immediately after receiving news of his father's death (Ashley 1138). This chapter will explore forests in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, namely 'Ancient Lights' (1912) and 'May Day Eve' (1907), paying particular attention to the teleological effect(s) of these strange forest topographies (darkness) with Christian soteriological iconography (light).

Ruth Heholt explores various haunted physical spaces to investigate how and why these particular loci succumb to the whims of spectral entities. She notes that '[p]laces are always marked by what has gone before, by the people who populated and shaped the environment in many different ways' (2). Physical settings function not as banal environments immune to influence; on the contrary, Heholt's reading views these settings as repositories of (non)human interactions. The main argument of her work contends that 'landscape is indelibly marked and therefore haunted by the past' (Ibid., 15). Heholt's position on this specific literary phenomenon identifies narrative settings as having a Gothic function and seemingly complements Roger Luckhurst's contribution in 'The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the "Spectral Turn"' in which he asserts that 'ghosts are held to haunt specific locales' (541). Specific narrative settings bearing the imprint of human interaction could suffer hauntings by ghosts particular to those spaces. The function of physical settings in a narrative, then, pivots on its relational characteristics with humanity. Elizabeth Parker is more specific in her critical approach and singles out forests among various topographies. She investigates 'fearful forests' through traditional Occidental views of the forest as a space rife with fear and other terrible sensations (269). She pursues established patterns inherent in these apparently Gothic forests that have led to reasons why forests are associated with fear and how they evoke it. One of Parker's main premises to support her claim that Western societies fear the forest is

---

[86] See pp. 121-2 in Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919). London: Penguin Books, 2003.
[87] Freud wrote Wilhelm Fliess (6th August 1900) about his construction for 'The Interpretation of Dreams' and how it relates to the metaphor of navigating a 'dark forest' until one reaches higher ground.
[88] There exists an operation of this light and dark binary within literary works with forest settings, particularly John Buchan's 'The Grove of Ashtaroth' (1910) and *Witchwood* (1927).

that its wooded landscape constitutes an anti-Christian space. Observing forests through a prism of fear, Parker maintains forests in supernatural horror narratives as standing on the dark—rather than light—side of the divide. Considering both sides of this conceptual divide, Robert Pogue Harrison illuminates the tradition of forests and their part in the construction of the Occidental cultural ethos. Forests are 'full of enigmas and paradoxes', for they straddle the border between religious 'profanity' and the 'sacred', 'lawlessness' and 'justice', 'danger' and 'enchantment' (x). These subjective binaries, Harrison posits, become 'confounded' in the forest space. John Miller's examination of 'weird woods' in fiction aligns with Parker and Harrison's conclusions by noticing how they comprise 'singular places with very specific energies' (9). That those energies manifest themselves in nefarious ways encapsulates most of the narratives he examines, yet some arboreal instances yield positive elements. As Miller comments about *Gilgamesh* and William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1623), forests can be a 'welcome refuge from the world of human affairs' and evoke a 'sense of joy', respectively (10). Viewed together, Parker, Harrison, and Miller's explorations of literary forests demonstrate the complexity of a narrative setting that can pivot toward each side of the dark/light divide.

Heholt and Luckhurst's investigations of haunted physical settings approach those landscapes broadly, typically through a scope of either urban or rural environments. To ascertain Blackwood's treatment of one type of topography—the forest—within a broader rural setting, further investigation is needed beyond Heholt and Luckhurst's examinations. Parker, Harrison, and Miller's contributions address this focal point by singling out forests as a topic for examination in Occidental literary tradition. David Punter investigates Blackwood's fiction and its rural narrative settings with trees. Specifically, he investigates the protagonists' precarious predicament vis-à-vis enigmatic trees. At one point he examines the story 'The Man Whom the Trees Loved' (1912) yet never analyses fully the function of the greater arboreal topography and its narrative purpose. Most—if not all—of Punter's investigative energy seems devoted to an enterprise of explaining the dynamic of nature in its broad sense and individual consciousness (44-55). James Goho explores haunted forests in Blackwood's fiction set in Canada and argues that these dark forests can simultaneously embody sources of hostility and healing (81). Goho's investigation, nevertheless, is limited because among the selected stories set in Canada, only two of them exhibit supernatural horror, and Goho's investigation excludes

a larger corpus of Blackwood's stories set in forests outside Canada.[89] Among scholars who have examined the breadth of Blackwood's literary oeuvre, Punter penetrates the deepest into the subject of rural settings in Blackwood's fiction. Yet he—like other scholars of Blackwood's works—has overlooked the specific function and purpose of strange, forested topographies in Blackwood's narratives. What is more, Punter and other scholars never analyse the (re)appearance of Christian iconography within these peculiar forests. In particular response to Parker's argument that connects sylvan fear to anti-Christian properties, what if Blackwood's forests operate differently? What if the forest topographies in his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 function as Christian spaces in which one can recognize a path toward salvation?

This chapter, then, addresses these academically uncharted forest-topographies in Blackwood's narrative production by investigating what might be the teleological effect of strange forest topographies with Christian soteriological iconography. This critically focused pursuit explains why Blackwood's strange forests with this type of religious symbolism function unexpectedly in his narratives, especially those published between 1899 and 1914. To accomplish this interpretive objective, close analyses of Blackwood's 'Ancient Lights' and 'May Day Eve' will uncover the function(s) and purpose(s) of their forest topographies as well as a deeper understanding of Blackwood's selection and arrangement of certain topographies along a trajectory that ranges from the urban locations examined in Chapters One and Two to the rural settings examined in this chapter. Extending this thesis's investigation of Blackwood's urban topographies comprising cities and gardens, this chapter argues that his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 set in forest topographies with Christian soteriological iconography deploy the strange to appeal to a Christian spiritual recognition that emphasises the opportunity to cross a threshold separating the terrestrial and celestial divide toward spiritual development.

Blackwood frequented forests from Britain to North America to Continental Europe and the Caucuses. Forests in these disparate regions vary in physical characteristics; Blackwood's fictional forests appear in narratives with settings strewn across the same regions to which he travelled.[90] This chapter's investigation of forests in Blackwood's fictional repertoire is less concerned with specific categories of forest than it is with the existence of a

---

[89] Of the six stories Goho examines, only "The Wendigo" (1910) and "Running Wolf" (1920) employ supernatural horror.

[90] This chapter will present a definition of forest topographies because of the various types of forests in existence. For the present examination, the definition to be used for forest topographies aligns with the most common Anglophone lexical sense, an "extensive tract of land covered with trees and undergrowth" (*OED*).

forest in a narrative. In other words, this chapter will refer to forests generally because those under investigation in this chapter function almost identically despite their phenotypical variety.

The denotation of 'spiritual', in the context required by this chapter's investigation, identifies any element representing existence beyond mortality.[91] The New Testament helps clarify this definition: 'For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin' (Rom. 7:14). This verse in Paul's epistle presents a conceptual binary between the spiritual and anything related to one's mortal body. His epistle to the Christians in Rome emphasizes this binary when he explains, 'For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things' (Rom. 15:27). Paul later clarifies that '[t]here is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44). Taken together, these biblical verses present a definition of 'spiritual' by comparing it to its binary opposite: the mortal body. This disparity connotes 'spirituality' as anything existing outside of the mortal body and the world in which the mortal body exists. Thus, any element associated outside of this mortal or terrestrial world relates to 'spiritual' in this chapter. The other term to define, 'recognition', adheres to its common Anglophone definition as an identification of something familiar and acknowledgement of its existence. Taken together, then, 'Christian spiritual recognition' occurs when one familiar with the Christian faith identifies elements of spiritual existence and encounters the possibility when the spiritual (celestial) fuses with the terrestrial. 'Christian spiritual recognition' is a preparatory act which leads to the form of Christian pathos in this thesis's ultimate chapter. But as this chapter will demonstrate, forests in 'Ancient Lights' and 'May Day Eve' appeal to Christian spiritual recognition through the presence of and operation of the strange.

Strange sounds reverberate within Blackwood's forests. Forests can shelter various animals and creatures, and naturally, these arboreal inhabitants emit sounds throughout the canopies and upon the forest floor. Though there exist sounds natural to the forested setting, Blackwood demonstrates instances where the forest emits sounds that are unnatural. To claim that these sounds are strange connotes the idea that there is something present within these sounds that constitutes something that exists unexpectedly. In Blackwood's fiction, the forest as a narrative setting is replete with myriad questionable features that highlight the presence of something that should not exist at the moment in which a character finds that unexpected entity.

---

[91] As the argumentative focus of this chapter identifies the concept of Christian spiritual recognition, a definition of this concept is warranted.

By so doing, Blackwood constructs strange forests, first, through the deployment of unexpected aural phenomena.

When exhibiting the strange, the eerie can operate in two ways. First, the failure of an expected absence, renders a situation strange when a viewer encounters something that should be expectedly absent. Mark Fisher refers to sound to exemplify an instance of this form of eerie phenomenon. He describes the event of the 'eerie cry' as one where 'there is something more in (or behind) the cry than mere animal reflex or biological mechanism—that there is some kind of intent at work, a form of intent that we do not usually associate with the bird' (45). The experienced phenomenon is unexplainable and shrouded in mystery. Though the eerie depends on the 'unknown' to operate, not all 'mysteries' produce it; there must also be a 'sense of alterity', that is, a 'feeling that the enigma might involve forms of knowledge, subjectivity and sensation that lie beyond common experience' (45). By 'common experience', Fisher refers to mundane events and understanding. To produce the eerie, then, there must be a juxtaposition of an unknown phenomenon with a quotidian understanding of the world in which the unknown phenomenon occurs. When viewed in collocation, this pairing could be reduced categorically to the unexpected and expected, respectively. The unexpected relates to what H. P. Lovecraft identifies in 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' (1927; revised 1939) as the 'unpredictable' and 'unknown', which affect the multifarious 'personifications, marvelous interpretations, sensations' that define the weird tale as one whose foundation comprises the 'unknown' and 'unpredictable' (12-16). Returning to the example of the 'eerie cry', living organisms such as birds and mammals emit various calls or sounds that have become predictable according to biological taxonomy, arranged hierarchically from kingdom down to species. The species *Canis lupus* (wolf), for example, emits a distinct howl that contrasts the call of the species *Panthera leo* (lion). The vocalizations of wolves and lions have been studied by zoologists and have become part of a collective mundane understanding in which wolves and lions exist. These accepted vocalizations constitute what could be described as 'expected', and any deviations from which would venture into an opposite realm: the unexpected. The notion of the unexpected thus coincides with Fisher's definition of the first form of the eerie in how something that fails to be expectedly absent is, rather, unexpectedly present.

'ANCIENT LIGHTS'

Published in *The Eye-Witness* in 1912 and republished in *Ten Minute Stories* in 1914, 'Ancient Lights' presents the story of a protagonist named Mr. Thomas, a surveyor's clerk who travels from London to the English countryside to remove a grove of trees for a landowner. These

trees, however, prove more difficult than Thomas first expected, since they serve as the source of supernatural horror in the story. An episode that demonstrates this function conspicuously occurs when Thomas enters the grove of trees and establishes contact with something from beyond the quotidian world:

> But, while he ran, the entire wood ran with him, round him, to and fro, trees shifting like living things, leaves folding and unfolding, trunks darting backwards and forwards, and branches disclosing enormous empty spaces, then closing up again before he could look into them. There were footsteps everywhere, and laughing, crying voices, and crowds of figures gathering just behind his back till the glade, he knew, was thick with moving life. […] He was frightened now. This was no story for his wife and children. […] Then, to his horror, he saw that the glade grew narrow, nettles and weeds stood thick across it, it dwindled down into a tiny path, and twenty yards ahead it stopped finally and melted off among the trees. (4692-3)

The trees in this small forest constitute a supernatural force of fear because they behave in a manner that is unexpected of trees in the non-diegetic world. They trap Thomas in their area, and he exhibits fear in response to a claustrophobic experience with a forest that ostensibly prevents his escape. The trees behave preternaturally by seemingly running alongside him. The anthropomorphising of the trees in this scene grants them human-like actions. They keep pace with Thomas, encircle him, and cut off his only exits. Anthropomorphic animation equips the trees to perform beyond rational explanation. Being trapped in an enclosed forest causes Thomas to panic, and the narrator reveals that he feels frightened and senses horror. Thomas's ultimate experience with the forest in 'Ancient Lights' portrays Blackwood's forest topography as a source of supernatural horror that dominates the narrative. The copse in 'Ancient Lights', tends to exhibit strange characteristics from without. From a distance, Thomas sees the grove without noting anything peculiar. What appears as the forest's exterior, however, fails to match Thomas's experience of its interior. An experiential challenge occurs immediately after he enters the forested area: 'So dense was the growth that the sunshine only came through in isolated patches. The air was close. He mopped his forehead and put his green felt hat on, but a low branch knocked it off again at once, and as he stooped an elastic twig swung back and stung his face' (4689). The initial point of contact Thomas encounters upon entering the small forest is with light—or the lack thereof. The narrator reveals the thickness of vegetation within the small forest to demonstrate the level of darkness that shades its interior. The diction employed to convey the copse's darkness is significant because it simultaneously reflects the protagonist's own situation. If the sunshine can only pierce the vegetation in 'isolated patches',

Thomas must feel isolated himself, utterly cut off from the sun. The narrator's portrayal of the copse in this scene depicts it as a dark, lonely place and unfamiliar to what Thomas expected prior to entering it.

Not only is the forest dark and lonely, but it is also unwelcoming. In addition to the amount of light within the forest's interior, the narrator offers sensory information pertaining to touch and thus moves beyond sound. Upon first reading the second sentence, one might be inclined to comprehend its meaning as indicating proximity; however, the adjective 'close' in that sentence functions lexically to describe something as either humid or airless. But merely stating that the air within the forest is humid fails to convey any notion of discomfort. Combining the sentence with the one immediately following it marshals a pejorative interpretation. The humidity is so onerous that Thomas feels inclined to remove his hat to wipe his sweat.[92] The interior of the forest constitutes an uncomfortable place that defies expectations.

Significance also lies in Blackwood's lexical choice to describe the small forest. Rather than describe the grouping of trees in any other way, Blackwood selects the word 'copse', which etymologically denotes smallness in scale when compared to another word such as 'forest'. Thomas reveals that the forested area measures approximately a 'square acre' (4690). Blackwood apparently plays with the strange here because he's misleading the reader to accept one form of familiarity dependent on an expectation of a copse of trees that signifies a limited number of them as opposed to the unexpected abundance of trees Thomas finds in his copse. Blackwood's choice fosters an interpretation that hinges on conflicting perceptions. How the story's narrator introduces the trees demonstrates Blackwood's legerdemain:

> Across the fields, perhaps a mile away, he saw a red house gleaming in the sunshine; and resting on the stile a moment to get his breath he noticed a copse of oak and hornbeam on the right. 'Aha,' he told himself, 'so that must be the wood he wants to cut down to improve the view? I'll 'ave a look at it.'
>
> […]
>
> He scrambled awkwardly over the gate and entered the copse. A little round would bring him to the field again. (4688-9)

Thomas encounters the purpose for his visit when he spies the copse of trees his client petitioned him to remove, and in this scene, Blackwood presents two perspectives of the copse.

---

[92] The verb "mopped" expressed in the sentence indicates the level of humidity and discomfort because it makes apparent the amount of sweat Thomas's body is exuding.

The first one is conveyed through the protagonist's point of view. In Thomas's identifying the copse, his description presents a finite object that is seemingly familiar. Thomas beholds the copse and declares that what he sees 'must be' the only copse of trees in question. If this thicket of trees is the only one Thomas knows about, then this proposition relays Thomas's sense of familiarity with what he encounters.[93] Blackwood stresses familiarity at this moment because it lays a foundation of normalcy for what follows in the plot.[94] Familiarity with the copse gives way to a deeper understanding of its being. After Thomas establishes recognition of the grove of trees, he then makes a declaration that sheds light on the characteristic of what he is about to enter. When he announces aloud that he 'will 'ave a look at it', his declaration connotes the diminutive size of the copse. With his client waiting for his arrival, Thomas implies in his declaration that his upcoming inspection of the copse of trees shall not conflict with his scheduled meeting. This initial reaction reveals in Thomas an almost cavalier sense of understanding. The copse, in his interpretation, is so small that he can inspect it within no time.

Thomas's evaluation alone, despite his own certainty using the modal auxiliary verb 'must', is limited to his own skewed understanding of a situation much different than his subjective interpretation. Yet the narrator ostensibly supports Thomas's implication through description of the same situation. He approached the gate and entered the copse, '[b]ut the moment he passed among the trees the wind ceased shouting and a stillness dropped upon the world' (4689). Thomas's initial encounter with the copse of trees occurs upon a threshold separating the open field from the small forest, represented here as a gate. Though typical gates operate by opening and closing to permit one's entry or exit, Thomas opts to climb over the gate. The narrator fails to explain whether the gate is locked or not, so it remains unknown why Thomas must enter the forest in this more difficult manner. According to Manuel Aguirre, the 'Gothic tends to display the threshold motif not only in symbols but as an integral part of its plots; characters are regularly seen advancing through doors, crossing either physical or figurative thin red lines' (234). The gate in Blackwood's 'Ancient Lights' behaves in a way resembling Aguirre's description of the Gothic threshold motif. Representing the symbol, the gate in Blackwood's tale embodies a Gothic fulcrum of the plot, for all the action revolves around this symbolic threshold separating the unfamiliar forest from its surrounding disparate

---

[93] Thomas commences his description with epistemic modality in the modal auxiliary verb phrase "must be." When a writer or speaker explains anything in this epistemic sense, he or she conveys the certainty of the underlying proposition.

[94] The reader, following along, bequeaths an amount of trust to the protagonist that stems from the latter's linguistic security established through epistemic modality.

terrain. Externally familiar and internally unfamiliar, the copse or small forest in 'Ancient Lights' exhibits the strange.

Crossing the topographical threshold to enter an uncanny forest in 'Ancient Lights' reveals an internal space with references to religiously recognisable symbols concerning Christian soteriology. An initial presentation of religious symbolism occurs as soon as Thomas enters the copse. Once within the forest's sphere of influence, Thomas experiences an arboreal assault against his hat: 'Again his hat, caught by an oak branch as he rose, was knocked from his head, falling across his eyes. And this time he did not put it on again' (4690). Including this occurrence, tree branches remove Thomas's hat a total of three times before he decides not to replace it while in the forest. Removing a hat before entering an enclosure recalls a similar act before entering such sacred structures as churches or cathedrals. Ronald Dworkin identifies the expectation of individuals to remove hats before entering a church as a 'social rule' that leads to an indisputable 'duty' people follow unwaveringly out of respect and possible fear of criticism or punishment (859). Thomas apparently insists on wearing his hat in the forest, and his choice is repeatedly denied by the trees. This scene adheres to Dworkin's explanation of hat removal as a social expectation for sacred buildings, since the trees compel Thomas to remove his hat upon entering the forest. His eventual compliance with its removal implies that the forested space could be a sacred one. Harrison examines symbols within forests and defines the notion of a 'cathedral forest' as one in which operates an 'ancient correspondence between forests and the dwelling place of a god' (178). He explains how the internal structure of a forest mirrors that of a cathedral in its permitted entry of external light through foliage or windows. Blackwood's forest in 'Ancient Lights' ostensibly adheres to Harrison's denotative formula. The title of the tale even highlights a connection between the ancient and light that Harrison explains. Thomas enters the forest's interior and cannot wear a hat. When applied to this scene, Harrison's definition renders Thomas's forest as sacred as a cathedral. This understanding is strengthened further when examined in tandem with Christian scripture: 'For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God' (1 Cor. 11:7). The New Testament warns against covering one's head in conjunction with the sacred. Examining sacred forests in fantasy literature, Weronika Łaszkiewicz links them to various mythologies and writes that 'some of the most recognizable examples of sacred trees are the biblical Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil [and] the Tree of Life' (40). Although the second chapter of this thesis focuses on Eden, sacred trees—whether in pagan mythology or the Christian mythos—are sacred and demand respect. As Uncle Frank discovers in 'The Transfer', the strange topographical space reacts against one's disrespectful decision(s). The trees in 'Ancient

Lights', implicitly buttressed by Christian doctrine, similarly combine against Thomas to demand reverence when he enters the sacred cathedralic forest.

The most noticeable manifestation of Christian soteriological iconography in 'Ancient Lights' occurs when Thomas finds himself lying in the middle of the forest 'like a man crucified upside down' (4692). The narrator's description of Thomas in this scene conjures imagery of the most poignant soteriological act in Christian history: the Crucifixion. Christ's execution on Calvary serves as the ultimate symbol of salvation, and The New Testament emphasises its purpose: 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, / Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him' (1 Thes. 5: 9-10). Although the Crucifixion's soteriological purpose is made scripturally transparent in these verses, Christ's sacrificial act is not performed invertedly as the narrator in 'Ancient Lights' describes. The concept of an inverted crucifixion (or an inverted cross) stems from the longstanding Christian belief that Peter was crucified invertedly (Rest 29). Such early Christian scholars as Origen of Alexandria (184-253 CE) and Eusebius of Caesaria (260-5 CE) reference Peter's martyrdom as an inverted crucifixion.[95] Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) also portrays this inverted crucifixion in his painting *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (1601). In the artwork, Peter has already been nailed to his cross, and three men seemingly struggle to lift it in a way that he will hang invertedly (see Figure 3). Written accounts by Christian scholars and artistic artifacts in European Christian paintings evince a traditional Christian understanding of inverted crucifixion. Its connection to
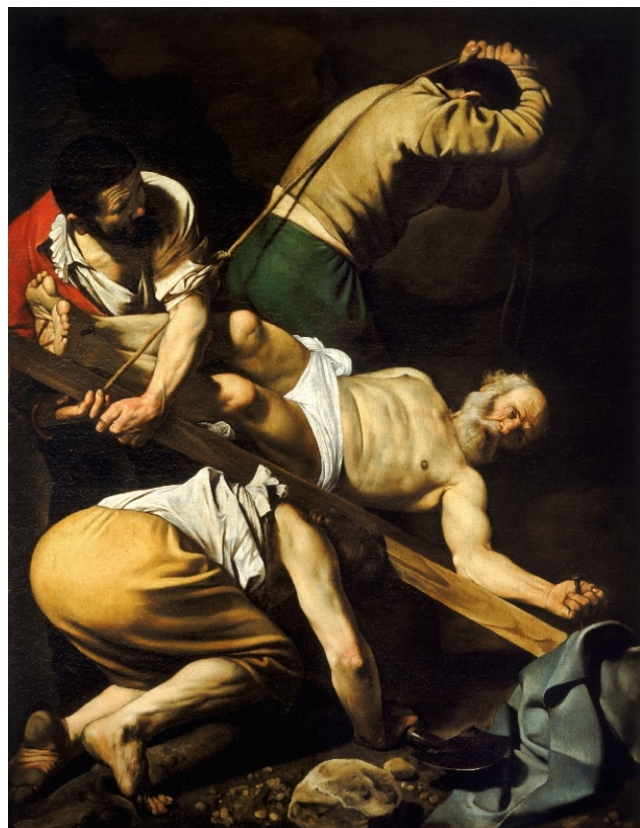
Figure 3. Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Crucifixion of Peter* (1601). Santa Maria Del Popolo. Rome, Italy.

---

[95] Origen of Alexandria offers an account of Peter's inverted crucifixion in *Commentary on Genesis*. Eusebius of Caesaria's *Ecclesiastical History* also depicts Peter's martyrdom as an inverted crucifixion (see III, 1). According to Steven Olderr, the inverted cross constitutes a Catholic symbol referred to as the "Petrine Cross" in honour of Peter's inverted crucifixion (see p. 62).

'Ancient Lights' becomes clearer after analysing the object of the narrator's description.

Describing the protagonist as the one who appears invertedly crucified bears significance when examined closely. Since Peter suffered martyrdom this way, searching for any apostolic connection to 'Ancient Lights' is warranted. The protagonist shares the same name as one of Christ's apostles: Thomas. Though it remains unclear how Thomas the Apostle died, the apostolic connection in this scene is clear through inverted crucifixion. That the character of Thomas in 'Ancient Lights' embodies a caricature of Thomas the Apostle constitutes an inference supported elsewhere in the narrative. Like the apostle, the protagonist travels throughout the countryside and warrants the reputation of a man who doubts. After Christ's crucifixion and subsequent resurrection, The New Testament portrays Thomas as the only apostle who doubts the return of his Saviour: 'The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe' (John 20:25). This scriptural portrayal of the biblical Thomas renders him faithless and doubtful but ultimately redeemed. The protagonist in 'Ancient Lights' exhibits similar behaviour. The inaugural lines of the narrative describe his personality: 'From Southwater, where he left the train, the road led due west. That he knew; for the rest he trusted to luck, being one of those born walkers who dislike asking the way. He had that instinct, and as a rule it served him well' (4688). Thomas only knows things by discovering them for himself and avoiding the help of others. He refuses to ask anyone for information, even if it would help him; instead, he prefers to leave things to chance and to follow his own senses to perceive things. This rationally selfish demeanour aligns with the biblical Thomas, for he also refused others' accounts, preferring to experience for himself the reality of a resurrected Christ before he would believe. As this rational approach fails to work for Thomas the Apostle—as revealed in Christ's implicit disapproval in John 20:29—so it similarly fails Thomas in 'Ancient Lights':

> There was only one thing to do—turn sharply and dash back again, run headlong into the life that followed at his back, followed so closely too that now it almost touched him, pushing him in. And with reckless courage this was what he did.
>
> […]
>
> Good Lord! The glade behind him had closed up as well; there was no longer any path at all. Turning round and round, like an animal at bay, he searched for an opening, a way of escape, searched frantically, breathlessly, terrified now in his bones. (4693)

Thomas fails to exit the small forest easily because he selfishly seeks his own rationality. The narrator displays Thomas's mindset in this scene by rationalising that there is only one thing

to do. On the contrary, there is not *only* one thing to do, yet inside Thomas's mind there is. He already exited the copse once, albeit not of his own design. Now he insists that this one way is the only means available to exit the small forest that is ostensibly entrapping him. And in his moment of doubt-filled desperation Blackwood's Thomas seemingly calls upon Christ when he interjects using the latter's sacred title. A quick reference to Thomas the Apostle's experience reveals a similar reaction. In his climactic moment of doubt, Thomas the Apostle touches a resurrected Christ and shouts out 'My Lord' (John 20:28). He realizes at that moment what others had been trying to reveal to him all along. Thomas's selfish reliance on his own reasoning failed. Mirroring the case of Thomas the Apostle, selfish reason in 'Ancient Lights' fails. Blackwood's narrative demonstrates a parallel between these two characters named Thomas that strengthens the underlying reference to Christian soteriology whose iconography exists in this forested topography. With references to crucifixion, apostleship, and doubt, 'Ancient Lights' functions as a repository of supernatural happenings coupled with Christian soteriological iconography.

The operation of an uncanny forest with symbolic references to the crucifixion, apostleship, and doubt in 'Ancient Lights' triggers something emotional concerning Christian salvation. Together these operational elements aim to dispel any existing familiarity with the forest as a topography, and it is during this moment of conflicting interpretations that the soteriological elements foster an appeal to Christian spiritual recognition. This phenomenon unfolds in the text when the protagonist experiences it for himself after he undergoes his inverted crucifixion:

> [H]e saw the little man in browny green go past him with extreme rapidity through the wood. The man was laughing. He passed across the glade some fifty yards away, and he was not alone this time. A companion like himself went with him. The clerk, now upon his feet again, watched them disappear into the gloom of green beyond. (4693)

But the little men do not exist. Or do they? Earlier in the plot, the narrator made it clear that Thomas thought he observed a man, yet it turned out to be nothing more than an illusion. This scene, however, indicates otherwise. Unlike the earlier scene, this one fails to include a rational explanation. It is almost as if Thomas accepts what he sees now. In other words, Thomas is no longer doubting. Since belief occurs during and immediately after his inverted crucifixion in the forest, a direct link exists between the forest and the inverted crucifixion. This soteriological nexus exemplifies Thomas's moment of Christian spiritual recognition. He realizes that a spiritual presence connected to Christian soteriology exists in the middle of a terrestrial body (the forest). A comingling of the celestial and terrestrial emphasise the presence of liminality.

That it operates within the forest topography stands at the heart of Blackwood's appeal to a Christian audience. The audience would understand that forest topographies in Blackwood's fictional repertoire differ from city and garden topographies. Blackwood's design renders the forest a destination in which visitors—especially the Christian kind—recognise and accept the existence of a spiritual/mortal or celestial/terrestrial link.

'MAY DAY EVE'

Published in *The Listener* in 1907, Blackwood's short story 'May Day Eve' recounts the tale of a materialist doctor from the city who encounters a strange forest while visiting his spiritual friend. 'May Day Eve' operates in tandem with 'Ancient Lights'.[96] On one level, it employs supernatural horror. The nameless narrator-protagonist enters the forest and discovers something he least expected:

> A valley to me was always a valley; a hill, merely a hill; a field, so many acres of fiat surface, grass or ploughed, drained well or drained ill; whereas now, with startling vividness, came the strange, haunting idea that after all they could be something more than valley, hill, and field: that what I had hitherto perceived by these names were only the veils of something that lay concealed within, something alive. (3584)

The forest in this scene illustrates supernatural horror in how it defies the narrator's mundane expectations and causes fear. The narrator explains what is familiar about his surroundings yet concurrently admits what is unfamiliar about them. Though he recognises the entire physical landscape, which includes the forest he soon enters, the narrator fails to recognise something else about them—something he never knew before. The landscape is alive. And this instance of the uncanny leads to fear, for the narrator confesses what he felt as strange and haunting. The forest in this story causes the same sensations when the narrator enters it. 'May Day Eve' coincides with 'Ancient Lights' through its employment of supernatural horror.

As with other tales of supernatural horror examined in this thesis where the protagonist travels toward some topographical destination, 'May Day Eve' presents one that constitutes a strange forest. But before exploring this forest in detail, it is important to note that it behaves like no other forest. This one is comprised of pine trees. The pine tree (*Pinus*) functions as a multivalent member of Blackwood's narrative *mise-en-scène* in other pieces of his oeuvre. One tale in particular, 'Pines' (1914), depicts a pine forest that defies human expectations through

---

[96] A day for celebration, May Day Eve has been observed by various European cultures throughout history since Ancient Rome. Since then it has been celebrated by pagans and Roman Catholics.

such anthropomorphic qualities as 'singing and 'whispering' (4771). When the narrator first encounters these singing and whispering pine trees, he must reconcile his simultaneous familiarity and unfamiliarity with these arboreal features of the diegetic setting. The exclusive result is his suspension in terrific awe throughout this short narrative that is focused solely on the characteristics of Blackwood's pine trees. Those in 'May Day Eve' observe Blackwood's tried formula. The narrator travels through some cartographically unspecified forest teeming with pine trees, and like their fictional counterparts in 'Pines', these ones cloud the narrator's judgement as he battles with reason to make sense of what he encounters. Mirroring his encounter with the surrounding landscape, the narrator declares without apparent irony, 'Everything about me seemed to have become suddenly *alive*' (3583; emphasis original). All the surrounding trees engage in anthropomorphic action. Blackwood accentuates the narrator's realisation by italicising the adjective 'alive', which identifies the forest's state of being. Blackwood's strategy here stresses that this forest is unlike any familiar forest. Taken at first, however, this description fails to portray anything unfamiliar about this forest, for pine trees are living organisms. But the appearance of this emphatic adjective at the end of its sentence invites a deeper understanding. When the narrator recounts that the surrounding forest becomes suddenly alive, the preceding verb and adverb dictate the characteristic details of the forest's living quality. Although pine trees constitute living entities, in 'May Day Eve' they adopt an additional facet of what it means to be living, an understanding of what is beyond the narrator and his material understanding of the world around him: 'This realisation that the world about me had somehow stirred into life; oddly, I say, because Nature to me had always been merely a more or less definite arrangement of measurement, weight, and colour, and this new presentation of it was utterly foreign to my temperament' (3583). The narrator reveals the instrument by which he has attempted to make sense of this narrative's topographical *mise-en-scène*, and unfortunately for him it has failed—as it did for Thomas in 'Ancient Lights'. The forest, in other words, is immeasurable or unrecognizable, leading the narrator to conclude that this pine forest is a 'strange environment' (3586). Fisher's tripartite structure of the strange (the Freudian uncanny, the weird, and the eerie) binds and governs its concepts communally; at the heart of this structure lies a central focus he identifies as the 'preoccupation with the strange' (4). The strange, then, interrelates with the uncanny, and vice versa. The pine forest in 'May Day Eve' is at first familiar and then unfamiliar until the narrator accepts that where he finds himself is merely within a strange forest. This concluding realisation prepares Blackwood's reader to acknowledge that another one of his tales of supernatural horror employs a strange forest.

Blackwood's tactic of constructing an uncanny forest in 'May Day Eve' paves the way for what the narrator soon discovers within it. Almost like unlocking a chest to uncover what lies inside it, the narrator crosses the threshold of the forest to arrive at its interior. In an escalatory plot sequence of discovery like those found in such narratives as Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864; 1867) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899; 1902), the protagonist in 'May Day Eve' traverses his forest topography by penetrating its geographical setting until he arrives deep within it. Executing the plot structure in this manner is apropos, for sequencing events in a linear fashion and having the protagonist arrive at some navigational destination accentuate the prominence of that destination. The reader engages the story with anticipation for the climactic result of reaching the protagonist's topographical objective. Standing inside the forest, the narrator encounters something substantial: 'A cloud of birds rose with shrill cries off the roof and whirled into the darkness when I knocked with my stick on the door' (3591). The narrator discovers a cottage occupying the centre of the forest, and what ensues after the momentous knocking is significant. Birds—albeit acting familiarly—exit the scene. There is nothing unfamiliar about shrill cries and whirling through the sky at a moment when the narrator disrupts the scene's silence with his knocking; however, the significance of this moment lies in the birds' destination during a sequence of events that steadily leads to the plot's climax. When the birds exit the scene, they fly into the darkness, never to be seen again. Darkness surrounds the cottage and the narrator, who established in a previous scene that light emanates from the cottage: 'The cottage loomed […] with its windows lighted and friendly' (3591). As in 'Ancient Lights', light and darkness concurrently occupy the narrative space in this scene. By delineating the borders of light and darkness, Blackwood's text presents a dichotomy between illumination and obscurity. This juxtaposition resembles the artistic technique chiaroscuro, whose function 'illuminat[es] some parts of the scene while leaving others purposely dark' (Zettl 40). With the cottage completely luminous and its surrounding areas rendered obscure, chiaroscuro operates in 'May Day Eve'. Though a literary text without actual illustrations would seem exempt from employing a technique common to the visual arts, chiaroscuro constitutes a device that literary scholars use to analyse works of fiction (Ringe; Kehl; Blair).

Herbert Zettl identifies multiple functions of chiaroscuro in art; the most applicable to this scene in 'May Day Eve' embodies how the technique employs light to 'direct the viewer's attention to certain […] areas' (40). Unlike attention-arresting moments of darkness in Gothic fiction, darkness in this scene fails to grasp the reader's interest because the way the narrator describes it is simple and shrouded in ambiguity, and the darkness pales in comparison to the

only source of light in the scene. He offers no additional details to help the reader position the darkness within the narrative space. For all the reader knows, the darkness could reach right to the threshold of the cottage's structure. The main difference lies in the contrasting description that the narrator offers when identifying the cottage and its distinctive radiance. Where the narrator's account merely observes 'darkness' without any lexically descriptive support, his illustration of the cottage incorporates additional help in the form of an extra verb and adjective to aid the reader's comprehension: 'loomed' and 'friendly'. The verb, when defined in its second sense, describes an object that enters one's view in an 'enlarged and indefinite form' (*OED*). In addition to its notable luminosity, then, the cottage appears large in comparison to its immediate surroundings. Something that looms, though, could bear a negative connotation depending on the context in which it appears. The noun 'danger' and its innate negative connotation, for example, could be paired to the verb 'loom' and inject it with that same negative undertone. Blackwood, nonetheless, eliminates any risk of misinterpreting the sense of the verb he employs by mooring it to the adjective 'friendly'. Anything described as 'friendly' should eliminate a pejorative connotation of a verb preceding it. Blackwood also furthers his syntactic technique by terminating the descriptive sentence with the adjective to grant it additional interpretive weight.[97] The cottage in this scene, therefore, should be interpreted as a dominant, welcoming structure.

The physical characteristics of the cottage, when compared to the simplistic and reductive description of the darkness, dominate the scene. Its looming and friendly presence arrests the narrator's—and reader's—attention because there is nothing to experience in the obscurity that surrounds the edifice. Light emanates from the cottage, and the narrator pursues it. Gravitating toward the object of light in a literary or visual scene is another function of chiaroscuro. Zettl notes that the technique positions an object in either the background or foreground depending on whether that object bears more darkness or light, respectively (42). In this scene, then, everything in the darkness represents the background, and the iridescent cottage occupies the foreground. A foregrounding effect in and of itself constitutes an emphasis-directing condition. Illuminating—and, thus, foregrounding—an object through chiaroscuro directs the reader's attention toward the principal part of a scene.

Guiding the reader's gaze in this manner grants a writer access to additional methods to influence one's understanding of a narrative event, scene, and so on. Blackwood's deployment of chiaroscuro makes an emotional appeal. Zettl highlights the emotional function

---

[97] See Joseph Williams and Joseph Bizup, *Style*. 12th ed. New York: Pearson, 2017.

of chiaroscuro when he states that the technique 'affect[s] our feelings directly regardless of the actual subject matter of the scene' (42). Analysing Georges de La Tour's *The Newborn Child* (c. 1645-8), Zettl identifies how chiaroscuro 'determines a dominant mood and reflects the strong emotions' that exist, 'one of deep sorrow and anguish [darkness], the other of wonderment and joy [light]' (42). In

Figure 4 - Georges de La Tour, The Newborn Child (*c. 1645-8). Musée des Beaux-Arts. Rennes, France.*

de La Tour's painting, the central light illuminates the scene's source of joy: the newborn baby (see Figure 4). When applied to 'May Day Eve', the light-bearing object that dominates the scene would likewise appeal to emotions of wonderment and joy. Because an appeal to an audience's emotions constitutes an authorial tactic, its utility at this ante-climactic moment in a storytelling exercise begs further exploration. Blackwood juxtaposes negative and positive emotional states, respectively, because his reader would naturally view the latter as the more desirable option. Presenting a blatant contrast of opposing emotions, Blackwood perceptibly nudges his reader into a guided perception of the cottage. Structuring the reader's experience this way through an appeal to such sentiments as wonderment and joy assembles an interpretive scaffolding around the cottage, rendering it emphatically pertinent to what immediately follows in the narrative's plot.

Provoking the plot's advancement in 'May Day Eve', the narrator's action after encountering the cottage sets the remaining narrative's events further in motion. It is during this phase when the narrator discovers certain religious symbolism of interpretive value on his journey through the forest. The act of physically knocking on the cottage's door apparently initiates a chain reaction that brings the narrator closer to discovery:

> [T]he significance of that knocking at the door set something vibrating within me that most surely had never vibrated before, so that I suddenly realised with what atmosphere of mystical suggestion is the mere act of knocking surrounded—*knocking at a door*— both for him who knocks, wondering what shall be revealed on opening, and for him who stands within, waiting for the summons of the knocker. (3591; emphasis original)

Something foreign stirs within the narrator after he knocks on the door, and had he limited his description to this content alone, the source of the internal vibrating would remain ambiguous. In the sentences that follow, however, the narrator bequeaths additional details that help direct the comprehension of the possible source of vibrating. Shelley Trower investigates vibrations and their effects upon those who experience them. She claims that there exists 'consciousness […] of what usually lurks inaudibly within sound' and its 'multiple vibrations' (3). The narrator realises that something mystical could be causing what he internally senses. Applied to this scene, Trower's observation helps explain why this vibratory moment resonates so profoundly with the narrator, for there is some conscious mystical thing lurking within the vibration. 'Mystical' as an adjective employed in the narrator's explanation carries a multivalent lexical quality. In its first and third senses of an early twentieth-century understanding of the term, the adjective could refer to theological concepts comprising a spiritual connection to or union with God or some higher spiritual power; in its second and fourth senses during the same chronological period, the adjective could describe esoteric subjects and/or objects (*OED*). When compared numerically, there is an interpretive bifurcation, for two senses align on one side whereas two senses align on the other. To help settle this interpretive dilemma, context is needed from 'May Day Eve'. After the insertion of the adjective 'mystical' in the narrator's explanation of his experience, attention returns to the act of knocking on the door, but in this instance, the narrator seems to dissociate himself from the action, since he speaks more generally than before by employing the third-person objective pronoun 'him' instead of the previous first-person subjective pronoun 'I' earlier in the same sentence. Also, switching from a subjective pronoun to an objective one practically mirrors a shift from a subjective perspective to an objective one. Moving from a subjective to an objective view of an event invites the semblance of veracity since the observers view something without infringement from subjective judgement. The differing perspective is clear, but why does the narrator make this sudden shift in narration, especially at a critical moment in the plot? Caspar J. Van Lissa et al. conclude that when narration 'shift[s]' from a first- to third-person perspective, a majority of readers view the protagonist as 'more trustworthy' and feel more inclined to empathise with him or her (58). Readers react in this manner because an 'external narrator […] is by convention an authoritative figure', and the 'trust' readers develop can transmit to 'their engagement with the protagonist' (59).[98] Trusting a protagonist or narrator is paramount if the author's purpose

---

[98] This transmission is also described as a type of "association" between the narrator and a character. See Maria Kotovych et al., "Textual Determinants of a Component of Literary Identification" in *Scientific Study of Literature.* 1:2 (2011), pp. 260-91.

is for the audience to believe what is communicated. If the audience trusts the narrator or protagonist, they could view and interpret his or her observations with more credulity.[99]

Priming an audience's trust at the ante-climactic point of a narrative plot constitutes an author's preparatory move for some significant action or event to transpire. At this same moment in the text, the phrase 'knocking at a door' appears exclusively italicised. Blackwood emphasises the action for his reader before the narrator conveys conceptual importance about the notion of the person who knocks and the responding other who is summoned by the act of knocking. The context of this scene once again aids interpretation. Affected by the adjective 'mystical', its syntactic neighbour, the verbal description of knocking occupies the same textual space with the theological and spiritual sense of the term. A theological and spiritual conception of knocking for a Christian audience would invoke the only comparable instance in the New Testament. Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in which an invitation is given to Christian disciples to knock metaphorically, is biblically recorded in two accounts:

> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Matt. 7:7)

> And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Luke 11:9)[100]

These verses from the New Testament highlight Christ's invitation as a synonymous sequence of rhetorical repetition. The verbs 'ask', 'seek', and 'knock' comprise a tripartite bloc of active rather than passive versions of themselves and in their syntactic context adhere to a unified meaning. These verses seem to constitute imperative sentences in discourse, and as isolated active verbs they would be so, yet upon further consideration of the syntactic context in which the active verbs appear, they function as collaborative components in a declarative statement. The speaker employs them informationally as the conditions for an experience rather than as a

---

[99] Van Lissa et al. conducted an empirical study that compared the effects of first- and third-person narration on seventy-six readers of fiction. Granted, this many participants in a study might not be a sufficient number to reach a conclusion that could apply to a larger population. And the test subjects all share the same national and cultural identity, which, again, limits the application of the results of this study and prevents it from being applied to a broader, more internationally societal group. Despite these limitations, nonetheless, the participants of the study comprise entirely Western European individuals familiar with reading fiction. Blackwood's main readership was also Western European, and perhaps the most beneficial factor of experimenting with numerous readers is the prevalence of patterns. In this case, despite the study's restrictions, even when a minor pattern that displays a slight majority of readers who experience an increase in empathy and trust for the narrator and protagonist upon transitioning from first- to third-person narration, this narrative phenomenon could apply to similar reading-scenarios.

[100] There is a third instance of knocking mentioned in the New Testament, but this one positions the speaker as the one who knocks rather than the listener: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

command to engage in that experience. When one asks, he or she will receive something; when one seeks, he or she will find something; and when one knocks, he or she will gain entry (that is, access) to something.

The final verb 'knock', moreover, performs an extra interpretive task that its preceding verbal counterparts do not, for it concludes both verses in Matthew and Luke with identical emphasis. Ostensibly achieving a crescendo, the verb 'knock' garners additional prominence in its syntactic position, since its emphatically ultimate function subordinates the preceding two synonymous verbs. Of the trio, then, 'knock' constitutes the most memorable member apropos a listener's perspective. With this Christian connotation's attachment to the deployment of 'knocking' for a Christian readership, it becomes apparent how presenting this verb alongside the adjective 'mystical' highlights a critical prerequisite to interpreting this ante-climactic scene in 'May Day Eve'. By invoking the most emphatic iconographic imagery of knocking from Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Blackwood's theological and spiritual presentation of knocking operates similarly as an informational source that delineates some conditional circumstance: if one knocks on the door in 'May Day Eve', it will be opened by someone—or something—theologically or spiritually related.

'May Day Eve', furthermore, mirrors these instructions from the Sermon on the Mount as recounted in the gospels of Matthew 7 and Luke 11. Throughout the narrator's journey in Blackwood's tale, he commits to the trio of verbs to advance the narrative. At the commencement of the plot, he 'felt it wise to inquire' about the forest before beginning his journey through it, until he seeks the cottage of his friend before finally knocking on its door (3581). Engaging in the sequence of enquiring, seeking, and knocking, the narrator demonstrates through his actions a notable alignment to the instructions conveyed in Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Having this additional facet as part of the greater context further congeals an interpretation of the momentous act of knocking and tethers it to an interpretive foundation consisting of Christian soteriological iconography. Knocking on the door, therefore, is no mere banal act in this narrative; on the contrary, Blackwood's protagonist embarks on a life-altering soteriological exercise that commences with inquiry and pivots upon the ultimate act of knocking. Blackwood's legerdemain in 'May Day Eve' depends on familiar Christian soteriological iconography to direct his Christian audience's attention and prime them emotionally for what will follow.

'MAY DAY EVE' AND AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL RECOGNITION

Preparatory acts related to Christian soteriological iconography in 'May Day Eve' carry import, but the protagonist's encounter with what awaits him behind the door is even more significant. After knocking on the door, the narrator explains, 'I came straight into a room that was full of light. […] To the end I never saw what produces the light', and concludes by expressing that he 'was feeling a sort of glory in the presence of such an atmosphere' (3591-2). Whereas the surrounding forest was deficient in light, the narrator seeks the source of light even though he cannot identify from where it emanates. He can identify, though, the sensation of glory that overwhelms him within the inundating awe-inspiring light. Linking the concepts of light and glory portrays this cottage in magnificence. As the only light source in the forest, the significance of its position functions as a source of glory as well, and because the narrator seeks this location, he pursues glory for himself. Seeking one's own glory could imply pursuing one's own salvation. Admittedly, the terms 'glory' and 'salvation' are not synonymous; however, the intensity of light in this interior dwelling illuminates glory in opposition to the gloom of the exterior forest. An underlined contrast between the cold, darkness without the cottage and the warm, brightness within it portrays a spectrum through the use of sensory vocabulary. Referencing his perception of the narrative's events, the protagonist ascends out of the darkness of the forest and into the luminosity of the cottage. When he enters into the light of the cottage's interior, the protagonist reveals that the 'air tasted like the air about the mountaintop' (3591). Throughout this narrative, the setting is illustrated as a forested topography. Mountains simply do not exist here, yet the narrator claims that the interior of the cottage bears an element found on the summits of mountains. (Chapter Four examines mountain topographies in detail.) For a reader, this expressive manoeuvre opposes the narrative's topographical equilibrium as a consequence of a mountain's anomalous appearance, however metaphorical. The audience, indeed, does not expect mountainous descriptions inside a forest or a cottage. A reason for this descriptive incongruity could be rhetorical, for why would Blackwood select this description at a point when it would be most unexpected? A fitting answer relates to authorial purpose. By employing the abnormal description at this precise moment in the scene—metaphorically inserting a mountain into a cottage—the narrator arrests the audience's attention to encourage them make sense of the topographical relationship. Indeed, a cottage and mountain are unalike, but the narrator offers a clue with the noun 'mountaintop'. A mountain contains various surfaces, so to be particular in this instance is significant. Not only does the narrator identify a mountain but also its summit as the exact source of the description. A cottage and a mountain's summit are, perhaps, even more conceptually distant than the previous pairing of a cottage and

a mountain. The narrator does not use the term 'summit', however. 'Mountaintop' contains within it a directional reference of 'top' as opposed to 'bottom', which is where the narrator currently finds himself topographically, that is, the bottom of a forested valley. So for the narrator to describe that the interior feature of the cottage resembles the top of a mountain, then the function of this anomalous description serves to suggest a notion of directional trajectory. Having come from the darkness of the forest outside, the narrator has apparently ascended into what is described as an elementally synonymous connection to the top of a mountain. Namely, the protagonist reaches a summit by entering the cottage, a summit full of light and glory.[101]

Light and glory in a metaphorically elevated cottage begs a question: whose cottage is it? Tom Bassett's name appears early in 'May Day Eve' as the waypoint for obtaining the narrator's navigational objective. At the beginning of the story, he seeks Bassett's cottage to find his ultimate destination. Bassett as a character is fascinating because he never once makes an appearance. He only exists textually when the narrator speaks of him, so for the entirety of the story, he looms over the narrative's events like a spectre. His peripheral presence hovers around the narrator throughout the plot leading up to the climactic scene inside the cottage. Blackwood's reader receives information related to Bassett's identity gradually yet fragmentarily to maintain the idea of this character's peripheral existence and establish him as ostensibly omnipresent throughout the forested setting. Bassett's character-construction invites interest concerning his true identity and function in 'May Day Eve'. Upon close examination, his identity and function coincide with the narrative's plot structure. When the narrator enters the cottage and experiences the climactic event, he immediately enquires about Bassett:

> 'I thought this was Tom Bassett's cottage!' I managed to ask at length, and looked
> straight at the man nearest me across the table. He had wild hair falling about his
> shoulders and a face of clear beauty. His eyes […] seemed shrouded by something veil-
> like that reminded me of the shadowy man of whom I had first inquired the way. (3594)

The narrator's exclamation reveals the operation of the uncanny, for it announces his simultaneous familiarity and unfamiliarity with the cottage. The employment of an exclamation conveys a sense of emotional unease. The narrator is startled because something unfamiliar assaults his foundation of familiarity. At this uncanny moment, the narrator ventures deeper into the cottage and discovers a room with humanlike spirits floating in and out, to and fro. At the centre of the room stands a table with the spirits seated there, and at the centre of the table

---

[101] See Chapter Four of this thesis for an in-depth examination of mountains in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914.

sits the interlocutor with whom the narrator engages in conversation. The figure's image as well as the surrounding scenic paraphernalia are interpretively significant. The depiction of this scene places the figure at the centre of a table with his companion-spiritual-beings adjacent on both sides of the table. The narrator describes him as having long hair that reaches his shoulders with a clearly beautiful face and with veiled eyes, resembling the person whom he asked before seeking the cottage and knocking on its door.[102] Synthesising these interpretive elements with those relating to the celestial nature of the cottage conjures an image resembling a well-known biblical event. The most specific visual details available in the New Testament about The Last Supper can be found in Mark 14 and Luke 22 in which the two accounts concur that the event's setting constitutes a spacious and furnished room. Besides these biblical references, no additional canonical particulars exist. A secular source, however, proved highly influential to imaginings of this biblical event throughout history. According to Stefano Zuffi, the first visually artistic secular reference to The Last Supper bearing significant influential import for all subsequent depictions of the event was Leonardo Da Vinci's painting *Il Cenacolo*, or *The Last Supper* (254). In Da Vinci's prototypical rendition, Christ appears seated at the centre of a long table that spans the width of a spacious room (see Figure 5). Upon closer inspection of Christ, his eyelids appear closed, hiding them from view, and his long hair reaches his shoulders. Surrounding Christ on both sides of the table, his twelve apostles are engaged in concurrent conversation. Blackwood's table scene in 'May Day Eve' seemingly replicates these details. The interlocuter with whom the narrator speaks also shares hidden eyes and Christ's hair length. All the other entities in the cottage speak simultaneously, as the apostles appear to do in Da Vinci's painting. These resemblances could be coincidental, but the most interesting parallel between Blackwood's text and Da

Figure 5: Leonardo Da Vinci, The Last Supper *(c. 1490). Santa Maria delle Grazie. Milan, Italy.*

---

[102] The use of the word "veil" can also be significant for interpretation, for it, too, appears in the New Testament when referring to Christ: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus" (Heb. 6:19-20; italics original).

Vinci's piece replaces mere coincidence with possible intention.

The peripheral character whose physical absence dominates the narrative is a crucial factor for the narrator to reach his journey's terminus. When the narrator enquires about Bassett's whereabouts, the entities in the room finally respond:

> Then apparently every one began to answer at once, or rather, not to answer directly, but to speak to each other in such a way that I could easily overhear.
>
> […]
>
> 'Tom Bassett was here for a while with the sheep, but his home was not here.'
>
> 'He asks the way to a house when he does not even know the way to his own mind!' another voice said, sounding overhead it seemed.
>
> 'And could he recognise the signs if we told him?' (3594-5)

The entire corpus of entities in the room erupt in conversation with one of them describing Bassett as if he were an itinerant shepherd. Other voices insert additional information, but there exists some interpretive difficulty in this scene. To whom do the following pronouns 'he' refer? That is, do they refer to Bassett or the narrator? The subject of 'Tom Bassett' commences the response and apparently directs its syntactic flow, for the following two sentences equally begin with and focus on the subjective pronoun 'he', which matches the subject, Bassett. Dependent on this syntactical construction, then, the reader could understand this response to focus solely on Bassett, and if so, Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* again assists with an interpretive link to biblical context. Imagery of shepherds finds abundant expression in the New Testament with Christ as the most significant figure who represents shepherds. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, describes Christ as the 'great shepherd of the sheep' (Hebrews 13:20).[103] In Da Vinci's painting, Christ's apostles surround him and appear to be engaged in concurrent conversation. The apostle nearest to Christ is Thomas, who is the figure pointing his finger upward.[104] Is it merely coincidence that Thomas the Apostle and Tom Bassett share the same forename, or does Blackwood provide sufficient evidence in 'May Day Eve' to connect the two figures intentionally as he does in 'Ancient Lights'? Many of Blackwood's characters bear similar names to the actual friends, acquaintances, and other figures from

---

[103] The adjective "great" in this description functions hierarchically by bestowing more significance on Christ-the-shepherd than on others.

[104] Da Vinci reveals the identity of each apostle in his portrait. See page 668 in Leonardo Da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, Complete*. (1888) Trans. Jean Paul Richter. Ed. Charles Aldarondo et al., Vol. 1, Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2004. Stefano Zuffi also confirms the identity of the apostles in the portrait. See page 259 in *Gospel Figures in Art*. (2002) Trans. Thomas Michael Hartmann. Ed. Mark Greenberg. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003.

history with whom Blackwood was familiar.[105] The description of Tom Bassett is the most telling of evidence, especially that he tended sheep in an area that was not his home. In the New Testament, Christ charges his apostles with feeding his sheep (John 21:16-17). Christ also sends his apostles to other places:

> Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. (Luke 9:1-4)

Granting unto them the power and authority to perform the same acts that he did, Christ designates his apostles as itinerant plenipotentiaries and sends them to whatever foreign house in which to abide temporarily.[106] The description of Tom Bassett in 'May Day Eve' bears similitude to this apostolic description. Whether he is an allegorical reflection of Thomas the Apostle or not is beside the point. Tom Bassett functions apostolically in 'May Day Eve', and the narrator has been seeking him to reach his ultimate destination.

The narrator's ultimate destination constitutes a significant component of 'May Day Eve'. He navigates his way through the forested setting in a determined attempt to reach a significant nameless man. The only details offered in the text about this individual are that he is a 'folklorist' with 'pet theories of magic and the powers of the soul'; known for his 'generosity to the poor' and 'benign aspect'; and regarded by some as a 'wizard who speculated in souls' and was viewed by others as having 'dark dealings' (3579-80). The only other reference of this significant nameless man in the narrative is at the end when the narrator finally meets him. He confesses, 'The change in his face made me start; it had taken on for the moment so exactly the look of the man on the hillside. The eyes gazing so steadily into mine had shadows in them, I thought' (3601). The man he finally meets—the ultimate destination of his journey—resembles another man whom, early on, the narrator enquired about his destination,

---

[105] Ashley highlights Blackwood's tendency in his writings to alter slightly the names of actual people with whom Blackwood was familiar. See Ch. 5 in *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2001.

[106] Itinerancy is a concept attached to not only his apostles but Christ as well: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the away, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (John 14:2-7). Christ also reminded others that his "kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

and this same man resembles the central figure sitting at the table in the cottage. This nameless character in 'May Day Eve', therefore, occupies the most spiritual locus in the narrative setting, bears a physical and behavioural Christ-like semblance, and embodies the destination of a human traveller who must reach him through another character described in apostolic fashion. A Christian audience familiar with the New Testament would not struggle to synthesise these details and view this nameless character in 'May Day Eve' as a Christ-figure. The implications of portraying a Christ-figure, along with all his gospel-related appurtenances, as the ultimate spiritual destination in a forested setting underline the moment of Christian spiritual recognition in 'May Day Eve'.

The appeal to Christian spiritual recognition in 'May Day Eve' compares to that in 'Ancient Lights'. Thomas recognises that a spiritual presence connected to Christian soteriology occupies the middle of the copse. The narrator in 'May Day Eve' acknowledges something similar inside his forest. These texts demonstrate moments of discovery for Blackwood's protagonists when they venture into strange forest topographies and witness or experience the operation of Christian soteriological iconography. Through the deployment of the uncanny in these forests, 'Ancient Lights' and 'May Day Eve' facilitate an appeal to Christian spiritual recognition that emphasises a liminal symbiosis between the celestial and terrestrial within their forest topographies.

CONCLUSION

Blackwood constructs strange forests through the deployment of unexpected phenomena related to Freud's concept of the uncanny and Fisher's concept of the eerie, which bear direct familial relation to Fisher's theory of the strange. Utilising the eerie's dependence on expectation related to absences and presences, Blackwood employs this dynamic to underscore what narrative characters and readers encounter as unexpected—and therefore—eerie or uncanny experiences. In 'Ancient Lights', expectations are disrupted when the narrator lures the audience into strange circumstances and events that render the forest settings eerie and/or uncanny. Upon closer examination, the strange forests conceal connections to the human past that manifest themselves along a threshold separating the mundane and spiritual dimensions. Within these supernatural conditions, Christian soteriological iconography manifests itself and does so particularly in 'May Day Eve' where its narrator-protagonist departs the city to navigate his way through an uncanny forest in which he must enquire about the way and seek what he discovers to be a destination anchored to his own spiritual salvation.

Representing Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, 'Ancient Lights' and 'May Day Eve' portray forest topographies with Christian soteriological iconography and deploy concepts of the strange and the eerie, to appeal to a form of Christian pathos defined in this chapter as Christian spiritual recognition, which accentuates liminality related to the terrestrial and celestial dimensions. This authorial tactic appeals to the audience's emotions to render readers more receptive to the underlying teleological function of Blackwood's forest topographies. Blackwood's uncanny and eerie forests ostensibly continue a literary legacy of presenting forests with instances of the mysterious, yet Blackwood emphasises something more when his protagonists experience their sylvan settings. Contrasting with this thesis's earlier treatment of such urban locales as cities and gardens, this chapter departs from the pejorative perspective in those earlier chapters to demarcate a pivot point on which Blackwood attempts to demonstrate what S. T. Joshi argues as Blackwood's 'optimistic' approach (*The Weird Tale* 89). Optimism combined with a presentation of soteriological concepts spiritually recognisable to a Christian audience through their fundamental teachings about Christ and salvation prepares them to become more receptive to a convincing message about their place and direction in the quotidian world. Though it is uncertain whether Blackwood adhered to Christianity or not, especially later in his life, his childhood Christian indoctrination reveals an intimacy with its gospel concepts. What remains clear, however, is that Blackwood further develops this point of commonality between his own Christian knowledge and that of his audience, employing it in this instance to convey an optimistic recognition of forests and their critical place on a spiritual trajectory toward one's personal salvation that terrestrially terminates in the mountains—the topographical focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Strange Summits: Christian Hope and Salvation in Mountain Topographies

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

– Micah 4:1

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord –

Isaiah 2:3

While strange forests only encourage recognition of an opportunity for spiritual progression, strange mountains enable the realisation of it. Mountains are traditionally sacred. From Olympus to Sinai to Fuji, elevated topographies throughout human history have carried elements of the divine. They 'commonly awaken in individuals a sense of wonder and awe that sets them apart as places imbued with evocative beauty and meaning' (Bernbaum 305). Sources of wonder, awe, beauty, and meaning attract visitors. Numerous mountain climbers set out each year to summit Mount Everest (or *Chomolungma* as it is called among its native Sherpas and Tibetans). Since Tenzing Norgay (1914-1986) and Edmund Hillary (1919-2008) first summited its peak in 1953, the tallest mountain on Earth has constituted the ultimate challenge for climbers everywhere and a site of pilgrimage for native Sherpas. Long before then and still today Everest has been viewed by its surrounding indigenous populations in Nepal and Tibet as an expansive tract of sacred terrain (Nepal et al. 70). The sacred characteristic of mountains shares commonalities among diverse cultures.[107] Mount Olympus constituted the home of the Greek mythological pantheon of gods just as Mount Etna served as the abode of the Roman god Vulcan. For the Hindu gods Shiva and Parvati, Mount Kailash is considered home. Abrahamic religions also reserve mountains as conduits to monotheistic deity. Mount Sinai in Judaism and Christianity represents the location where Moses conversed with God face-to-face, and Islam reveres *Jabal al-Nour* (جَبَل ٱلنُّور), which translates to 'mountain of the light', as the location where the Islamic prophet Muhammad received divine revelation from the angel *Jibra'il* (Gabriel). From various oral and literary traditions throughout history, mountains represent more than the mundane and exhibit these special characteristics in both religious and

---

[107] Friedrich Nietzsche even referred to climbing metaphorical mountains as objects one "will never climb in vain" (293).

secular texts. Blackwood's literary works seemingly follow this trend. Particularly, his texts that base their narratives amid mountains present them as a geographical element beyond the normal. This chapter will explore these narrative instances of mountains and the teleological effect of presenting strange mountain topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, namely 'Special Delivery' (1910),'The Glamour of the Snow' (1911) and 'H.S.H.' (1913)

Horace Walpole (1717-97), who wrote the archetypal text of Gothic fiction in 1764, *The Castle of Otranto*, commented on his impression of Europe's mountains in a letter to Richard West: 'Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings, Salvator Rosa—the pomp of our park and the meekness of our palace! […] I begin this letter among the clouds; where I shall finish my neighbour Heaven probably knows: 'tis an odd wish in a mortal letter, to hope not to finish it on this side of the atmosphere' ('From a Hamlet among the Mountains of Savoy'). Walpole describes his location as one beyond the terrestrial range and adjacent to heaven. His connecting mountains to celestial majesty occurs at a chronologically significant point that Marjorie Hope Nicolson investigates. Prior to the eighteenth century, Nicolson notes, European societies viewed mountains and hills as ugly features that shroud the 'fair face of Nature' (2). She also states that people during that time who had to climb elevated topographies did so 'fearfully, grimly, [and] resenting the necessity' (2). Before Walpole's time, people did not share his venerable perspective about mountains. Nicolson notices a shift in this perspective that ranges between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period she characterises as causing a 'revolution in thought' (3). The revolution to which Nicolson refers is a changing view of the mountain from a negative natural entity to a positive one. She argues that this alteration of perspective in literature 'from gloomy to glorious' occurred especially at the hands of Romantic poets.[108] Albrecht Classen builds on Nicolson's argument and posits that a shift in the views and attitudes related to mountains as dangerous locations changed toward the end of the fifteenth century (1-23). Regardless of *when* it happened, the shift occurred and influenced a positive portrayal of mountains.

Societies have shared in this positive view of mountains for centuries. According to M. Rashed Mohassel et al., the 'majority of the religious rites were held at the top of the mountains because people thought that the mountain was the closest place to the sky which was believed to be the place of the gods' (119). Entering mountain landscapes constituted an 'emblem of

---

[108] Nicholson named William Wordsworth and Lord Byron as the two most involved writers associated with this change of perspective. See pp. 1-33.

being detached from corporeal matters' and connecting with 'otherworldly interests' (119). Similarly, Mariola Offredi explores mountains to analyse how they are perceived by readers. Though she admits that there exist various interpretations of mountains in literature, Offredi claims that mountains appear either as an organic entity or one that is 'immovable' and 'timeless as eternity' (401). Offredi's study highlights a commonality among literary works. Like the eternal deities who are connected to these landscapes, mountains are eternal. Babak Dariush and Heshmatollah Motedayen confirm the supernal characteristic of mountains in literature, detailing how writers throughout their histories regarded mountains as locations of 'magnificence and grandiosity' (84). Dariush and Motedayen add that these mountains were also respected as providers of necessary resources—namely water—and refuge for humanity (92). Mountains provide temporal benefit as well as a spiritual one. The authors conclude their examination by stating that modernity and advanced technology have diluted these emphases and the need for mountain-borne resources (92). But other peoples still view mountains as continual providers of temporal and spiritual sustenance. John Bellezza presents literary references to sacred mountains as well as ongoing practices of utilising sacred mountain spaces as conduits through which mediums establish contact with deities. Mohassel et al., Offredi, Dariush and Motedayen, and Bellezza collectively portray a literary and practical tradition of viewing and utilising the mountain space for the spiritual—and temporal—benefit of humanity and as a means to communicate with deity.

Focusing on horror fiction, Yvonne Leffler explores what she calls 'gothic topography', which she explains as a 'complex relationship between landscape and character, space and focalization, external environment and internal mental state, present time and hidden past' (43-4). She notes that in this mode of literature, mountains as a Gothic topography—among other geographical landscapes—replace the Gothic castle or haunted house. Protagonists in these horror narratives must confront the mountain instead of the traditional Gothic antagonist in the traditional Gothic setting. She notes that the protagonists' 'loss of control and their dark side' become distinct and connected to and triggered by the landscape. Also viewing mountains as Gothic geographical elements, Alice Labourg argues that the mountain terrains in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) 'stand as pivotal elements both in the picturesque composition of a scene and in the composition of the novel as a whole and its framing of the Gothic' (317). The mountain spaces, themselves, become Gothic 'icons' responsible for producing the enigmatic features of the narrative (318). Mountains and mystery are concepts that Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann explore. Ireton and Schaumann interrogate mountains in literature and conclude that mountains 'acquire meaning through a variety of

dynamic perspectives', but disparity in comprehending the mysterious mountain exists in the individual's 'chosen mode of interpretive reflection' (17). Ireton and Schaumann's argument apparently positions the mountains of horror fiction and Anglophone Gothic fiction—as well as other literary interpretations of mountains—as organically interpretive entities whose nominal characteristics depend on the observer's learned perspective.

The observer's perspective constitutes a critical feature of the Romantic movement in English literature that is the sublime.[109] In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke (1729-97) presents his interpretation of the sublime and, according to Jack G. Voller, gave the classical concept a 'major boost' (3). This enhancement rendered the sublime influential for writers during the Romantic movement in English literature (Day 4; 132). Burke describes the sublime as '[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (36; emphasis original). Emotion is the principal component of the sublime; feeling the sublime requires interaction with one of its sources, but Burke also makes it clear that distance from the actual source of danger is necessary to achieve the full emotive experience the sublime can offer (36-7). Mountains, according to Burke, comprise a 'powerful cause of the sublime' because of their embodiment of 'vastness' (66). And once the sublime is invited there occurs an ultimate emotive effect. Burke explains,

> The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature* […] is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment […] is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree (53; emphasis original)

Astonishment, then, is the emotive consequence of the sublime that can be invited by an experience—at a safe distance—with the vastness in the mountains.[110] Though mountain

---

[109] British Romanticism began during the final decade of the eighteenth century with the publication of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 (Abrams and Harpham 211; Roper 8; Day 5).

[109] What defines this era of writing, according to Maurice Bowra, constitutes an "importance which [writers] attached to the imagination" (1).

[110] Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni* (1817) illustrates the dynamic between a mountain and the sublime.

topographies in Blackwood's fiction can display elements related to the Burkean sublime, Blackwood's ultimate treatment of mountains differs. The process of the sublime leads to an arrested emotive state in which one is unable to think, but a static mental condition is unusable for Blackwood's purpose. As this chapter will demonstrate, Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror with strange mountain topographies affect his audience in a manner that prepares them for—rather than prevents them from—instruction. In other words, Blackwood engages with his audience in a way that ultimately leads them into a didactic arena in which he appeals to a positively emotional facet of Christian spirituality.

This spiritually positive vein is where Blackwood's perspective on mountains thrives. His strict Christian upbringing and later study of Buddhism and Eastern mysticism exposed Blackwood to a variety of perspectives that helped colour the prism through which he viewed the physical landscape, including mountains. And Blackwood frequently sojourned among Europe's peaks and sought refuge there at regular intervals. Many of his stories set in mountains reflect Blackwood's perspective, and a frequent reoccurrence of them throughout these works align to Christian concepts more than Eastern ones. But despite extant scholarly discourse about mountains, their image, and their meaning throughout literature and horror fiction, an area remains underexplored. A writer of supernatural horror, Blackwood employs the strange in mountains, and this chapter addresses this area by asking what the teleological effect might be for presenting strange mountain topographies with Christian soteriological iconography in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914. Failing to address this overlooked area of scholarship could prevent a deeper understanding about the function of the strange in Blackwood's mountains and the purpose of a trajectory that commences in urban spaces and terminates in mountain spaces with an appeal to the reader's emotions apropos salvation. This chapter, therefore, posits that Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, specifically 'Special Delivery', 'The Glamour of the Snow', and 'H.S.H.', with their strange mountain topographies and Christian soteriological iconography deploy the eerie to facilitate an appeal to Christian hope that emphasises a source of individual salvation through overcoming evil.

Blackwood—in his lifetime—had frequented such diverse mountainous regions as those in Scotland, France, Switzerland, North America, and the Caucasus.[111] Because his fictional mountains bear some resemblance to these visited geographical locations,

---

[111] See Blackwood's autobiography *Episodes Before Thirty* and Ashley's *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*.

Blackwood's familiar mountain visitations likely shaped their literary counterparts in his oeuvre of supernatural horror. A general audience's idea of a mountain might align with extant commonly accepted lexical definitions,[112] but geography scholar John Gerrard finds this common definition of mountains 'extremely vague' and prefers a geographical definition supplied by various geographical and geological scholars from the early twentieth century onward. Gerrard's synthesised definition of a mountain comprises an 'elevated landform of high local relief […] with much of its surface in steep slopes, usually displaying distinct variations in climate and associated biological phenomena from its base to its summit' (4).[113] A technically geographical definition such as the scholarly amalgamated one Gerrard provides might seem superfluous for this chapter's examination, but Blackwood was an avid mountaineer and frequently scaled mountains upon visiting them. When he chooses not to tell his reader that a narrative occurs in or around the mountains, Blackwood reveals his fictional mountains in an exercise of showing. The short story 'Perspective' (1910) stands as a case in point:

> Fixing himself securely against his axe, he stood and stared. The sun beat back into his face from the glittering snow on all sides. Tremendous black precipices towered not far behind him; to his left rolled the frozen mass of the huge glacier, its pinnacles of tottering ice catching the afternoon sun; to his right stretched into bewildering distance the interminable and desolate reaches of shale and moraine till the eye rested upon summits of a dozen peaks that literally swam in the sky where white clouds streamed westwards. (4113)

Blackwood presents seven lines with descriptive discourse when he could have limited description to one line—as he sometimes does in other narratives set in mountain topographies.[114] The narrator could have merely mentioned the mountain region's name or location in which the protagonist finds himself, but this narrative case illustrates how Blackwood's fictional mountains coincide with the definitional expectations of mountains in the non-diegetic world. Like the mountains that Blackwood visited during his lifetime, those in 'Perspective' demonstrate snow-covered towering precipices with glaciers that spanned a

---

[112] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "mountain" as a "large natural elevation of the earth's surface, especially one high and steep in form (larger and higher than a hill) and with a summit of relatively small area."

[113] In geographical parlance, a "local relief" refers to the difference between a terrain's lowest and highest elevations. Gerrard also notes that a consensus "seems to be emerging" that a high local relief of 700 meters would be a "realistic figure" used to define mountains (see page 4).

[114] In "The Glamour of the Snow," for instance, Blackwood's narrator reveals early on in the narrative that the protagonist occupied a mountain village whose diegetic name and location mirrors those found in the non-diegetic Swiss Alps. With this method, Blackwood's reader understands upon commencing the narrative where it takes place.

horizon, filling it with countless summits seemingly suspended among the clouds. Blackwood's descriptive discourse in this scene presents mountains that match the lexical criteria almost exactly, and his description of the snow- and ice-covered mountains meet Gerrard's definitional criterion that requires some display of the variations of climate. The accurate comparability of Blackwood's diegetic mountains to those in the mundane world demonstrate his level of technical intimacy with a pragmatic definition of mountains. Blackwood's definitional grasp of mountain topographies, then, is one that colours his diegetic depiction of them in his works of supernatural horror. When examining Blackwood's works in this chapter, these synthesised definitional criteria will inform all instances of identifying and analysing mountain topographies.

Mountain topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror reveal a relationship to 'Christian hope'. Though ultimately distinct, this concept bears interpretive similitude to its lexical parent, 'hope'. The latter term constitutes an 'expectation of something desired' (*OED*).[115] The derivative definition for 'Christian hope', then, is similar to its parental definition yet dissimilar in that it holds a necessary definitional criterion in place of the object— that is, the 'something'—desired. As with the other forms of Christian pathos defined in previous chapters, the necessary criterion here facilitates the definition of the subcategory of Christian hope for this chapter. To help classify this necessary criterion, the New Testament illustrates how the lexical phrase 'Christian hope' could be defined. In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul defines 'hope' by utilising an early Christian paradigm: '[O]ur Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope' (1 Tim. 1:1). Preceding these words, Paul identifies himself as Christ's apostle, but with this concluding syntactical construction he equates Christ with hope. Given that the first verse of 1 Timothy constitutes an incomplete sentence, the crux of the verse lies in the subordinate clause that concludes it, for the terminal four words function as a quasi-declarative statement if the relative pronoun 'which' were substituted with the noun it describes in more detail: Christ. In other words, the concluding quasi-declaration would read, 'Christ is our hope'. A connection of Christ to hope resurfaces in another Pauline epistle, this time the first epistle to the Thessalonians: 'But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation' (1 Thes. 1:5). In this verse, Paul conflates hope with salvation. Though 'hope' is not compared with Christ by name per se, the latter's soteriological role in Christianity—his dying for the sins of humankind and its subsequent facilitation for resurrection and eternal life—renders his name synonymous with

---

[115] This general definition of "hope" also spans Blackwood's period.

salvation. In this case, therefore, a Christian version of 'hope' (that is, 'Christian hope') includes and emphasises the expectation of one's desired salvation through Christ.

Christian hope that embodies a familiar element among narratives with supernatural mountainous settings replete with soteriological references could be suggesting something more from readers than a mere pleasurable reading experience. Poems or stories with supernatural mountainous settings, Christian soteriological symbolism, and Christian hope focus on the mountain as a necessary destination for salvation. These elements coalesce, for instance, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), which describes mountains in the prelapsarian world:

> Be gather'd now ye Waters under Heav'n
>
> Into one place, and let dry Land appeer.
>
> Immediately the Mountains huge appeer [285]
>
> Emergent, and thir broad bare backs upheave
>
> Into the Clouds, thir tops ascend the Skie[.] (VII. 283-7)

Terrestrial elements (water, land, and mountains) materialise in this scene among celestial elements (heaven, clouds, and sky). Viewed separately, the former elements seem not to portray meaning beyond their individual contribution to the world's constructive process; however, a closer inspection of this descriptive space aids a deeper interpretation. After analysing these five lines of verse, one element stands out among its counterparts: the mountains. When compared with the other terrestrial elements, mountains resemble something more than their earthly siblings. One distinguishing concept that illuminates this textual phenomenon constitutes size. The smallest terrestrial element presented in these verses constitutes water. It appears before the preposition 'under' in a syntactical presentation that positions water subordinately to or below something else, in this case, heaven, a celestial element. The next physical element to follow water comprises land, yet its appearance lacks any additional description besides its literal emergence in the setting. Dwarfing their terrestrial predecessors, however, mountains appear 'huge' in size.

In addition to perceived mass, a differential point coincides with action. By being gathered, water is acted upon by some other force in this scene; the passive verbal construction renders water a passive element. Land merely appears without being acted upon or performing action by itself. Land in this sense, then, embodies a neutral element. Mountains, on the other hand, thrust their huge terrestrial selves into the clouds and ascend the sky. This sudden motion depicts mountains as an active—rather than passive—entity. Activity, as opposed to passivity or neutrality, attracts attention in this scene through a dynamic demonstration of character.

Since the water's passivity reveals some other agent acting outside of the scene, the only agent present, then, constitutes mountains. Presenting mountains through their unrivalled active capability and physical enormity emphasises them as the principal focal point in a narrative.

Dante Alighieri's *Purgatorio* (ca. 14th c. CE) operates in a similar fashion. At the heart of the allegorical poem lies a mountain. Mount Purgatory constitutes the sole physical site which Dante's protagonist-persona ascends to reach paradise, or the biblical Eden. Climbing seven terraces that represent the cardinal sins, the Dante persona progresses from the mountain's shores at its base until he eventually reaches its summit. When a poem—or any narrative work, for that matter—mirrors its own narrative progress with its protagonist's physical journey through physical settings, that poem or work of fiction directs focus onto those physical settings responsible for advancing the protagonist's journey. This premise can be illustrated by John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). The unfolding of the plot coincides with Christian's ambulatory advancement through various physical settings, ranging from the sinful City of Destruction at one extreme to the heavenly Mount Zion on the other. This nexus between the narrative experience and the protagonist's journey through settings attracts attention. C. N. Manlove argues that Christian's 'journey, with its one path, its single hero, its fixed and objective course, its direction, its insistence on forward movement and its vividness, makes us [readers] acutely aware of the goal' (33-4). The goal to which Manlove refers is the protagonist's goal in reaching his destination, and that goal coincides directly with the reader's goal of successfully terminating the narrative. Focus, then, becomes directed upon the narrative elements Manlove identifies: those various physical settings along the protagonist's journey. Progression through the physical setting in Dante's work, itself the second poem in a progressive tripartite series, is likewise linked to its narrative progression. The poem commences at the shores of Mount Purgatory and relates every advancement in the protagonist's ascension, terrace by terrace, in a series of cantos that demonstrate poetic progression until his eventual arrival at its simultaneously physical and narrative terminus: the summit of Mount Purgatory. Staring at the mountain from the shore, the reader has no other way to advance through the poem but by figuratively ascending the narrative mountain. As the epicentre of action, Dante's mountain constitutes the highest level of narrative functionality in *Purgatorio* that naturally invokes a comparable amount of focus upon it.

With the reader's attention drawn to the mountainous setting, in part by a presentation of size and activity on the one hand as well as a fusion between narrative progress and its dependence on a character's advancing through physical locations, the narrative purpose of mountains emerges. As the largest and physical element in the setting and the one whose plot

depends on reaching its end, the mountain becomes an unmistakably necessary destination to reach some version of paradise, be it a terrestrial or celestial one. Milton's mountains, for example, only exhibit an intent to reach heavenward, and Dante's lone peak, similarly, exists as the exclusive means to reach paradisiacal glory. Combined, their literary mountains demonstrate parallel presentations of divine destinations that would, understandably, be pursued by a Christian character with the hope of successfully scaling these mountains to attain salvation.[116]

Ascending mountains for soteriological reasons resembles familiar biblical narratives. The Old Testament provides two points of illustration in Exodus. In its third chapter, Moses ventures toward the summit of Mount Horeb, speaks to God through the Burning Bush, and learns that God will deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. To obtain this knowledge, which clearly sets into motion events that lead to the liberation of the Hebrew slaves, Moses needed to ascend a mountain on which he could connect with deity. Moses summits another mountain (Sinai) in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus and communes with God again, and during this visit Moses receives the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) for the recently freed Hebrew people waiting at Sinai's base. The issuing of the Decalogue provided the Hebrew people with a directive that would help them—if followed judiciously—attain and remain in good standing with God. These chapters in Exodus present an individual (or character, to use narratological nomenclature) who climbs mountains to commune with a supreme heavenly being and consequently triggers the liberation of the Hebrews as slaves and the manifestation of a procedure that can lead them to eventual salvation. Mountains and their being ascended—and summited—by mortals produce deliverance for the latter, whether it be physical or spiritual or both. Salvation, synonymous with spiritual deliverance, ostensibly adheres to mountains, and as a fundamental Christian theological illustration, this biblical narrative also exemplifies an understanding that mountain topographies are replete with soteriological iconography and the means responsible for salvation.

Mountains in these types of narratives—whether literary or biblical—command the focus of characters and readers alike through dominant features related to size and activity as well as the mechanical role of simultaneous geographical and narrative progression. In their physical proximity to the heavens, their teleological function as a nexus between the terrestrial and celestial spheres, and their providing a locus in which mortals can commune with supreme

---

[116] Other literary examples exist in William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1799), in which he depicts mountains as destinations that command respect, sometimes through terror, and *The Excursion* (1814), in which he portrays mountains as ethereal sources of salvation (see Stanza 1, line 15), and (see Stanza 6, line 161).

immortal beings, mountains possess a quality of spiritual aspiration. This soteriological element drives this narrative enterprise with Christian hope that identifies mountain settings as necessary destinations for salvation. Narratives with biblical mountain topographies and Christian soteriological iconography that appeal to Christian hope, therefore, might encourage readers to acknowledge these settings as requisite progressive soteriological milestones.

The relationship between mountain settings and Blackwood had been an intimate one. Preceding his goal to become a holy man, Blackwood's penultimate objective in life constituted becoming a mountaineer, and throughout his lifetime, he hiked mountain ranges from Europe's Alps to western Asia's Caucasus Mountains (Ashley 133).[117] The order of Blackwood's goals is significant, for it appears as some sequential progression of sorts. Mountains served an instrumental purpose in Blackwood's life toward his becoming a holy man. Mike Ashley notes that after Blackwood trekked among the Alps, the latter described his experience as quasi-'religious' (691). When he travelled to the Caucasus mountains, for instance, Blackwood 'daydreamed' about Mount Ararat as the 'traditional cradle of the human race, where Noah's Ark is said to have landed after the Flood' (Ashley 2193-4). Blackwood's writing career was also affected by his relationship with mountains and seemed inseparably linked. This connection manifested itself to those who travelled with Blackwood, of whom they noticed an affinity for telling ghost stories on the mountains (Ashley 397). Ashley identifies the dynamic between Blackwood and mountains as a significant one that provided inspiration for 'magical draft[s]' of fiction throughout Blackwood's life (406-7). Perhaps the most telling of any level of intimacy between Blackwood and mountains exists in his preferable location to be buried after death. As the trajectory of topographies in this thesis terminates in the mountains, so did Blackwood's corporeal journey. After his death, Blackwood's nephew scattered his cremated remains over the Alps (Ashley 4657-8). Mountains constituted a topographical location of physical and soteriological intimacy for Blackwood.

Along with the establishment of various literary and biblical narratives with mountain topographies bearing Christian soteriological symbols that appeal to Christian hope to encourage readers to seek mountains for salvation, Blackwood's mountain topographies in his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 function supernaturally because they echo supernatural mountains in familiar biblical narratives. How do 'supernatural mountains' translate to narrative mountains? Mountains in biblical narratives seemingly reveal the presence of divinity. Instances of these mountains can be found in the Old Testament.

---

[117] All citations of Ashley's text refer to the Kindle version with location numbers rather than page numbers.

Exodus, for example, depicts two mountains, and like some of Blackwood's narratives, its verses tell the reader where a particular narrative takes place. In the third chapter, for instance, the narrator tells plainly that Moses 'came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb' (verse 1). In another example, the nineteenth chapter explains that 'Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain' (verse 3). These mountain exemplars in the Old Testament bear similitude in that someone (in this case, Moses) ascends some elevated terrestrial feature that is merely referred to as a 'mountain'. Avoiding lengthy descriptive discourse in these biblical verses eliminates the risk for literal misinterpretation. A reader knows Moses ascends a mountain because the verses state it explicitly. Some of Blackwood's narratives with mountains function identically, but this method is not what renders them supernatural. Blackwood's fictional mountains do not imitate their biblical counterparts by physical characteristics alone. Supernatural mountains are observed beyond a mere literal hermeneutical interpretation. Mountains in biblical narratives also serve as a definitional source for Blackwood's fictional mountains through either tropological or anagogical interpretation(s). Applying these biblical hermeneutics to the mountains in Exodus, for example, Moses's ascension and experience on the summit of Horeb or Sinai provide doctrinal lessons to guide a Christian's mortal life (tropological interpretation) with the hope of receiving—in the future—salvation (anagogical interpretation). Horeb or Sinai, then, can exist categorically as a definitional exemplar of 'supernatural mountains' that Blackwood incorporates into his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914.[118]

Blackwood's interpretation of supernatural biblical mountains appears in his narratives. The most prominent and consistent examples depict a protagonist-traveller who frequents mountain destinations and typically does so alone; the anchorite visits a mountain environment and discovers something he never expected. In 'Perspective', the protagonist, a clergyman named Reverend Phillip Ambleside, plays a spiritually instrumental role by saving a character whom the narrator only identifies as the man 'with *the* Christian name' (4116; emphasis added).[119] Throughout the narrative, Ambleside perceives spiritual promptings and encounters a divine experience upon ascending a mountain in the Swiss Alps:

---

[118] This chapter will apply the definitional categorization of 'supernatural mountains' in its examination hereafter.
[119] Reference to the man this way accentuates his only identifying details as an onymous connection to Christianity. Ambleside and Carmen, the other two main characters, also bear onymous Christian significance. "Amble" denotes walking; viewed together with the forename "Phillip" and Ambleside's function in the story (preaching and saving others), the protagonist is an apparent reference to Phillip the Apostle. The name "Carmen" etymologically derives from the Hebrew word כַּרְמֶל (*karmel*), meaning "God's garden or vineyard" (Albaigès Olivart 69). Presenting characters with names that identify recognizable Christian concepts or figures is a repeated occurrence in Blackwood's oeuvre, as demonstrated in the previous chapters of this thesis.

> The whole scale of the chain of Alps about him seemed raised to an immeasurably higher power[.]
>
> […]
>
> [Y]et at the same time [the mountains] made him conscious of the grandeur of his soul before the God who had set him and his kind above all this chaos of tumbled planet. He thought of the mountains as part of the 'garment of God,' and of nature as expressing some portion of the Deity not intended to be expressed by man—all part of His purpose, alive with His informing will. This glory of the inanimate Alps linked on to some stranger glory in himself that interpreted for him, as in a mystical revelation, God's thundering message and purpose known in the great forms and moods of nature. Closely in touch with the spirit of the mountains he was; [*sic*] glad to be alone. (4106-7)

Two thematic movements exist in this excerpt. The first one occupies the initial sentence. Alone among impressive mountainous peaks, Ambleside immediately measures the scale of the mountains in front of and around his person. The sentence commences with a feeling of physical dimension that encourages the reader to envisage the sheer proportional chasm existing between a human observer—Ambleside—and the proximal mountains. These mountains, which as the sentence starts out by promising, can seemingly be measured by the witnessing eye; however, the narrator terminates the sentence with a descriptive adjective that renders immeasurable the higher qualities—whether physical or supernatural—the mountains possess. Constructing the quality of the mountains in this fashion sets them onto a massive foundation of (meta)physical proportions. The first sentence in the textual example describes the state of the mountain topography in which Ambleside finds himself. The mountain terrain is initially measured on a 'whole scale' that delineates the parameters of the subject in question. The subject taken into consideration, then, is the entire mountain in the scene. The entirety of that subject is then described as being raised to an immeasurably higher power. Yet something immeasurable that was previously described in measurable terms identifies a contradiction. How can something measured in its entirety suddenly, and without explanation, become immeasurable? Further details from the scene help clarify this interpretive conundrum. The mountains cause Ambleside to notice something about himself in relation to God, and the former's immediate response is to view the mountains as an appendage of God that expresses the latter and his will. Ambleside then reveals that the mountains interpreted for him God's message and purpose. With so much emphasis on deity, a reader could believe that Ambleside actually finds himself in the presence of God, yet the narrator never identifies this speculative point in the narrative. This scene, nevertheless, portrays the mountains as a divine conduit

through which the observer could experience deity, and through this understanding, a semantic transmutation of measurable to immeasurable mountains would be reasonable. Immeasurable mountains in Blackwood's narrative are such because they reveal a celestial and spiritual connection.

Like Moses on Horeb or Sinai, Blackwood's protagonist experiences deity and learns more about himself and the state of his soul than he had hitherto known. Mirroring familiar biblical narratives that showcase supernatural mountains inserts Blackwood's mountain topographies into a comparable interpretive light. Not only are Blackwood's narrative mountains biblical, but they are also unquestionably supernatural. Blackwood's supernatural mountain topographies in his short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 frequently contain Christian soteriological iconography. The existence of this phenomenon in Blackwood's repertoire is instantiated in two ways. Whether mountain topographies in his works present analogies to biblically soteriological visions or evoke biblically soteriological characters, Blackwood's supernatural mountains are intimately associated with the Christian concept of salvation.

'SPECIAL DELIVERY'

First published in *Pall Mall* in 1910 and republished in *Pan's Garden* in 1912, 'Special Delivery' presents the story of a protagonist named Meiklejohn, a clergyman who travels throughout the Jura Mountains and encounters the supernatural as it enters his room in the middle of the night. His first glimpse of the strange thing occurs at the foot of his bed:

> [T]he person who had knocked at the door had meanwhile opened it and passed into the room. I had left the lock unturned. The person was close beside me in the darkness— not in utter darkness, however, for a rising three-quarter moon shed its faint silver upon the floor in patches, and as I sprang swiftly from the bed, I noticed something alive moving towards me across the carpetless boards. Upon the edges of a patch of moonlight, where the fringe of silver and shadow mingled, it stopped. Three feet away from it I, too, stopped, shaking in every muscle. It lay there crouching at my very feet, staring up at me. But was it man or was it animal? For at first I took it certainly for a human being on all fours; but the next moment, with a spasm of genuine terror that half stopped my breath, it was borne in upon me that the creature was—nothing human. Only in this way can I describe it. It was identical with the human figure who had knocked before and beckoned to me to follow, but it was another presentation of that figure. (4504)

Confusion dominates this scene as Meiklejohn attempts to discern the mysterious entity adjacent to his bed. Outside of his door, the figure appears as a person yet upon entering Meiklejohn's room behaves and seems like something different. Meiklejohn ostensibly reaches toward rational explanation yet fails to produce anything. The best explanation he can offer consists of descriptive material from three sources: human, creature, and some unknown presentation of the human figure. At the apex of confusion in this scene, the supernatural establishes a firm foothold, for Meiklejohn's unwelcomed guest embodies some otherworldly being.

Coinciding with the supernatural fixture established in this scene, anxiety and fear dominate Meiklejohn's supernatural encounter, for his experience with the strange initiates a causal sequence that commences with the Freudian uncanny. Oscillations between familiarity and unfamiliarity govern Meiklejohn's situation as he attempts to define the strange manifestation of existence in front of him. Attempting to ascribe to the thing familiar descriptions of human and bestial characteristics, total descriptive dominance remains out of reach. Meiklejohn simply fails to define the strange thing in his room and rests on a description wedged somewhere among a tripartite consolidation of human-creature-unknown definition. The human-creature hybrid comprises a common trope within the legacy of supernatural horror fiction. Narratives ranging from Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872) to H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) present characters who either possess the ability to transform from human into creature or merely exist in a permanent state of human-creature hybrid. In each case, however, unfamiliar hybridities lead others to experience some degree of fear. Meiklejohn in 'Special Delivery' is no different. At the emergence of his still ambiguous—yet conclusory—definition, Meiklejohn reels in 'genuine terror'. He fears the strange entity which he cannot fully recognise despite his attempts. Responsible for the initiation of the plot's climactic ascent, this scene demonstrates how supernatural horror via the Freudian uncanny constitutes the narrative fabric of 'Special Delivery'.

Through supernatural horror and the Freudian uncanny, the narrative material in 'Special Delivery' presents Christian soteriological iconography. This type of Christian symbolism appears in Blackwood's fiction either explicitly or implicitly, but in 'Special Delivery' both versions manifest themselves. The first presentation of Christian soteriological iconography in 'Special Delivery' occurs explicitly. Staying overnight at a rural inn in a mountainous frontier between Switzerland and France, the protagonist, Meiklejohn, attempts to sleep in his rented bed, and while doing so, something enters his room and wakes him:

> I stood there trembling on the bare boards, my eyes riveted upon the dark, uncouth
> shape that covered all the floor beyond. I saw no limbs or features, no suggestion of
> outline that I could connect with any living form I know, animate or inanimate. Yet it
> moved and stirred all the time—*whirled within itself*, describes it best; and into my
> mind sprang a picture of an immense dark wheel, turning, spinning, whizzing so rapidly
> that it appears motionless, and uttering that low and ominous thunder that fills a great
> machinery-room of a factory. Then I thought of Ezekiel's vision of the Living Wheels.
> (4504; emphasis original)

After awaking, Meiklejohn notices and moves toward a shape perched at the corner of his room near the foot of his bed. He conveys a sense of the unexplainable in the first line of this evidentiary event in the narrative. By describing the shape as 'uncouth', Meiklejohn reveals that he is witnessing a strange entity that defies description. A physical description of something as 'uncouth' can denote the unrefined or raw appearance of something. Adding to what little descriptive substance he has to go on, the protagonist-narrator attempts to build a case for some understanding of the thing that exists before his eyes. Blackwood incrementally offers the reader information that leads somewhere, and upon closer inspection, the functionality of the initial lines of this evidence reveals the brief operation of the weird. As defined in this thesis's earlier chapters, the weird—a member of the triumvirate categorised as the conceptual strange—constitutes an irruption of unknown forces into a quotidian world that is bound by familiar and accepted laws that govern reality. In other words, the weird occurs with the advent of something that should not belong. Blackwood employs the weird in this scene to dispel any familiar means of explaining the unfamiliar shape that lies in front of Meiklejohn. An emphasis on the unknown at this specific moment of vulnerability for the protagonist induces sensations of terror. Though a slight case could be made to identify this scene as one of horror, since Meiklejohn beholds the source of terror before his eyes, the mystification of identity that dominates this scene's description positions the beholder—the protagonist as well as the reader—into a place of the unknown. Similar to perceiving a suspicious something walking toward the subject yet separated by some conceptual object, this scene functions similarly, for the separational object that divides Meiklejohn from the identity of his intruder is the unknown itself. In this sense, then, the scene leans more toward terror than horror.[120] Why would Blackwood evoke terror at this moment by using the weird? Since the

---

[120] Ann Radcliffe distinguished the difference between terror and horror in supernatural fiction: 'Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them' ('On the Supernatural in Poetry' 168). An example of terror occurs

weird challenges any rational explanation of the object in view, Blackwood demonstrates the impotence of scientific explanation. His first source to supply any rational explanation is limited to biologically anatomical appearance. The absence of limbs or features defies categorizing this object as either animate or inanimate. In other words, it constitutes neither.

The ambiguity of description in this scene causes enough consternation in the protagonist that it reminds him of something specific. Meiklejohn's encounter with something weird in 'Special Delivery' leads him to envision a scene from the Old Testament: Ezekiel's vision of the wheels (Ezek. 1:15-21). Ezekiel, a prophet of God, experiences a vision in which he encounters something strange: 'And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire' (Ezek. 1:4). Ezekiel observes an amorphous entity that is comparable to the shapeless form that visits Meiklejohn. Interestingly, this shape behaves in the same manner as well. Ezekiel's entity folds upon itself while Meiklejohn's whirls within itself. Upon contemplating the weird shape before him, Meiklejohn's mind drifts toward Ezekiel's vision:

> Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. (Ezek. 1:15-21)

An amalgamation of creatures, faces, wheels, colours, rings, eyes, and a spirit comprises approximately twenty-nine percent of a chapter that, itself, offers nothing to aid in interpreting

---

as an anticipatory sensation of heightened anxiety or dread before encountering the object of that terror. Hearing the sounds of an approaching monster that is out of sight illustrates a scene of terror. Horror, on the other hand, involves experiencing or witnessing the source of terror directly and feeling frozen, immoveable in the face of the observer's impending destruction.

what Ezekiel sees. The experience constitutes a convoluted depiction of something that remains enigmatic. Its purpose coalesces in the final verse of the chapter when Ezekiel encounters the source behind the vision: 'As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake' Ezek. 1:28). The final verse of the chapter reveals the divine force behind the mysterious mélange facing Ezekiel. Functioning as a literal deus ex machina—since God clarifies everything at the end—this ultimate verse in the first chapter segues into further explanation in the following chapters. Ezekiel's experience with the amorphous medley of spirit essentially serves as a conduit through which God communicates with Ezekiel the latter's responsibility in highlighting the means of salvation to the captive Israelites. Mortals in this sense will be instructed or warned through an ostensibly dizzying description that facilitates their salvation. Salvation comes to Meiklejohn in the same situation, for he encounters the mysterious form, mentally drifts toward Ezekiel's vision, and is later saved from literal death because he heeded the promptings of the shapeless form. Blackwood's 'Special Delivery', as the title suggests, establishes the concept of salvation as a special form of deliverance aided by outside intervention and an explicit link to a familiar story in the Old Testament that resembles Blackwood's narrative version almost exactly. The protagonist's experience makes him think of Ezekiel's vision in the Old Testament; thus, this example serves as an explicit illustration of Christian soteriological iconography in Blackwood's fictional mountain topographies.

In addition to Christian soteriological visions, an aspect of Christian soteriological iconography present in mountain topographies within Blackwood's short stories between 1899 and 1914 surrounds Christian characters or figures who mirror those in the Bible directly relevant to a disciple's spiritual salvation. Although the ultimate exemplar of salvation in Christianity is, clearly, Christ, other characters in the Old and New Testaments help people make progress toward salvation. Moses, for instance, is a biblical prophet responsible for saving the Hebrews not only temporally through fleeing physical captivity in Pharoah's Egypt but also spiritually through the introduction of the Decalogue as a soteriological rubric-prototype preparatory to Christ's subsequent higher law. Another character in the Bible with a direct connection to soteriology is John the Baptist. Preparing the way for the arrival of Christ, John 'did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' (Mark 1:4). John also baptizes Christ in the New Testament, and the latter declares, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (John 3:5). The Synoptic Gospels portray John the Baptist and his vocational act of baptism as

the gateway to Christ's predicated soteriology. Biblical characters such as Moses and John the Baptist occupy roles in Christian soteriology and, therefore, constitute major soteriological figures. One of these major soteriological figures finds his way into 'Special Delivery'. Meiklejohn bears similitude to John the Baptist. The latter is described in the New Testament as a prophet 'preaching in the wilderness of Judaea […] [with] his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey' (Luke 7:28; John 3:1, 4).[121] Apropos of semantics, 'wilderness' carries more than one denotative sense dependent on whether the presence of a definitive article ('the') precedes it or not.[122] 'Wilderness' in the verses from the third chapter of John appears after the definitive article 'the'. Reading these verses with this denotation of the geographical landscape, nonetheless, raises an interpretive conundrum when viewing the linguistic construction from a syntactic perspective. If John was preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, to whom was he preaching, for the wilderness is a geographical space inhabited by nonhumans. This syntactic complexity interrogates the denotation of wilderness in this instance. For a correct linguistic deployment of the verb 'preaching', someone else should be present within the sphere of preaching, that is, some other interlocutor, and that interlocutor must be human—not angelic—because John preaches to those with no prior knowledge of Christ or the latter's plan of salvation. Since John would not preach reflexively, and there is no biblical evidence that reveals John the Baptist's penchant for preaching to nonhuman entities, it is safe to infer that the linguistic deployment of the gerund 'preaching', therefore, connotes the presence of other humans within that wilderness ecosphere. Also, the verses in this same chapter of John depict the Baptist as a material minimalist in that he wears nothing more than animal fur and a leather belt to secure his only garment and perhaps carry some light articles. He needed not carry much food since his diet depended on what was available to him in the rural areas within which he travelled. John the Baptist, then, constitutes a biblical prophet who preached in rural areas and travelled lightly.

The protagonist in 'Special Delivery' parallels John the Baptist in name and action. The name of the story's protagonist, 'Meiklejohn', derives from the Old English *micele* and Middle English *mikel*, meaning "great" (*OED*). To follow this etymological trail, Meiklejohn could be

---

[121] Gregory Mobley identifies John the Baptist as the "wild man" of the New Testament. See page 228 in "The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 116. no. 2 (Summer 1997) 217-33.

[122] The sense without the definitive article denotes "wilderness" as a wild or uncultivated land," and the other sense with the definitive article "the" present defines the same geographical noun as that same denotation as previously stated and one "uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals" (*OED*).

rendered as 'Great John'. Throughout the Bible appear three individuals referred to as John: (1) John the Baptist, (2) John the father of Peter, and (3) John the Apostle (also referred to as 'John the Beloved'). Among these three men, Christ identifies John the Baptist as the greatest. The rendition of the name 'Great John' would match John the Baptist's identity in the Synoptic Gospels: 'For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist' (Luke 7:28).[123] So an appellation of 'Great John' should understandably refer to the greatest of the Johns: the Baptist. Blackwood seemingly secures this interpretation with his narrator's designation of the protagonist in 'Special Delivery'. The narrator introduces Meiklejohn as 'Meiklejohn the curate' as if the suffixal title is inseparable to the identity of the character being named. Presenting the protagonist's name and title as a nominal unit stylistically mirrors 'John the Baptist', for he is equally designated by name and suffixal title throughout Christian references. This undeniable similarity between Blackwood's protagonist in 'Special Delivery' and the Christian prophet responsible for preparing Christ's disciples for salvation through baptism highlights a soteriological presence in Blackwood's narrative.

Blackwood further strengthens the parallel to the biblical Baptist in 'Special Delivery' through Meiklejohn's actions. Meiklejohn commences the tale with a hike through the French Jura, and the narrator describes him as a curate who 'read[s] his Bible' and travels through rural mountainous terrain (4501). The narrator's inaugural description of the story's protagonist depicts the latter as a devoted ecclesiastical pastor who travels unencumbered by personal items throughout rural settings. In fact, the only items Meiklejohn carries on his person comprises his 'boots, knapsack, and a flask' (4499). Compared to biblical descriptions of John the Baptist, Blackwood's protagonist appears and behaves analogously to the itinerant biblical preacher. As being nominally similar, Meiklejohn's connection to John the Baptist via appearance and action demonstrate a deeper analogous link between Blackwood's fiction and well-known Christian figures. Christian soteriological iconography emerges in Blackwood's supernatural mountain topographies.

In these short narratives, Blackwood exposes a nexus between his supernatural mountains and Christian soteriology. His narratives conjure biblical visions of salvation that the lonely protagonists experience when sojourning in mountainous regions, sometimes functioning as a literal means of salvation for the character in physical danger, in which Meiklejohn found himself. Other instances in these stories present characters—namely protagonists—who resemble all-too-familiar biblical characters engaged in the work of

---

[123] See also Matthew 11:11.

spiritual salvation, and these parallels between Blackwood and the Bible's characters resemble one another at a level of intimacy down to their physical description and personal items they carry. Leaving little room for interpretive ambiguity, Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 set in supernatural mountain spaces draw these transparent connections to Christianity that operate in tandem with its doctrine of salvation.

Among supernatural horror and Christian soteriological iconography in 'Special Delivery', the existence of the eerie manifests itself.

> 'You have the corridor all to yourself', the man said; showed him the best corner of the landing to shout from in case he wanted anything […]; wished him good-night; and was gone. He went downstairs with a noise like a horse, thought the curate, as he locked the door after him. […] [T]here came a knocking at the door. Hastily rising from his knees, he opened. The sound of rushing water filled the corridor. He heard the voices of the workmen below in the drinking-room. But only darkness stood in the passages, filling the house to the very brim. No one was there. He returned to his interrupted devotions. 'I imagined it,' he said to himself. He continued his prayers, however, longer than usual. At the back of his thoughts, dim, vague, half-defined only, lay this lurking sense of uneasiness—that he was in danger. He prayed earnestly and simply, as a child might pray, for the preservation of his life.... (4499-500)

The presentation of this scene's details in seriatim establishes the existence of the eerie. The inn's proprietor, Berthoud, is the sole attendant in the small inn, for the narrator emphasises earlier that 'of course, there was no *femme de chambre*' (4499; emphasis original). And because there are workers from the village sawmill who patronise the inn's ground-floor common room for its red wine, Berthoud's attention is utterly consumed by their requests. Meiklejohn is alone.[124] Yet during the solace of his silent prayers, someone—or something—knocks on his door. This thesis's third chapter examined Blackwood's employment of knocking and its relationship to the eerie and Christian soteriological iconography, but this scene differs with its source of the knocking. Unlike in 'May Day Eve', the knocking in 'Special Delivery' is initiated by someone or something besides the protagonist. The knocking, in this scene particularly, bears significance because of its function as the catalyst of the eerie. The scene having just established its parameters of what exists—or should not exist—in the protagonist's immediate environment then disrupts that understanding with a silence-disturbing knock. To

---

[124] Context surrounding this scene combined with Berthoud's statement that Meiklejohn is the only guest on the entire floor establishes an understanding about Meiklejohn's present circumstance.

substantiate further Meiklejohn's cognitive disorientation resulting from this disruptive moment, the narrator explains that all the inn's inhabitants—including the proprietor—are still where they should be: downstairs. The only thing Meiklejohn finds outside his door and down the corridor constitutes a dominant presence of darkness, obscuring everything on that inn's floor. In this condition and as Meiklejohn admits, nobody exists in the immediate area because nobody can exist in that darkness. His rational interpretation of the situation leads him to reason that what he heard merely emerged from his imagination. The situation, nevertheless, progresses on a fearful trajectory. Meiklejohn, rather than accepting his own rationalisation, behaves differently than before the knock. He prays longer than usual, feels uneasy about some danger, and patterns his prayer after one a child might offer for delivery from a life-threatening source. Meiklejohn's post-knock behaviour exhibits fear. Although he attempted to explain the peculiar source of the impossible knock, Meiklejohn clearly fails to believe his own rationalisation. The impossibility of the knock fails to disappear and causes the eerie to manifest itself in this scene. Because Meiklejohn cannot ultimately account of the source of the knock, the circumstance points to the eerie, and Meiklejohn's sensation of fear confirms its operation in the narrative.

Establishing the existence and operation of the eerie facilitates an appeal to Christian hope. The eerie in 'Special Delivery' transports the protagonist into an emotional nadir as a preparatory manoeuvre that anticipates delivery from that unsettling place to a more emotionally and soteriologically secure one. When Meiklejohn finds himself lost in the face of the strange entity before him, a voice calms him and offers him promise:

> '"Come!" it said. "Come out—at once!" And the sense of power that accompanied the Voice was so splendid that my fear vanished and I obeyed instantly without thinking more. I followed; it led. It altered in shape. The door was open. It ran silently in a form that was more like a stream of deep black water than anything else I can think of—out of the room, down the stairs, across the hail, and up to the deep shadows that lay against the door leading into the road. There I lost sight of it.' Meiklejohn's only desire, he says, then was to rush after it—to escape. (4504)

In his moment of dread and despair, the strange shape that accompanies Meiklejohn in his room soothes him with its fear-defeating splendid voice. This soothing voice was powerful enough to banish any and all sensations of anxiety produced by the operation of the eerie. Meiklejohn obeys the voice, follows the strange shape out of his room and literally escapes destruction, for as he witnesses later, a boulder from the adjacent mountain cliffs pulverises the bed on which

he previously slept. Out of the fearful depths of the eerie, a voice of hope saves Meiklejohn from death and preserves the Christian curate's continued journey toward salvation.

Meiklejohn's salvatory experience ostensibly patterns itself after one in the New Testament. After he feeds the five thousand, sends his disciples into a ship, and ventures up a mountain to pray, Christ walks on the sea to calm his fearful disciples:

> And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, *Come*. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. (Matt. 14:25-29, emphasis added)[125]

Christ's walking on the sea toward the ship startles his disciples, and the proximity of the verb 'troubled' to the disciples' declaration that what they think they see is a 'spirit', emphasises their belief of some supernatural presence that should not exist in the middle of the sea. The emotional nadir of the scene takes a positive turn when the source of the entity speaks to them and asks Peter to come out of the ship and toward the source. A case for the operation of the eerie in this biblical account could be made here, but significance to Christian hope lies in the identical scaffolding of this biblical scene when examined in juxtaposition with the one in 'Special Delivery'. The eerie leads the disciples to fear some strange shape just as Meiklejohn experiences anxiety as a consequence of some strange existence that should not exist. The supernatural entities in both texts establish the eerie and subsequently banish the fear it causes through the deployment of a voice, inviting the fearful to 'come' and be saved. Peter obeys the vocal invitation toward Christ, the embodiment of Christian salvation whereas Meiklejohn obeys the voice yet never discovers its true identity. The result, however, remains the same. As Peter's life is saved by a vocal invitation ('come'), Meiklejohn's life is saved in the same manner and with the exact word. Lexical alignment in these two texts—as well as the scaffolded structure of what transpires within their storylines—demonstrates commonality between them. This foundation of similarity instantiates the function of an appeal to Christian hope. Like Peter's demonstration of Christian hope by obeying his soteriological invitation despite the eerie and its resulting fear, Meiklejohn prays to Christ for salvation when the former senses fear, obeys a supernatural invitation, overcomes his own eerie-inspired fear, and

---

[125] See also Mark 6:45-52 and John 6:16-21. Of all the accounts of Christ's walking on the sea, Matthew is the most detailed one. The other accounts of the same episode fail to mention any discourse between Christ and Peter as well as the latter's walking out onto the sea to meet Christ.

ultimately preserves his Christian life. The saving of Meiklejohn's mortality is his unique soteriological provision. 'Special Delivery', as its title suggests, portrays a Christian's overcoming fear through hope of salvation that leads ultimately to a special, soteriological delivery.

'THE GLAMOUR OF THE SNOW'

A confrontation between fear and hope set in mountain topographies reappears in another narrative example of Blackwood's supernatural horror. First published in *Pall Mall* in December 1911, 'The Glamour of the Snow' presents a tale about how its protagonist, Hibbert, travels to the Alps and encounters supernaturally malign characters who seek to take his life. Hibbert mistakes one of these figures for a woman and attempts to woo her throughout the narrative yet discovers her true identity is nothing near what he expected:

> But when he plunged forward to hold her, or at least to look, the girl was gone again. And something in the way she stood there a few feet beyond, and stared down into his eyes so steadfastly in silence, made him shiver. The moonlight was behind her, but in some odd way he could not focus sight upon her face, although so close. The gleam of eyes he caught, but all the rest seemed white and snowy as though he looked beyond her—out into space....
>
> […]
>
> The girl stood in front of him, very near; he felt her chilly breath upon his cheeks; her hair passed blindingly across his eyes; and that icy wind came with her. He saw her whiteness close; again, it seemed, his sight passed through her into space as though she had no face. (4368-9)

Hibbert's desire to hold the woman intimately initiates a moment of discovery. Never seeing her face or knowing her true identity during their time together before this scene, Hibbert finally musters sufficient courage to seek physical contact with the mysterious woman to whom he has grown attracted. The woman, however, has no face. Despite his looking directly at the woman so closely, Hibbert cannot see anything where a face should exist. The strange quality of Hibbert's predicament is further conveyed and reinforced by contextual additions supplied by the narrator. Hibbert shivers not because of the mountain air's temperature but because of the strange experience of looking into an area where a face should appear yet finding nothing that matches expectations. The narrator divulges that Hibbert finally discovers the gleam of her eyes but without any other material associated with a face. Hibbert sees through the woman's face, for nothing substantive exists. This moment in the narrative highlights the function of

supernatural horror in 'The Glamour of the Snow'. Hibbert encounters an entity whom he mistook for a woman and discovers that the figure possesses no material facial feature besides an isolated pair of glowing eyes. This discovery instantiates the presence of a supernatural entity that interacts with the story's protagonist. Hibbert senses fear for the first time when he realises that what he thought was a woman is actually some faceless nonhuman thing. The level of Hibbert's fear grows soon after this scene when he realises that the supernatural entity lured him into a snow trap designed to kill him. Supernatural horror operates during these critical moments of the plot in 'The Glamour of the Snow'.[126]

During these moments in 'The Glamour of the Snow', supernatural horror functions alongside Christian soteriological iconography. The initial occasion when this type of iconography surfaces in the narrative occurs at the instant Hibbert decides to follow his companion up the mountain's slopes. Unaware of what will eventually happen to him atop the mountain, Hibbert remains oblivious. The narrator, however, presents an inaugural moment of dramatic irony when the discourse of those who observe Hibbert's actions is revealed:

> Henri Défago, putting up the shutters over his café windows, saw him pass, and wondered mildly: "*Un monsieur qui fait du ski à cette heure! Il est Anglais, done ...!*" [A gentleman who is skiing at this hour! He is English, then…] He shrugged his shoulders, as though a man had the right to choose his own way of death. And Marthe Perotti, the hunchback wife of the shoemaker, looking by chance from her window, caught his figure moving swiftly up the road. She had other thoughts, for she knew and believed the old traditions of the witches and snow-beings that steal the souls of men. […] "They've called to him ... and he must go," she murmured, making the sign of the cross. (4364-5; my translation)

Défago's account portrays Hibbert's predicament as one that would likely terminate with some type of skiing accident. The café owner's words communicate feelings of disbelief followed by a rationalized dismissal of Hibbert's strange behaviour as that expected of a foreigner. The narrator's explanation of Défago functions as a conclusion of the latter's account and adds more to what the café owner uttered. Hibbert had the right to choose his own way to die. This moment reveals to the reader portentous details about what could happen to Hibbert while the

---

[126] Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) compiled a collection of Japanese legends and ghost stories titled *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*, which was published in 1904. One of the stories therein, *Yuki-onna* ("Snow Woman"), details a supernatural figure from Japanese folklore that resembles a beautiful woman who kills mortal men with the extreme cold. When Hearn's snow woman is juxtaposed with Blackwood's, both bear striking similarities. Interested in Oriental mythologies, Blackwood could have been familiar with Hearn's English-translated depictions of fearful supernatural characters from Japanese legends.

latter remains oblivious: death. Perotti's account, moreover, functions to confirm the prospect of Hibbert's death on the mountain. Similar to the previous account, the narrator injects contextual details into Perotti's observation that help define Hibbert's soon-to-transpire experience on the mountain. But unlike Défago's observation, Perotti's version is coloured with supernatural elements that define Hibbert's mountain experience as one attached to supernatural horror. The diabolically supernatural entities of the mountain steal men's souls, and now they desire Hibbert's. Perotti's ultimate act while observing Hibbert counters the idea of losing his soul to the supernatural elements that await him upon the mountain. Powerless to stop him, Perotti calls upon a higher power in Christianity capable of saving an individual's soul: Christ.

Symbolic elements related to Christ and soteriology continue to appear in the narrative. When Hibbert discovers the diabolic nature of the snow woman after the latter attempted to kill him, he flees for safety and encounters a procession of light with Christian elements of soteriological import: '[H]e understood that it was the village *curé* [priest] who carried that little gleaming lantern in the dawn, and that he was taking the Host to a châlet on the lower slopes' (4371; my translation). Hibbert's discovery of a Christian priest carrying the Holy Communion or Eucharist identifies a Christian rite commensurate with one's salvation.[127] Prior to his crucifixion in the New Testament, Christ met with his apostles and inaugurated what is observed throughout Christianity as the Holy Communion or the Eucharist:

> And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. 11:23-5).[128]

Paul's epistle to the Corinthians amalgamates versions of the Last Supper from the Synoptic Gospels and underlines the purpose of what transpired apropos the partaking of the bread and wine. Christ instructs his apostles—and subsequently all Christians—to partake as a rite of remembrance for his sacrifice and to perform the rite until Christ's second coming. The Holy Communion, according to the New Testament, exists as a symbolic act that reminds one of Christ's atoning sacrifice and the subsequent opportunity for humankind's salvation. In this

---

[127] When referring to the Holy Communion or the Eucharist, the "host" constitutes the bread or wafer to be consumed in remembrance of Christ's body. The New Testament, for example, associates the term "host" with Christ, who is referred to as the "host of heaven" (Acts 7:42).

[128] See also Matt. 26:26-8; Mark 14:22-3; and Luke 22:19-20) for additional depictions of Christ's Last Supper.

sense, taking the Holy Communion constitutes one of the requisite rites for one's salvation. The Holy Communion appears in 'The Glamour of the Snow' at an unexpected time and place in the plot, its existence seemingly incongruous for the situation in which Hibbert finds himself. But the absurdity is precisely the point. The strange occasion arrests Hibbert's attention to such an extent that it emphasises the iconographic object carried by the Christian priest: salvation.

Alongside Christian soteriological iconography, 'The Glamour of the Snow' presents the eerie within its mountain setting. Hibbert's sojourn in the Valais Alps leads him to someone who unexpectedly exists spatially and temporally where or when nobody else should. Blackwood first offers a sampling of this eerie phenomenon when Hibbert decides to skate alone on some ice:

> The shadows of the towering mountains fell across the rink, and a wind of ice came from the forests, where the snow lay ten feet deep. The hotel lights winked and went out. The village slept. The high wire netting could not keep out the wonder of the winter night that grew about him like a presence. He skated on and on, keen exhilarating pleasure in his tingling blood, and weariness all forgotten. And then, midway in the delight of rushing movement, he saw a figure gliding behind the wire netting, watching him. With a start that almost made him lose his balance—for the abruptness of the new arrival was so unlooked for—he paused and stared. (4355)

Hibbert catches the glimpse of someone—or something—present, observing him after he decides to remain on the ice after all the village residents retire for the night. This decision to stay beyond his natural curfew sets up the strange events that follow. The entire opening of this scene highlights colossal shadows created by the surrounding mountain peaks and depicts them as falling onto the rink as if to bury it. The next description then focuses on an icy wind that follows from a forested area of snowy abundance. Taken together, these elemental happenings portray a repellent nature because of the negative imagery they create. The narrator's description of the nearby towering mountains and their falling shadows establishes an uncomfortable scene because of the syntactic proximity of the verb that follows the subject. Though the sentence reads normally—in that the shadows are the ones performing the action— the verb 'fell' immediately after 'mountains' syntactically plays on the idea of the mountains themselves falling upon the rink, so the imagery that this presentation conjures is negative. Equally, the icy wind sounds negative and uninviting in the additional information that the narrator offers about its extreme origin. Setting the scene up with this negative and uninviting imagery functions clearly when it hands off to what the narrator describes as the residents' actions. Almost like automatons, the entire hotel's staff, their guests, and the villagers retire

for the night, and the way that this explanation is positioned in the text appears as a consequence of the natural elements of mountainous shadows and icy wind. This scene establishes an unwelcome time for anyone to be outside exposed to the darkness and atmospheric elements, and the ostensible purpose of this narrative enterprise constitutes the establishment of expectations. Everyone in town has voluntarily disappeared, so the only individual who exists is Hibbert. Yet he is not alone. The narrator breaks the established expectation when he describes someone watching Hibbert from outside the rink. The eerie operates when there is a failure of absence, and true, perhaps someone could have been outside still; this presence, however, defies the expectations of the only extant individual in the story at this moment (Hibbert). He demonstrates this defiance of expectation when he became startled and almost fell, for the arrival of this guest—or anyone, for that matter—was, as the narrator explains, 'unlooked for' to the extent that an incredulous Hibbert had to pause and stare. His actions allude to a deployment of the eerie.

A double dose of the eerie in one narrative is not anomalous in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror. 'The Glamour of the Snow' is also designed this way. After he meets the girl at the ice-skating rink and follows her up the mountain, Hibbert perceives the presence of other beings around him and attempts to escape the dangers of the mountain heights at night:

> For ever [*sic*] close upon his heels came following forms and voices with the whirling snow-dust. He heard that little silvery voice of death and laughter at his back. Shrill and wild, with the whistling of the wind past his ears, he caught its pursuing tones; but in anger now, no longer soft and coaxing. And it was accompanied; she did not follow alone. It seemed a host of these flying figures of the snow chased madly just behind him. He felt them furiously smite his neck and cheeks, snatch at his hands and try to entangle his feet and ski in drifts. His eyes they blinded, and they caught his breath away.
>
> […]
>
> But for years to come the story of 'mad Hibbert's' ski-ing at night is recounted in that mountain village. He went, it seems, up slopes, and to a height that no man in his senses ever tried before. The tourists were agog about it for the rest of the season, and the very same day two of the bolder men went over the actual ground and photographed the slopes. Later Hibbert saw these photographs. He noticed one curious thing about them—though he did not mention it to any one: There was only a single track. (4371-2)

The first paragraph is replete with descriptive references of the girl and others pursuing Hibbert down the mountain. In an ostensible effort to establish the presence of these other beings, the narrator ventures into detailed description of what exactly Hibbert notices. Voices, laughter, shrills, whistling, and anger, unmistakably establish a human register, for no other natural beings would be described this way. The first paragraph, then, functions to establish the presence of other people around Hibbert. The second paragraph, however, upends this belief as it details the improbability for humans to venture that far up the mountain. This piece of information sows the seeds of the eerie, and the closing words of the paragraph—and the story—cultivate the eerie fully when Hibbert finds contrary evidence of what he witnessed. The humanlike beings he encountered fail to present themselves via their tracks in the snow. This failed presence conjures eerie sensations, and it also retroactively establishes his mountain escape as a failure of absence because the other beings should never have existed that high up the mountains in the first place. Not only does Blackwood double up on the eerie in 'The Glamour of the Snow', but he also chooses to end the story at the height of the sensation without solving the enigma it raises.

As the eerie operates within 'Special Delivery' and 'The Glamour of the Snow', it becomes apparent that supernatural mountain topographies in Blackwood's narrative enterprise operate no differently than previous tales with cities, gardens, and forests. Whether the protagonists encounter structures and people who should exist yet do not or individuals who should not exist at a certain time and place but do, Blackwood continues to employ the strange, and his fiction demonstrates that it flourishes within his narrative mountain spaces. As understood earlier in this thesis, the eerie pivots conceptually on the focal point of agency. So how does the eerie and consequential focus on agency fit with Blackwood's mountainous settings? In every instance of the eerie operating within the mountain spaces of Blackwood's work, the notion of agency hovers intimately. The protagonists reflect on the agent behind the eerie and must act. When they do, Blackwood showcases the consequences.

Consequences stemming from the operation of the eerie in 'The Glamour of the Snow' lead Hibbert to a positive outcome. Agents of action on a mountain when and where there should be nobody provoke eerie-inspired anxiety. The eerie presence of diabolical snow spirits at high altitude on the mountain in 'The Glamour of the Snow' facilitates an appeal to Christian hope that emphasises individual salvation through overcoming evil.

Christians familiar with the New Testament acknowledge the presence of diabolical entities and their interaction with Christ and his disciples. These biblical interactions appeal to a kind of hope that emphasises individual salvation through overcoming evil. The Synoptic

Gospels present numerous cases in which evil spirits harass individuals to the extent of possessing their physical bodies. In the Gospel of Mark, for example, Christ encounters a group of these mountain-dwelling demons:

> And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, […] [a]nd always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. […] And [Christ] asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. […] Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought [Christ], saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. (Mark 5:1-12)

Knowing that he will cast them out, the devils plead with Christ to allow them access to animal bodies instead. The demons in this scene reside among the nearby mountains and exhibit a demeanour subordinate to Christ. In another account of this same event, these demons display a more aggressive and influential existence vis-à-vis humans: 'And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way' (Matt. 8:28). The ending of Matthew's verse carries significance, for it describes the demons as 'exceeding fierce' to an extent that they prevent people from travelling past that area. This demonic function demonstrates the possibility for demons or evil spirits to interact directly and aggressively with humans, not the more passive version recounted in the Gospel of Mark.[129] When these two gospel accounts are synthesised, demons in the New Testament can inhabit mountain topographies and exhibit an aggressive and highly influential comportment when interacting with humans. The overcoming of these ferociously perceived diabolical entities is what inspires hope in this scene. Christ exorcises the demons and thereby pacifies them vis-à-vis humans. The exemplary triumph of Christ over demons illustrates soteriological hope for both his diegetic and non-diegetic disciples, for, together, they realise that salvation exists in him.

Hibbert's interaction with the supernatural entities on the mountain in 'The Glamour of the Snow' ostensibly aligns with that in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. His encounter with a literal legion of evil spirits exhibits a threatening situation. The snow woman (thing) and her

---

[129] There is another rendition of this event in the Gospel of Luke; it aligns with aspects found in the other Synoptic Gospels yet focuses on a separate detail related to the nakedness of the demoniac. See Luke 8:26-33.

Figure 6. Gustave Doré. Paradise Lost (1866).

Figure 7. Gustave Doré. The Inferno, Canto 21 (1861).

supernatural coterie prevent Hibbert from advancing any farther up the mountain and pursue him in an attempt to kill him. Their voices of death and laughter comingled with anger demonstrate a malign nature resembling those biblical demons which prevented human attempts to traverse their mountain. Hibbert finds himself in a battle for his life with diabolical figures who possess the ability to match his pace because of their ability to fly. Though diabolical flight does not appear in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, or the corpus of Synoptic Gospels, it surfaces elsewhere in the New Testament. The Book of Revelation describes Satan and his followers: 'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him' (Rev. 12:9). This account portrays Satan as a dragon and his demons as angels who were cast out of heaven. The winged characteristic of traditional dragons and angels ascribes an ability to fly to Satan and his demons. Flying demons as a concept, furthermore, stems from what Dale Basil Martin explains as 'familiar Christian mythology' in which 'demons are or were fallen angels' (657).[130] Milton's *Paradise Lost* refers to Satan as the 'Apostate Angel' (I.125). Gustave Doré (1832-83) illustrated Satan and his fallen angels from *Paradise Lost* as winged entities with the ability to fly (see Figure 6). Doré additionally portrays Satan's fallen angels in the *Divina Commedia* as flying toward Virgil and Dante in a

---

[130] Martin further explains that the concept of demons as fallen angels is attached to Satan's own status as a fallen angel and the leader of those who rebelled alongside him; these rebellious angels became his "minions" and "demons" (657).

threatening manner (see Figure 7). The demonic figures in 'The Glamour of the Snow' parallels these biblical, literary, and artistic portrayals of flying demons. As Hibbert attempts to advance, the mountain-demons function primarily as a barrier to prevent him from going anywhere, yet when he flees, they pursue him tirelessly in an attempt to prevent his escape. Their specific actions in this scene mirrors those of the fallen angels in the *Divina Commedia* as a demonic force which attempts to prevent Virgil and Dante from advancing on their journey (Canto IX). When juxtaposed, the biblical demons, fallen angels, and the mountain-demons in 'The Glamour of the Snow' behave identically and exhibit the same purpose. They function to harass human characters by preventing the latter from navigating the landscape—in most cases a mountain topography. Comprehending these similarities fashions an interpretation of the mountain-demons in 'The Glamour of the Snow' as diabolical entities who mirror the fallen angels who became demons.

Like the demons in the New Testament, the mountain-demons in 'The Glamour of the Snow' can be defeated. Hibbert's initial attempt to best the flying mountain-demons is by skiing down the mountain at top speed. But according to the narrator's account, it seems as if Hibbert cannot escape without the help of an external source:

> The terror of the heights and snow and winter desolation urged him forward in the maddest race with death a human being ever knew; […] it was then, moving slowly along the edge of the woods, he saw a light. A man was carrying it. A procession of human figures was passing in a dark line laboriously through the snow. And—he heard the sound of chanting. Instinctively, without a second's hesitation, he changed his course. No longer flying at an angle as before, he pointed his ski straight down the mountain-side. The dreadful steepness did not frighten him. He knew full well it meant a crashing tumble at the bottom, but he also knew it meant a doubling of his speed— with safety at the end. (4372-3)

The icon that saves Hibbert is light. Piercing the darkness that surrounds Hibbert, the light serves as a beacon that causes him to shift course and safely escape the threatening mountain-demons. The presentation of the light in this scene bears significance because of its striking resemblance to Christ's encounter with the mountain-dwelling demons in the Synoptic Gospels. Christ travels throughout the Judaean countryside with his apostles as a procession of peace and figurative light. Their arrival near the mountains of the Gadarenes enacts the dismissal of demons who have tormented mortals who venture toward those mountains. In 'The Glamour of the Snow', Hibbert discovers the light carried by the Christian priest, and the

pursuing demons disappear. The light and its holy company are responsible for the vanquishing of the demons.

The defeat of the demons in 'The Glamour of the Snow' evinces Christian hope that emphasises individual salvation through overcoming evil. Saving Hibbert from evil, the light, Christian priest, and Holy Communion function as Hibbert's source of hope in his moment of desperation. Representations of Christ—be they light, priests, the Holy Communion, or a church—serve as points of safety throughout the plot, and there are several attempts to reach Hibbert throughout his journey on the mountain. Before he climbs, Hibbert experiences one of these spiritual moments of attempted contact:

> [H]e remembered passing the church. Catching the outline of its tower against the stars, he was aware of a faint sense of hesitation. A vague uneasiness came and went — jarred unpleasantly across the flow of his excited feelings, chilling exhilaration. He caught the instant's discord, dismissed it, and—passed on. The seduction of the snow smothered the hint before he realised that it had brushed the skirts of warning. (4365)

The physicality of a Christian church almost convinces Hibbert to reconsider his plan to follow the snow woman further up the mountain. Though the spiritual contact causes him to contemplate his actions, temptation proves too strong for Hibbert at this moment in the narrative. This first encounter with a Christian church before Hibbert joins the snow woman on their joint trek up the mountain demonstrates a connection to Hibbert's salvation that exists throughout the plot moments leading to the narrative's climax. In a seeming effort to remind Hibbert that it continuously remains in the background despite his decision to acquiesce to temptation, the church reconnects with Hibbert later in his climb: 'The sound of the church bell came up faintly from the valley far below, and he counted the strokes—five. A sudden, curious weakness seized him as he listened. […] It was, of course, the warning of complete exhaustion. With a great effort he fought and overcame it. It passed away as suddenly as it came' (4368). Nearing the summit, Hibbert again experiences a spiritual connection to the church as it figuratively warns him against summiting the mountain with the snow woman, but as before, he chooses to continue onward. Despite continuing forward with his climb by ignoring the second warning, Hibbert never loses his connection to the church—and everything it represents. The pursuit of Christian hope surfaces only when Hibbert encounters the eerie. He seeks ultimate refuge when he discovers the light carried by a Christian priest with the Holy Communion.

Light, Christ, and salvation form a collective source of Christian hope for the protagonist in 'The Glamour of the Snow'. Like the disciples in the New Testament—as well

as characters in such literary exemplars as *Paradise Lost* and the *Divina Commedia*—Hibbert ultimately finds a way to defeat the diabolical forces that attempt to thwart his mortal progress. The defeat of these supernatural enemies inspires hope. As Christ exorcises demons and pacifies them vis-à-vis humans, his ultimate triumph over evil illustrates soteriological hope for both Hibbert and humanity. Whether demons or fallen angels, the supernatural spirits in 'The Glamour of the Snow' align with other biblical and literary iterations of them in how they operate as threatening barriers to human progression—be it geographical or moral. Hibbert's navigational obstruction solidifies his encounter with the eerie whose manifestation initiates a causal sequence that illuminates an appeal to Christian hope. Hibbert wants to be saved from the terror he experiences on the mountain. Despite not heeding several warnings by Christian icons, Hibbert never loses his connection to Christianity. Salvation through Christ appears at Hibbert's most desperate moment when his attempts for physical safety appear to fail. It is precisely at this moment of culminating despair when the light Hibbert discovers shines at its brightest to direct him toward the ultimate source of his own salvation and leading him to reflect that it 'seemed he flew off the surface of the world' (4373).

'H.S.H.'

First published in October 1913 in *The British Review*, 'H.S.H.' showcases another appeal to Christian hope via supernatural horror and the eerie within mountain topographies. 'H.S.H.' constitutes another short story set in the Alps and shares with the other narratives examined in this thesis in that it, too, bears the marks of supernatural horror. One of these marks manifests itself at the climax of the narrative's plot. After the protagonist, Delane, provides hospitality for someone he believes to be a fellow mountaineer, the latter eventually reveals his true identity to be none other than Satan, and in a fit of rage, he demands that Delane worship him. The entire plot comes to a head at this supernaturally and horrifyingly climactic moment. The narrative is set in a world in which no supernatural beings should exist, yet Satan manifests himself as a physical being. In addition to the supernatural quality present in the story, the sole purpose of Satan is to embody a source of fear. Taken together in this narrative experience, the reader ascertains that 'H.S.H.' embodies another of Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror.

This story of supernatural horror is also set in a mountain topography with Christian soteriological iconography. The narrator clarifies the setting within the first five words of the description of the inaugural scene: 'In the mountain Club Hut' (5245). Throughout the remainder of the story, the narrator's description aggregates additional details about the

physical environment and the activities that typically occur within that environment. 'H.S.H.' takes place within the mountains and displays iconography specific to Christian soteriology. Satan represents one reference. In Christian theology, Satan constitutes the source of evil responsible for attempting to foil humanity's attainment of salvation.[131] His presence in 'H.S.H.' thus comprises an exemplar of Christian soteriological iconography. Another instance that appears in this story relates to Satan's role as the tempter in the Garden of Eden. Satan's link to the forbidden fruit appears in 'H.S.H.' in the form of an apple. Unlike the familiar Bible story, however, Satan does not offer this fruit to another character. In a gesture of hospitality, Delane offers the apple to Satan. At this point in the plot, Delane remains oblivious to the identity of the mysterious figure sitting before him. The enigmatic traveller, nevertheless, reveals his identity in the following scenes, but how he reacts to the appearance of the apple in this scene connects the fruit to the familiar one in the biblical garden:

> [Delane] set the bread and meat before him, the apple and the tiny packet of salt, then turned away to place the coffee pot beside the fire again. But as he did so a singular gesture of the other caught his eyes. Before touching the bowl or plate, the stranger took the fruit and brushed his lips with it. He kissed it, then set it on the ground and crushed it into pulp beneath his heel. (5251)

Delane's visitor singles out the apple and seizes it first. The singular gesture to which the narrator refers is that rather than begin eating, which a fatigued mountaineer would be expected to do, Satan ignores the main meal and, instead, kisses and pulverises the apple. This action not only calls attention to the apple, but it also establishes the apple as soteriologically iconographic because the ambivalent reactions Satan demonstrates conjure up the function of the fruit in Eden's garden. Because Satan succeeded in his temptation of Eve and Adam, respectively, the kiss in Blackwood's story symbolises Satan's appreciation for his own brief triumph. But what Satan does afterward is somewhat perplexing. If the fruit was instrumental in bringing about the Fall, why destroy it in such an exaggerated way? The narrator's mentioning of the heel in this scene offers some clarity. In the third chapter of Genesis, when God confronts Adam and Eve after they eat the forbidden fruit, God addresses Lucifer (Satan) and places 'enmity' between him and Eve's posterity, who shall 'bruise [Satan's] head' whereas Satan can only 'bruise [humanity's] heel' (3:15). Satan's use of his heel to crush the apple in 'H.S.H.' seemingly references his postlapsarian state of enmity and dejected attitude.

---

[131] See Luke 22:31 in which Satan's intentions for mortals is described. Satanic evil occupies a similar role in the other Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Islam. See the Jewish concept of *yetzer hara* in the Torah (Genesis 6:5 and 8:21). Also see the Islamic description about the figure شَيْطان (Shaytan) in the Quran (sura 7, verse 20).

Though he succeeded in bringing about the Fall, Satan is still miserable and hostile toward humanity. Presenting Satan and having him react ambivalently to a symbolic representation of the biblically familiar forbidden fruit demonstrates clear iconographic connections to Christian soteriology.

Amid the emergence of Christian soteriology, 'H.S.H.' also deploys the eerie. Before disrupting existential expectations needed to facilitate the function of the eerie, however, a text must first set what is to be expected. The narrative's norm is established in the opening paragraph: isolated in a small mountain hut, Delane struggles psychologically with the overwhelming feeling of loneliness. In fact, the narrator refers to the noun 'loneliness'—and its lexical siblings—a total of four times in the opening paragraph (5245). Rhetorical repetition in this inaugural scene heavily emphasises an understanding that Delane is alone in his remote refuge on the altitudinal face of the Alps. Though Delane seems to be expecting company at any moment, the narrator quickly dismisses the feeling as the 'unwelcome symptom of true loneliness' (5245). The move to clarify Delane's condition simultaneously confirms that nobody else exists near his location. To solidify this understanding, the narrator further provides details about the surrounding environment:

> Delane […] sat alone, and listened to the wind that beat the pines with violence. The firelight danced over the bare stone floor and raftered ceiling, giving the room an air of movement, and though the solid walls held steady against the wild spring hurricane, the cannonading of the wind seemed to threaten the foundations. For the mountain shook, the forest roared, and the shadows had a way of running everywhere as though the little building trembled. Delane watched and listened. He piled the logs on. From time to time he glanced nervously over his shoulder, restless, half uneasy, as a burst of spray from the branches dashed against the window, or a gust of unusual vehemence shook the door. Over-wearied with his long day's climb among impossible conditions, he now realised, in this mountain refuge, his utter loneliness. (5245)

The wind beats the trees with hurricane force that threatens to upend structural foundations. With such descriptors as beating and ripping up edifices along with their seemingly solid foundations, the actions and characteristics of the wind in this scene instantiate a fury that would deny the very presence of people; the narrator describes a scene in which any travellers would scurry desperately to vacate this mountain rather than remain on it. If the narrator repeats the concept of loneliness in this scene, the aforementioned description of the treacherous conditions that colour the mountain setting seem redundant. In other words, Delane is truly alone because the Blackwoodian reliable narrator states multiple times that he is such.

Loneliness in this scene is firmly established. Nobody else can exist on this mountain, especially in the inclement weather.

The hazards of being in an isolated setting atop the Alps during the tumult of an unforgivable tempest in conjunction with the narrator's repetitious description of the protagonist's solitary state sets the expectations of the scene. Yet someone—or something—upends those expectations:

> The interruption to his thoughts came with startling suddenness, as the roaring night descended against the windows with a thundering violence that shook the walls and sucked the flame half-way up the wide stone chimney. The oil lamp flickered and went out. Darkness invaded the room for a second, and Delane sprang from his bench, thinking the wet snow had loosened far above and was about to sweep the hut into the depths. And he was still standing, trembling and uncertain, in the middle of the room, when a deep and sighing hush followed sharp upon the elemental outburst, and in the hush, like a whisper after thunder, he heard a curious steady sound that, at first, he thought must be a footstep by the door. It was then instantly repeated. But it was not a step. It was some one knocking on the heavy oaken panels—a firm, authoritative sound, as though the new arrival had the right to enter and was already impatient at the delay. (5247)

After establishing and emphasising Delane's solitary situation, the narrator proceeds an additional two pages before the narrative's expectations are disrupted by the firm knocking at the door. What is particularly interesting in this scene is the timing of the knock itself. Throughout this portion of the narrative, the narrator has described a tempestuous event that carries with it a cacophony of aural ferocity. How could anyone aurally decipher a knock when the roaring night descends against the windows with thundering violence that even shakes the walls? Yet Delane recognizes a knock during a lull in the deafening chaos. Two items arrest the reader's attention in this scene: (1) someone—or something—is actually at the door, and (2) there is a perfectly coincidental lull in a previously unrelenting tempest to allow Delane to hear the knocking. First, it was previously established that nobody could exist in the narrative's setting, yet there is a knock at Delane's door. The narrator soon divulges the identity of the source of the knocking: a 'tall, cloaked figure' who 'passe[s] him swiftly' with a 'face hidden by a low-brimmed hat' (5247). The narrator immediately describes that the 'two men turned to confront one another in the little room' (5247). At this stage, especially in this most recent line, the narrator reveals that the source of the knocking is, indeed, a man. But how did he arrive under the current conditions? The notion that a man exists in a place where no man should exist

conjures up an eerie sensation. Speculation immediately follows after the guest as he enters Delane's cabin. Who is he? How did he arrive? What does he want? But these questions are not the only ones that arrest this scene. The respite in the scene's diegetic noise and how perfectly timed it was to coincide with the knocking begs another question: is there some agency at play that caused a hiatus in the aural ambience? And if so, what is the nature of the agent? Why there exists this second round of questioning is also explained by the employment of two strands of the narrator's description in the inaugural scene that establishes Delane's unmistakable solitude. Blackwood deploys two points of contact for the eerie to allow it enough dimension to operate unchallenged. Not only is there existence where there should not be, but there is also the ostensible manipulation of nature where there should not be. With these questions unresolved, the eerie dominates this and subsequent scenes within 'H.S.H.'

Eerie scenes in 'H.S.H.', like those in 'The Glamour of the Snow', serve a purpose. As previous chapters have demonstrated, the eerie injects suspense and speculation into every scene in which it emerges. The eerie presence of Satan in 'H.S.H.' facilitates an appeal to Christian hope that emphasises individual salvation through overcoming evil.

Familiar stories for a Christian audience that cause them to speculate about the agent behind the presence and function of Satan appeal to this form of Christian hope. The Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament instantiate this dynamic. The fourth chapter of Matthew describes Christ's post-baptismal experience fasting forty days in the wilderness. The inaugural verse of the chapter offers explanation about why Christ engages in this activity: 'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil' (verse 1). Temptation sometimes carries a negative connotation; the following verses attest to the diabolical nature of the temptation, so why would anyone seek it out willingly? The verse reveals that Christ was guided toward this diabolical temptation by an external source of influence. The Spirit of God is no stranger to the company of Christ. The previous chapter in Matthew depicts Christ's baptism by John the Baptist and the subsequent decent of the Spirit of God upon Christ (Matt. 3:16). And with the presence of the Holy Spirit, the final verse in the chapter establishes the source of the supernal link: 'And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matt. 3:17). God the Father reveals himself aurally and confirms the source of the spiritual link between him and Christ before the latter was tempted amid the wilds of Judaea.[132] Christ's being guided toward temptation by the Holy Spirit and God the Father

---

[132] There are other instances in the New Testament that reveal Christ's subordination to God the Father: Christ's Farewell Prayer in John 17-1-26, Christ's transfiguration in Matthew 17-1-8, and the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7:55-6.

implies that confrontation with Satan at this stage was part of a divine plan. (After the temptation, Christ commences his ministry and locates his apostles.) Participating in a plan that transpires in seriatim, Christ acted with purpose. Even as an adolescent he confessed such to his earthly parents when they were searching for him worryingly: 'And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' (Luke 2:49). Because the young Christ was found conversing with religious teachers at the temple and not engaged in the work of his earthly father, Joseph, it becomes clear that the father's business to which he refers identifies his heavenly father, that is, God the Father. From a young age, Christ understood his purpose and conducted the rest of his mortal activities accordingly—even if that meant being tempted by the Devil. And the Synoptic Gospels illustrate to a Christian audience this onslaught of temptation that eventually yields to Christ's triumph over Satan. This moment in the New Testament provides a remarkable exemplar of hope for Christians. Christ not only overcame Satan and evil, but he saved himself and the rest of humanity as well.

'H.S.H.' seemingly follows Christ's temptation in the New Testament. Alone in a mountainous wilderness, Delane experiences Satan's temptation and emerges triumphant. The eerie presence of Satan in the narrative causes the reader to speculate about the agent responsible for Satan's presence and function in the diegetic setting. The operation of the eerie directs the interpretive focus of the text. Amid the raging storm outside Delane's mountain hut, something unexpected occurs and arrests both Delane and the readers' attention. The preceding quote identifies a sudden, unexpected hush that lasts coincidentally long enough for Delane to hear repeated knocking at his door. What is interesting in this event is that prior to this moment, the storm never let up, constantly lashing the seemingly fragile mountain hut for an incalculable amount of time, yet at this one opportune point in the plot, the noise ceases just enough for Delane to perceive the presence of someone at his door. This moment initiates the eerie in 'H.S.H.', for it commences the speculative enterprise of ascertaining the truth of the situation: is there *really* someone knocking on the door despite the annihilating conditions outside? The reader soon learns the answer to this initial question, but Blackwood's narrative replaces one eerie situation with another. Almost toying with the reader, the unknown guest enters the hut and reveals some details about his identity. Interrupted briefly, the eerie returns when the reader learns that the ambiguous figure 'carried no knapsack, nor was he clothed for the severity of mountain travel' (5249). In addition to this description, the figure admits that he is not even a climber (5251). Given the narrator's description of the raging mountain storm that threatens the existence of a humanmade structure, how could anyone unprepared for mountain travel both physically and mentally survive such lethal conditions? Anyone in this situation outside

should not be present. The eerie, therefore, returns and incites questions about the entity or force behind this individual and how it defies the natural world to appear in this scene. Again, toying with the reader, the narrative reveals the identity of the wanderer, yet when the ambiguity surrounding Satan's identity disperses, the previous eerie circumstance gives way to another: which supernatural agent or force allows Satan to take on a corporeal form that demonstrates the liberty to exist and act as a mortal in the terrestrial world?

The eerie presence of Satan refocuses speculation away from his supernatural essence and onto the agency behind his corporeal presence in a mortal world. The first hint of this shift emerges when Satan tries to explain how he found Delane and the latter's abode:

> 'Not otherwise,' boomed the startling words as though an avalanche found syllables, 'could I now show myself to — you.' Delane was trembling horribly. He felt the next words slip off his tongue unconsciously. The shattering truth had dawned upon his soul at last.
>
> 'Then the light you saw, and came to ―― ?' he whispered.
>
> 'Was the light in your heart that guided me,' came the answer, sweet, beguiling as the music in a woman's tones, 'the light of your instant, brief desire that held love in it.' He made an opening movement with his arms as he continued, smiling like stars in summer. 'For you summoned me; [*sic*] summoned me by your dear and precious belief: how dear, how precious, none can know but I who stand before you.' (5255)

According to Satan's account, Delane had initiated the former's corporeal manifestation through the latter's desire, love, and belief. These sentiments attracted Satan toward the mountain hut, so he could encounter Delane and capitalise on the latter's vulnerable isolation. The Devil's account, however, is misleading. His telling of what happened makes Delane appear as some Satanic sympathiser, but that is not what happened at all. Returning to the earlier part of the plot when Delane occupied the hut alone, the reader can confirm that the event that initiated Satan's arrival was Delane's ruminating on his own personal and spiritual condition. He confesses that prior to visiting the mountains, he spent his time along the 'Road of Excess' through the 'gaiety of capitals where the lights are not turned out at midnight by a Sunday School police' (5247). Delane also admits that his body and mind had been 'surfeited' (5247). By juxtaposing such doctrinally opposing images as carnal excess and reverent Sunday School, the narrator presents a life unaligned with righteous Christian living. Delane engaged in this type of behaviour because his interests lay elsewhere than religion. But like the familiar Christian parable of the Prodigal Son, Delane eschews his past life and seeks refinement

through 'severity, pure air, solitude, and hardship' (5247).[133] The manner in which the narrator describes Delane's transition is comparable to those of such early Christian eremitic monks as Paul of Thebes (227-342 CE) and Saint Anthony the Great (251-356 CE), also known as Anthony of Egypt or Anthony the Hermit. Early Christian eremites exchanged a life of material wealth and/or corporal pleasures for a spiritual one through solitude and physical hardship.[134] The narrator explicates that Delane's 'system rebelled' against his previously errant life and sought solitude in the mountains as his new temporal and spiritual destination (5247). Once there, Delane spiritually connects with the Christian doctrine he was taught during childhood:

> And all day long as he climbed the desolate, unsafe ridge, his mind—good, wholesome, natural symptom—had reverted to his childhood days, to the solid worldly wisdom of his church-going father, and to the early teaching (oh, how sweet and refreshing in its literal spirit!) at his mother's knee. Now, as he watched the blazing logs, it came back to him again with redoubled force; the simple, precious, old-world stories of heaven and hell, of a paternal Deity, and of a daring, subtle, personal devil. (5248)

The arduous exertion of mountain climbing all day in isolation amid treacherous conditions mentally transports Delane to the familiar Christian teachings of his parents. The presentation of Delane's recollection is notably positive. The narrator first explains that the day's regiment of physical rigour rendered Delane's mind in a healthy state, and in this positive state his mind ventures to familiar Christian teachings that are described as sweet, refreshing, and precious. Only when Delane remembers the existence of heaven, hell, God the Father, and Satan are his thoughts interrupted when Satan initiates contact. Comparing the narrator's rendition of these events with that of the Devil presents the issue of reliability for evaluation. With two accounts of the same occurrence, the reader is left to decide which one constitutes the more credible version. The text's deployment of rhetoric in these scenes aids in spotlighting the more convincing narrative. The first rhetorical mechanism functioning amid the narrator's account and that of Satan comprises an appeal to credibility, specifically for reliability. For the reader to accept the story being told, he or she must accept that the storyteller is, in fact, reliable. Similar to the other works of Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror examined in this thesis, and typical of Blackwood's narrative repertoire overall, the narrator in 'H.S.H.' constitutes a reliable one, for there exists no evidence to the contrary. In a narratological sense, then, the reader is inclined to accept the narrator as a credible source. Satan also tries to

---

[133] See Luke 15:11-32.

[134] See pp. 1-70 in Carolinne White, *Early Christian Lives*. London: Penguin, 1998. This section of the text focuses on and details the life of Saint Anthony the Great.

establish his credibility by asserting his authority in this tale by using the same word the narrator used, 'precious', in an attempt to woo Delane and earn the latter's trust. To solidify his intent, Satan even emphasises the word through rhetorical repetition and placing the targeted word in his final explanatory sentence. Seemingly trying to outdo the narrator, Satan uses the word more than once, and this manoeuvre also establishes Blackwood's characterisation of Satan in this narrative. By wielding the same strategic word more than his opposing source of credibility, Satan performs his biblically familiar role as an attempted usurper, for in 'H.S.H.' he is trying to usurp the position of ultimate credibility in the story. The connection between this story and Satan's true identity in Christianity conjures up other characteristics of the Fallen Angel that are also corroborated by a source of ultimate authority among Christians: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it' (John 8:44). The Gospel of John emphatically declares Satan's mendacious nature. Christians recognise that his position as the father of lies renders him as an image of one incapable of telling the truth. This setback to his authority hovers in 'H.S.H.' and dashes any attempt Satan exerts to establish himself as a reliable source. What he claims about Delane's belief and love for him is inaccurate and demonstrates a futile attempt at making an appeal to credibility so that Delane would be convinced to believe and worship Satan.

Given the unreliable and unauthoritative nature of Satan in 'H.S.H.', the reader still receives no complete answers to address Satan's eerie presence. The sensation of the eerie lingers during all scenes that include Satan. To find closure, then, the reader must seek an alternative agent responsible for this failure of absence. Blackwood's Christian audience recognise that Satan—despite his megalomaniacal persona—is subordinate to a higher being. If God permits the failed absence of Satan in the terrestrial world, particularly in a secluded mountain setting, eerie speculation pivots from the question 'who is responsible?' toward the question 'why did it happen?'; in other words, why would God allow Satan the opportunity to appear incarnate and terrorise Delane? For a Christian audience, this situation is reminiscent not only of Christ's temptation in the wilderness—as discussed earlier—but also that of Job. The Old Testament details Job's experiences tempted and tormented by the Devil. Job's patience throughout adversity is well known among Christians and theologians alike. Susan R. Garrett notes, 'In New Testament times Job was considered a model of "steadfastness"' (254). When compared to Job, Delane exhibits patience amid temptation and torment—albeit not to the same degree as Job by any stretch of the imagination. Though the first chapter of Job

describes him as 'perfect', he fails to reflect the perfect image of patience (1). Garrett points out that 'readers of Job' fail to accept his description as an 'accurate reflection of this afflicted man's state of mind' (254). Indeed, Job suffered numerous difficulties and lamented his condition and his perceived absence of God throughout these challenges (Job 19:6-11). But understanding the interpretive nature of Job's characteristics demonstrates that he, like Delane—and all humankind for that matter—is not perfect. Job broke down in sorrow, but that reaction is humanly relatable. Delane indulged in hedonistic activities. Besides Christ's life as depicted in the New Testament, nobody in Christianity lived perfectly—not even the most beloved of his apostles.[135] The commonality among these related instances helps answer the lingering eerie question of why God permits the failure of absence in 'H.S.H.' Delane, too, distanced himself from the doctrinal points of Christianity he learned in his youth and lived a wayward life for a period. But after rejecting that lifestyle, he finds himself in solitude away from any Bacchanalian or Faustian paths. Like Christ and Job, who decided to live righteously and follow God, Delane becomes tormented and tempted by Satan as an opportunity to prove his divine devotion and spiritual strength of character.

The testing of Delane's spiritual fortitude is a prerequisite to overcoming evil. In a bid to connect more intimately to the Christian reader, Delane's experience mirrors that of an imperfect being. Like Job and other Christian disciples who almost yielded under diabolical pressure, Delane exhibits some wavering behaviour reminiscent at the climactic height of the narrative's action:

> [T]he one desirable thing, the one possible, strong and beautiful thing—was to bend his head and kiss [Satan's] imperial fingers. He moved noiselessly towards the Hand. He raised his own to take it and lift it towards his mouth—[w]hen there rose in his mind with startling vividness a small, soft picture of a child's nursery, a picture of a little boy, kneeling in scanty night-gown with pink upturned soles, and asking ridiculous, audacious things of a shining Figure seated on a summer cloud above the kitchen-garden walnut tree. The tiny symbol flashed and went its way, yet not before it had lit the entire world with glory. For there came an absolutely routing power with it. In that half-forgotten instant's craving for the simple teaching of his childhood days, Belief had conjured[.] […] Delane had set up a personal, paternal Deity. (5256)

---

[135] See Luke 9:51-6 in which John the Beloved and his brother James succumb to their emotions and request authorization from Christ to rain fire upon the village of Samaritans who rejected them. Christ rebukes them for their erroneous request.

Delane feels the weight of temptation and seems to have reached a breaking point before he conjures enough strength to resist. At the moment of most vulnerability, Delane's mind focuses on a spiritual event he experienced as a child when he witnessed a divine being. Though the narrator never clarifies the identity of the personage Delane saw (that is, God the Father, Christ, or an angel), a Christian reader would be inclined to attribute the figure to either God or Christ. First, the narrator connects Delane's vision to his childhood Christian teaching. Second, the understanding that Delane's recollection of his childhood vision conjured renewed belief in a paternal deity. The fulcrum of Christian doctrine positions God as a father figure. Finally, the description adopts language that bears similitude to the description of Christ in the New Testament. For instance, Christ in the Gospel of John declares, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John 8:12). Luke also reveals that the 'angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them' (Luke 2:9). The attribution of the nouns light and glory to Christ position these descriptive agents as being directly connected to him. Describing Delane's childhood experience in a similar way presents an ostensible point of connection between what Delane experienced and the reader's familiarity with Christ's description in the Bible. Taken together, these three factors regarding Delane's experience reveal the likely identity of the figure he saw when he was a child. Having a clear understanding of the source of Delane's revelatory experience reveals a wellspring of strength and salvation during his most vulnerable moment. Conveying this personal dynamic spotlights hope for any Christian who finds himself or herself in the throes of a similar dilemma. Delane's source of spiritual fortitude when he was about to succumb to the wiles of the Devil constituted the former's knowledge of and belief in Christ. One could say that this knowledge even saves Delane literally during his diabolical trial. With this help, Delane overcomes evil. Since Christ is the fundamental source of spiritual strength throughout Christianity, those familiar with his teachings would not struggle to establish connections between themselves and Delane's experience. Altogether, 'H.S.H.' portrays an example of employing belief in Christ and salvation to help one overcome evil.

As an exemplar of Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914, 'H.S.H.' occurs in a mountain topography with Christian soteriological iconography and the operation of the eerie attached to the physical environment and a supernatural entity. Satan's corporeal presence in this narrative illustrates a transparent iconographic connection to Christian soteriology. Also operating among this mooring to Christian soteriology is the eerie, and Blackwood cultivates two extensions of it to encourage the certainty of its operation. The multiple sources of the eerie is not uncommon in Blackwood's repertoire of supernatural

horror. Eerie scenes in 'H.S.H.' and Blackwood's fiction serve a purpose to evoke suspense and speculation, and this manoeuvre facilitates an appeal to Christian hope that emphasises individual salvation through overcoming evil. Biblically recognisable stories for a Christian audience can encourage Christian hope. 'H.S.H.' ostensibly aligns to the process of Christ's temptation in the New Testament.[136] Delane reconnects with his Christian upbringing and like Christ and Job, endures Satanic torment and temptation to prove his spiritual fortitude. Seeking the mountains as a locus of temporal and spiritual regeneration, Delane's knowledge of Christ manifests the ultimate source of Christian hope and consequently saves him from his personal battle with evil.

CONCLUSION

Mountains in either secular or religious narratives command the focus of diegetic and non-diegetic participants. In their physical proximity to the heavens, mountains carry a teleological function through a nexus between the terrestrial and celestial. With their providing a locus in which mortals can commune with supreme immortal beings, mountains encourage spiritual aspiration. This soteriological element drives Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 and identifies mountains as spiritually significant landscapes. Narratives with supernatural horror, mountain topographies, the strange, and Christian soteriological iconography that collectively appeal to Christian hope might encourage readers to acknowledge mountainous settings as requisite progressive soteriological milestones. Like biblical figures, Blackwood's protagonists experience forms of God and rediscover themselves in the process. Mirroring biblically noticeable narratives that showcase supernatural mountains places Blackwood's mountain topographies into a similar area of interpretation, and by so doing, Blackwood's narrative mountains embody not only biblical but supernatural spaces as well. In his short stories of supernatural horror, Blackwood reveals how his mountains connect to Christian soteriology. Iconography related to biblically discernible elements related to salvation colour these stories. Biblical visions and allegorical comparisons with biblical characters imbue the mechanics of the plot. Protagonists who sojourn in supernatural mountainous spaces might find the source of their literal salvation from physical death, yet most instances demonstrate the protagonists progression toward spiritual salvation. Equivalences between Blackwood's characters and biblical ones are presented in a transparent way to avoid interpretive ambiguity so that Blackwood's Christian audience could readily

---

[136] The abbreviation 'H.S.H.' derives from the style or manner of address for royalty 'His/Her Serene Highness'.

make these connections to Christian soteriology. As the strange operates in these short stories of supernatural horror set in mountain topographies, it becomes apparent that Blackwood's mountains in his narrative enterprise function similarly to features in the previous tales set in cities, gardens, and forests. Whether the protagonists encounter structures and people who should exist yet do not or individuals who should not exist at a certain time and place but do, Blackwood continues to employ the eerie, and this chapter reveals that it flourishes within his narrative mountain settings. As encountered in earlier chapters, the eerie pivots conceptually on agency. When protagonists and the reader reflect on the possible agent behind eerie phenomena, Blackwood's narrative presents supernatural means that lead to a spiritual end. The function of the eerie within mountain topographies in Blackwood's fiction serves this theological purpose through evoking suspense and speculation to enable an appeal to Christian hope that emphasizes individual salvation through overcoming evil.

Showcasing a triumph of faithful devotion over the ultimate source of evil in Christianity can encourage hope within a Christian audience. Presenting a story with a humanly relatable trial of faith can encourage Christian readers to seek the same process for themselves—albeit one less intimidating than a personal showdown with Satan or his demons. In seeking the mountains as a locus of temporal and spiritual regeneration, Hibbert and Delane—like other Blackwoodian protagonists who do the same—made a wise decision. This circumstance positions these protagonists as exemplary figures who improved their lives through experiencing the physical landscape of a narrative. As characters flee cities for ephemeral sensations of spirituality in gardens and enter forests to initiate a spiritual connection to forces beyond terrestrial comprehension, Blackwood's mountains become the trajectorial zenith in one's progressive soteriological journey. Blackwood's deployment of supernatural horror, the strange, and the mountain topography mutually engage with his Christian readers to an extent that their encounter with Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror (re)assembles their learned perspective of mountains in general. Like the parables in the New Testament, Blackwood's narratives perform a didactic function that guides a nuanced perspective to perceive the terrestrial environment—and mountains in particular—as ultimately and unquestionably sacred sources of personal salvation.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914 that occur in such topographies as cities, gardens, forests, and mountains with Christian soteriological iconography are designed to encourage his audience to experience these terrestrial settings in a certain way. That manner constitutes sequentially engaging these essential progressive soteriological milestones. They enable one's physical and spiritual advancement that originates in urban spaces (cities and gardens) and terminates in rural ones (forests and mountains), respectively, because Blackwood's narratives that occur in these specific topographies alongside the presence of Christian soteriological iconography deploy some operation of the strange—be it the Freudian uncanny, the weird, and/or the eerie—to attempt appeals to Christian-specific pathos. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, Blackwood's narratives set in city topographies appeal to a Christian fear that emphasises the need to escape soteriological uncertainty before entering gardens that appeal to Christian guilt (Original Sin), stressing the possibility for one's redemption. Blackwood's narratives continue this spiritually progressive journey away from urban topographies and into rural ones. Forests facilitate an appeal to Christian spiritual recognition that underlines the opportunity to cross a threshold separating the terrestrial and celestial divide toward spiritual development before venturing into the mountains where an appeal to Christian hope features a source of individual salvation through overcoming evil.

The first chapter examined city topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror. Blackwood's personal experience with cities seemingly translates into his fiction. An inescapable condition of wretchedness combined with imagery of evil and damnation dominates the experiences of protagonists as they attempt to navigate their way through the urban abyss. City topographies in Blackwood's short stories reveal Christian components that represent elements related to salvation. References to Satan and diabolical deviants, snakes that tempt characters, and a gaping entrance into hell exemplify Christian reminders of a need for spiritual salvation. Christian soteriological iconography combines with the strange in these narratives in operational symbiosis. Functioning in tandem, the strange encourages characters to enquire about the abnormalities they encounter through the theologically conceptual parameters of Christian soteriology. The location of these soteriological dangers within the city identifies its topography as morally problematic and spiritually unsecure. Whether it be a poltergeist next door which betrays the biblical version of Abraham and Isaac by actually committing filicide against God's wishes as in 'A Case of

Eavesdropping' or the unexpected appearance of a demonic taxi whose sole destination constitutes the entrance to hell located in London as in 'Carlton's Drive', the eerie operates unrestrained. This function of the eerie emphasises probable agency and the identity of the probable agent. Coupled with the soteriological icons related to sin, death, and damnation, Chapter One revealed an innate appeal to Christian fear at the centre of Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror set in city topographies. Appeals to Christian fear for a Christian audience conjure feelings of emotional and spatial insecurity that inexorably lead one to question his or her own possibility for salvation in a space that is antagonistically positioned against the wellbeing of the soul.

The second chapter aligns with Blackwood's biographical escape from the suffocating streets of the city to gardens—even if those gardens lie at the heart of a metropolis like New York City. Aside from frequenting such urban garden oases as Bronx and Central Parks, even if that meant sleeping therein temporarily, Blackwood viewed the garden as an initial destination on an escape from the soteriological disorientation of urban topographies and toward the soteriological promise of rural ones. Since his youth, Blackwood relished rural space, even if his sole opportunity for a taste of it was limited to such substitutes as gardens adjacent his family home or those in cities. As a writer of supernatural horror, Blackwood creates garden topographies that ambivalently present and defy common expectations. This chapter demonstrated that Blackwood's gardens exhibit an operation of all three apparatuses of the strange: the Freudian uncanny, the weird, and the eerie. These liminal locations operate idiosyncratically and characteristically deviate from their quotidian counterparts. Blackwood interprets gardens as Fechnerian and Jamesian harbingers of spiritual consciousness, capable of bequeathing its soteriological cognisance and sentient qualities upon those who engage them. Blackwood's garden can also become a temporary Todorovian space that supports a construction of the weird. This supernatural feature ostensibly reaches its pinnacle when the garden topography hosts activity from its constituent agents—be they plants, trees, or the ground itself, hungry for the souls of the impenitent.

Impenitency in the garden space resembles a familiar Christian dynamic of falling and dying in an Edenic garden. Gardens, particularly Edenic ones, challenge the notion of embodying a single identity with their conjoining of a sinful urban atmosphere with a redemptive rural one. Blackwood packages this understanding and delivers it to his Christian audience as encouragement to experience gardens as conduits through which one can flee cities and terrestrial civilization for advancement along a spiritually redemptive pathway toward increasingly rural topographies. Though redemption is possible in the garden, it is only the

beginning. Those interested must continue their soteriological journey into increasingly rural topographies comprising forests and mountains.

This thesis's penultimate chapter examined the strange within forest topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror. Blackwood's forests present strange phenomena in the vein of the Freudian uncanny and the eerie. As observed in 'Ancient Lights', for instance, Blackwood overturns expectations by using an uncanny forest that carries connections to a human past and demonstrates them along a threshold dividing the terrestrial and celestial dimensions. Within these supernatural conditions, Christian soteriological iconography manifests itself as a significant reminder of human agency vis-à-vis a threshold of soteriology. Liminal agency returns in 'May Day Eve' with its protagonist who departed the city—and its contents—to experience an uncanny and eerie forest in which he must seek guidance about the subsequent destination for his own spiritual salvation. Blackwood's use of Christian soteriological iconography ultimately appeals to Christian spiritual recognition that depends on a familiarity with fundamental Christian teachings about Christ and salvation. This tactic simultaneously appeals to a Christian audience's emotions to render readers more receptive to the underlying teleological function of Blackwood's forest topographies.

This form of recognition particular to a Christian audience, highlights liminality related to the human location between terrestrial and celestial influences. Blackwood's uncanny and eerie forests ostensibly continue a literary legacy of presenting forests with instances of the mysterious, yet Blackwood underscores something more with his protagonists. Distinguishing itself from Chapter One and Chapter Two's investigations of city and garden topographies, respectively, this chapter discovered an optimistic outlook that coincides with what Lovecraft, Penzoldt, Punter, Joshi, and Ashley notice as Blackwood's authorial tendency in his supernatural horror. Optimism combined with a teleologically designed presentation of spiritually recognisable soteriological themes prepares a Christian audience for a convincing message about their place and direction in the terrestrial world. Blackwood advances cohesion between his own history with Christian doctrine and that of his audience to convey an optimistic acknowledgment of forests and their necessary place on a spiritual trajectory toward personal salvation that leads successively into the mountains.

Mountain topographies in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror constituted the investigative focus of this thesis's fourth—and final—chapter. As the tallest terrestrial bodies in the world, mountains accentuate a human propensity to view in them some innate conduit to a celestial domain. This proximity to a superterrestrial source renders mountains conducive to spiritual aspiration. Blackwood equally treats mountain topographies in his

literary repertoire as substantial spiritual and soteriological landscapes. This chapter has revealed that these particular settings combined with the deployment of Christian iconography relevant to salvation initiate an appeal to Christian hope that aims to encourage Blackwood's audience to acknowledge an experience with mountains as a necessary soteriological terminus on one's terrestrial journey toward salvation. Blackwood connects his fictional mountains to Biblical ones to underline shared soteriological phenomena. Biblical visions and allegorical comparisons with biblical characters permeate Blackwood's short stories set in mountains. Characters who experience Blackwood's mountains discover liberation from both physical and spiritual death. Their circumstance is punctuated by similar instances of the eerie that feature in Blackwood's other short stories of supernatural horror set in cities, gardens, and forests. This chapter has shown that Blackwood continuously employs the eerie among his narrative mountain settings. As encountered in earlier chapters, the eerie pivots conceptually on agency. Chapter Four extended this notion when it explored the potential agent behind eerie phenomena and discovered that the function of the eerie within Blackwood's mountain topographies fulfils a teleological function that evokes suspense and speculation to enact an appeal to Christian hope that emphasises individual salvation through overcoming evil.

Chapter Four ultimately exhibited victory of righteous devotion concerning the ultimate source of temptation and evil in Christianity. Presenting a story with recognisable and relatable trials of faith can encourage a Christian audience to seek the same process for themselves. This narrative manoeuvre demonstrates where Blackwood is at his most didactically influential. He exemplifies protagonists who display the potential for and eventual achievement of spiritual enhancement. This chapter has ultimately demonstrated that characters who embark on their personal journeys toward salvation reach their trajectorial terminus in mountain topographies after advancing from cities, to gardens, to forests. Blackwood's deployment of the eerie and Christian soteriological iconography mirror the parables in the New Testament to attempt a didactic delivery that instructs a Christian audience about a nuanced terrestrial perspective experienced only in mountains sacred enough to preview one's celestial and soteriological opportunities.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT WITH BLACKWOOD'S FICTION

A nuanced understanding of Blackwood's fiction underscores the contribution this thesis has provided for scholars of Blackwood. This thesis has equipped scholars to approach Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror with fresh analytical lenses through which to decipher Blackwood's deployments of the strange. 'The Singular Death of Morton' (1910), a

narrative not examined in this thesis, can serve an illustrative purpose for how my reader can apply what was discovered in this thesis regarding how to read Blackwood's fiction in a new light. 'The Singular Death of Morton' will be used as an example here to demonstrate how one could approach other narratives by Blackwood and how engaging a Blackwood story can generate the type of reading delineated throughout this thesis. In 'The Singular Death of Morton', the protagonist and his hiking companion, Morton, encounter strange phenomena. The story takes place in the mountainous terrain comprising the French Jura within which the protagonist and Morton climb during the day. In these mountains, however, the two men encounter the presence of something and someone that should not exist:

> 'Odd,' he said, 'but I don't see that farmhouse where we got the milk anywhere. It ought to be easily visible from here. […] It was a queer place rather, I thought,' he added. He did not deny the curiously suggestive atmosphere of the region, he merely wanted to find satisfactory explanations. 'A case in point, I mean. I didn't like it quite—that farmhouse—yet I'm hanged if I know why. It made me feel uncomfortable. That girl appeared so suddenly, although the place seemed deserted. And her silence was so odd. Why in the world couldn't she answer a single question? I'm glad I didn't take the milk. I spat it out. I'd like to know where she got it from, for there was no sign of a cow or a goat to be seen anywhere!' (5740-1)

The protagonist and Morton have just passed by a farmhouse in which dwelled a young girl and her mother. These two women attended to the fatigued climbers by offering them a refreshment. After continuing their journey, the two climbers reached another part of the mountain from which they enjoyed a vantage point to observe the previous stages they had trekked, but that same farmhouse has disappeared. What existed previously as a physical structure with its two female inhabitants has unexplainably vanished. The protagonist and Morton constitute two eyewitnesses who discovered the farmhouse and interacted with its two residents. But did they really experience what they thought they did? The mental state of a witness could be called to question if he or she is found under some state of hallucination or false sense of reality. (The protagonist's skewed perspective in Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart'{1843}comes to mind here.) In 'The Singular Death of Morton', nevertheless, Blackwood makes it clear that the reality in his narrative has not been altered in any way. The narrator maintains a position of reliability throughout the story and establishes normalcy by contrasting it with the strange behaviour that Morton exhibits after drinking the milk:

> The milk—she produced a jug and two wooden bowls after a brief disappearance round the corner of the house—was—well, it tasted so odd that he had been unable to swallow

it, and had spat it out. His friend [Morton], on the other hand, savage with thirst, had drunk his bowl to the last drop too quickly to taste it even, and, while he drank, had kept his eyes fixed on those of the girl, who stood close in front of him. And from that moment *his friend had somehow changed*. On the way down he said things that were unusual, talking chiefly about the 'Chenille', and the girl, and the delicious, delicate flavour of the milk, yet all phrased in such a way that it sounded singular, unfamiliar, unpleasant even. (5741-2; emphasis added)

When he recalls his and Morton's experience and how the latter's state changed after drinking the milk at the now-inexistent farmhouse, the protagonist juxtaposes two conflicting perspectives: the first explains that the milk tastes odd and spits it out; the other says it is delicious and delicate. Yet which perspective is the more credible one? This dichotomy is clarified by contextual clues surfacing in the narrative. After Morton drinks the milk, the narrator explains that he became more fatigued than the protagonist and struggled to keep pace with him because 'from time to time he stumbled among the loose rocks' (5738). It is worth noting here that the narrator further explains that the fatigue did not cause the stumbling; Morton struggled because of an 'absorption of spirit that made him careless how he walked' (5738). By inserting this last clue to explain why Morton struggled to walk, the narrator renders the more reliable perspective conspicuous through sober evaluation. The quality of performance between the two characters stands in the spotlight as the narrator makes an implicit case for a better state of person. The protagonist refused to drink the milk and continues to climb unimpeded whereas Morton, who consumed all the milk he was offered, demonstrates behaviour akin to one who is inebriated. It is interesting that Blackwood has his narrator refer to the 'absorption of spirit' as the culprit for Morton's failing performance, since alcoholic beverages can also be identified as 'spirits'.[137] Whether the drunk substance is either milk or some metaphorical alcohol is irrelevant. The point remains that Morton consumed something that has caused him to become careless. Being careless connotes a negative state, especially in the case of a mountain climber who requires all his or her mental faculties to avoid accidents. By relegating Morton's mental and physical states qualitatively below the protagonist's, the narrator implies Morton's situational inferiority. Juxtaposing inferiority with superiority, this evaluation implies preference for the more utilitarian perspective as the one that portrays reality. Establishing reality through a clearheaded evaluation also alludes to the protagonist's credibility. By refusing to drink something that tastes odd, as opposed to gulping it down

---

[137] The earliest use of the term "spirits" to refer to alcoholic beverages dates to 1475. See *OED*.

without reservation as did Morton, the protagonist shows that he is aware of peculiarity and is proactive. The protagonist's decisiveness and evaluation makes an appeal to the reader in an attempt to convince the latter that the protagonist never loses his grip of reality and that his relaying of what he experiences throughout the narrative—through the telling of a reliable narrator—can be trusted.

A trustworthy team of reliable narrator and protagonist invite the conveying of observations acceptable without the hindrance of dubious interpretation. The protagonist and Morton discover a farmhouse and interact with two women. Despite Morton's mental condition after drinking the milk, the protagonist realizes that the physical structure of the farmhouse and its female inhabitants vanish. Certain that what is occurring is actually happening, the reader understands that the protagonist and Morton encounter an eerie failure of presence. Interestingly enough, Blackwood ostensibly doubles down on this invested eerie scene when the protagonist and Morton become uneasy when they question how milk could exist at this altitude without the presence of cows or goats. The final exclamatory line of the above excerpt emphasises the incredulity of what is occurring. The protagonist eschews drinking the milk because his expectations are challenged by the mere presence of milk in such an altitudinally remote location where any source of milk neither exists nor can exist. Since the expectation in this sense pivots on the need for cows or goats to exist yet they do not, this occurrence is another instance of a failure of presence, and when added to the overarching operation of the eerie in this scene, essentially what the two men encounter exemplifies a possible case of the eerie within the eerie. This instance of a double dose of eerie in the same scene functions to intensify the eerie through rhetorical emphasis and repetition. Blackwood showcases the eerie by presenting it quasi-simultaneously. Establishing a concentrated phenomenon of a failure of presence in a scene of isolated trekking among the mountains establishes a sure footing of the eerie, and by definition, the strange.

Recognising an operation of the strange, and particularly in this case, the eerie, can henceforth alert Blackwood scholars to any simultaneous manifestations of spiritual and/or religious iconography. This thesis has provided an informed analysis that can yield interpretive results to identify the definition and purpose of specific symbolism related to Christianity. After establishing a foothold for the strange in 'The Singular Death of Morton', for instance, Blackwood introduces a set of symbols familiar to a Christian audience: 'There was something about that girl that struck cold into the soul. Yet she was a mere slip of a thing, very pretty, seductive even, with a certain serpent-like fascination about her eyes and movements; […] [i]n spite of her undeniable charm there was about her an atmosphere of something sinister' (5742).

As previously investigated in this thesis's chapters, ophidian imagery combined with the act of tempting others is a recurrent presence in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror and conjure images of Eden, Original Sin, and any threat to one's salvation. Later in this story, the Satanic woman interacts with a direct icon of Christian soteriology: 'The next moment the figure slid with a queer, gliding motion towards the trees, and disappeared among the yews and tombstones in the direction of the church. The heavy stick, hurled whirling after it, fell harmlessly halfway, knocking a metal cross from its perch upon an upright grave' (5746). A symbol of Christ's crucifixion is touched at the exact moment the serpentine temptress slithers away. Using this thesis's findings as interpretive instruments, this scene begins to make sense. Christ's crucifix (including what it represents) and Satan appear in a mountain topography in battle for the soul of yet another Blackwoodian protagonist. These icons from Christian soteriology test the protagonist's gumption in the face of Satanic forces to prove whether Christian hope exists and is sufficient to allow the protagonist to obtain personal salvation by overcoming evil. Informed analysis reveals the existence of another appeal to Christian pathos in Blackwood's fiction of supernatural horror. A principal contribution of this thesis, then, enables scholars the ability to unlock Blackwood's spiritual messages in not only other short stories of supernatural horror but also his novels and dramatic works.

Ultimately addressing the question in this thesis's introduction, these chapters have thoroughly examined repeated instances of Christian soteriological iconography manifested in such topographies as cities, gardens, forests, and mountains alongside various iterations of the strange in Blackwood's short stories of supernatural horror between 1899 and 1914. This thesis's central argument has equipped scholars with a deeper understanding of how Blackwood's literary oeuvre relates to the critically overlooked context of Christianity. Blackwood seriously deploys the strange to facilitate an emotional appeal to his Christian audience that encourages them to eschew the evils of modern civilization and seek positive spiritual change in the rural terrestrial spaces of the world. This thesis's argument has revealed that Blackwood is, indeed, didactic, a feature that does not reflect pejoratively on his writing; on the contrary, it increases its literary and interpretive value. And that value ostensibly bequeaths further significance onto the natural environment, which flows through the heart of Blackwood's didactic enterprise. He is inviting his audience to follow him. Blackwood discovered a way to employ supernatural horror and the strange to communicate a positive spiritual message to his Christian audience, and these didactic means lead to an enlightened end. That end is what this thesis has demonstrated as the most significant aspect of Blackwood's efforts. Building on a literary legacy of supernatural horror, Blackwood

incorporated the strange to establish a soteriological subcategory of supernatural horror that could be called 'soteriological horror'. Perhaps Blackwood actually achieved his life's ultimate goal ('torch') by becoming *the* 'holy man' of supernatural horror fiction.

WORKS CITED

"Bound for Gold Fields." *The Evening World*, 28 Apr. 1894, p. 6.

Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 9th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.

Aguirre, Manuel. "Narrative Structure, Liminality, Self-Similarity: The Case of Gothic Fiction." *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers*, edited by Clive Bloom, 2nd ed., Palgrave, 2007, pp. 226–46.

Albaigès Olivart, José M. *Diccionario de Nombres de Personas*. Publicaciones Universitat de Barcelona, 1993.

Aldaña Reyes, Xavier, editor. *Horror: A Literary History*. British Library, 2016.

Alexandria, Origen of. *Commentary on Genesis*.

Amherst, Alicia. *A History of Gardening in England*. Cambridge University Press, 1895.

Anolik, Ruth Bienstock. *Property and Power in English Gothic Literature*. McFarland & Company, 2016.

Ashley, Mike. *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*. Carroll & Graf, 2001.

Barclay, Glen St. John. *Anatomy of Horror: Masters of Occult Fiction*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978.

Batchelor, John. *The Edwardian Novelists*. Duckworth, 1982.

Bate, Jonathan. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. Routledge, 1991.

Bell, Michael. "The Metaphysics of Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, edited by Michael Levenson, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 9–32.

Bellezza, John. *Calling Down the Gods: Spirit-Mediums, Sacred Mountains and Related Bon Textual Traditions in Upper Tibet*. Brill, 2005.

Berkman, Paul Arthur. *Science into Policy: Global Lessons from Antarctica*. Academic Press, 2002.

Bernbaum, Edwin. "Sacred Mountains: Themes and Teachings." *Mountain Research and Development*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2006, pp. 304–09.

Bihet, Francesca. "Death and the Fairy: Hidden Gardens and the Haunting of Childhood." *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 148–65.

Birkhead, Edith. *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*. Russell & Russell.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'A Case of Eavesdropping'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 3235-50.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'About the Moravians'. *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 33, February 1891, 166-71.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'Ancient Lights'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4688-95.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'Carlton's Drive'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4191-8.

Blackwood, Algernon. *Episodes Before Thirty*. Casell and Company, 1923.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'H.S.H.'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 5245-59.

Blackwood, Algernon. "In the Jura -- Neuchatel." *The Methodist Magazine*, vol. 33, June 1891, pp. 551-58.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'May Day Eve'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 3579-603.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'Perspective'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4104-25.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'Pines'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi
Publishing, 2014, pp. 4768-72.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'Special Delivery'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*.
Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4497-508.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'The Damned'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings:
Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4890-979.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'The Glamour of the Snow'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*.
Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4351-73.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'The Lost Valley'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*.
Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 3962-4015.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'The Psychology of Places'. *The Westminster Gazette*. 30 April 1910,
p. 15.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'The Singular Death of Morton'. *Collected Works of Algernon
Blackwood*. Hastings: Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 5738-48.

Blackwood, Algernon. 'The Transfer'. *Collected Works of Algernon Blackwood*. Hastings:
Delphi Publishing, 2014, pp. 4470-82.

Blackwood, Henrietta, editor. *Some Records of the Life of Stevenson Arthur Blackwood*.
Hodder and Stoughton, 1898.

Blair, Walter. "Color, Light, and Shadow in Hawthorne's Fiction." *The New England
Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, Mar. 1942, pp. 74–94.

Blakemore, Charles N. "Hell or High Water: The Horrors of the Lacanian Real in Algernon
Blackwood's 'The Willows.'" *Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers*, 1996, pp. 1–
36.

Bleiler, E. F. "Introduction." *Supernatural Fiction Writers*, edited by E. F. Bleiler, Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1985, pp. xiii–xix.

Bond, Frederick Bligh. *The Gate of Remembrance: The Story of the Psychological Experiment Which Resulted in the Discovery of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury*. 2nd ed., B. H. Blackwell, 1918.

Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2014.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 1996.

Bowra, Maurice. *The Romantic Imagination*. Oxford University Press, 1950.

Breen, John, and Mark Teeuwen. *Shinto in History*. Curzon Press, 2000.

Briggs, Julia. *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*. Faber & Faber, 1977.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. "Cinema and the Gothic Extreme." *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 107–22.

Bryon, Glennis. "Gothic in the 1890s." *A New Companion to the Gothic*, edited by David Punter, Wiley Blackwell, 2012, pp. 186–96.

Burbank, Luther. *His Methods and Discoveries and Their Practical Application*. Edited by John et al. Whitson, Luther Burbank Press, 1914.

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. 1757th ed., Oxford University Press, 1990.

Caesaria, Eusebius of. *Ecclesiastical History*.

Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. Columbia University Press, 2008.

Carroll, Noël. *Philosophy of Horror: Paradoxes of the Heart*. Routledge, 1990.

Chang, Elizabeth Hope. *Novel Cultivations: Plants in British Literature of the Global Nineteenth Century*. University of Virginia Press, 2019.

Classen, Albrecht. "Mountains as a Novel Staging Ground in Late Medieval and Early Modern Literature." *Medievalia et Humanistica*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–23.

Colbron, Grace Isabel. "Algernon Blackwood: An Appreciation." *The Bookman*, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1915, pp. 618–21.

Collins, Steven. *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery, Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Crane, Jonathan Lake. *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film*. SAGE Publications, 1994.

Crellin, John K. "Eighteenth Century Pharmacy at St. George's Hospital, London." *Medical History: An International Journal for the History of Medicine and Related Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2012, pp. 327–40.

Cronon, William C. "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1996, pp. 7–28.

Crosby, Joanna. "The Gothic Orchard of the Victorian Imagination." *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 48–64.

Currie, Mark. *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, Complete*. Edited by Charles Aldarondo, Translated by John Paul Richter, vol. 1, Project Gutenberg, 1888.

Dangerfield, George. *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. Constable, 1935.

Daniels, Les. *Living in Fear: A History of Horror in the Mass Media*. Scribner, 1975.

Dariush, Babak. "The Importance of Mountains in Iranian Literature in the Course of Time and the Effect of Modernity on Its Conceptualization." *Motedayen, Heshmatollah*, vol. 16, no. 71, 2019, pp. 77–86.

Darwin, Charles. *Insectivorous Plants*. Murray, 1875.

Darwin, Charles. *The Power of Movement in Plants*. D. Appleton, 1880.

Day, Aidan. *Romanticism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.

Del Principe, David. "Introduction: The EcoGothic in the Long Nineteenth Century." *Gothic Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–8.

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol in Prose; Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*. Edited by Jose Menendez and David Widger, Project Gutenberg.

Dworkin, Donald. "Social Rules and Legal Theory." *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 81, no. 5, Apr. 1972, pp. 855–90.

Edney, Sue. "Introduction: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers." *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 1–15.

Ehrenfeld, David. *The Arrogance of Humanism*. Oxford University Press, 1978.

Erdey, Zoltan L. E., and Kevin G. Smith. "'Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth': The Nature of the Suffering of the Wicked in Matthew." *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2013, pp. 141–73.

Ffoulkes, Maude. "Algernon Blackwood." *My Own Past*, Cassell, 1915, pp. 186–202.

Fisher, Mark. *The Weird and the Eerie*. Repeater, 2016.

Förstemann, Ernst. *Altdeutsches Namenbuch*. Williams & Norgate, 1856.

Freeman, Nicholas. "'Nothing of the Wild Wood'? Pan, Paganism and Spiritual Confusion in E. F. Benson's 'The Man Who Went Too Far.'" *Literature and Theology*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2005, pp. 22–33.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Edited by Trans. David McClintock, Penguin, 2003.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated by A. A. Brill, MacMillan Press, 1913.

Garrett, Susan R. "The Patience of Job and the Patience of Jesus." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1999, pp. 254–64.

George, Jessica. "Weird Flora: Plant Life in the Classic Weird Tale." *Plants in Science Fiction: Speculative Vegetation*, edited by Katherine E. Bishop et al., 2020, pp. 11–31.

Gerrard, John. *Mountain Environments: An Examination of the Physical Geography of Mountains*. The MIT Press, 1990.

Gilbert, Stuart. "Algernon Blackwood: Novelist and Mystic." *Transition*, vol. 23, July 1935, pp. 89–96.

Goho, James. *Journeys into Darkness: Critical Essays on Gothic Horror*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.

Gray, Elizabeth Kelly. "The World by Gaslight: Urban-gothic Literature and Moral Reform in New York City, 1845–1860." *American Nineteenth Century History*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2009, pp. 137–61.

Guest, Gerald B. "The Prodigal's Journey: Ideologies of Self and City in the Gothic Cathedral." *Speculum*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2006, pp. 35–75.

Harrison, Robert Pogue. *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Heard, Mervyn. *Phantasmagoria: The Secret Life of the Magic Lantern*. Edited by Stephen Herbert, The Projection Box, 2006.

Heholt, Ruth. "'That Which Roars Further out': Gardens and Wilderness in 'The Man Who Went Too Far' by E. F. Benson and 'The Man Whom the Trees Loved' by Algernon Blackwood." *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 82–98.

Heholt, Ruth. "Introduction." *Haunted Landscapes: Super-Nature and the Environment*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2016, pp. 1–20.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Translated by William Lovitt, 1954th ed., Harper and Row, 1977.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, 1927th ed., Blackwell, 2005.

Heidelberger, Michael. *Nature From Within: Gustav Theodor Fechner and His Psychophysical Worldview*. Edited by Trans. Cynthia Klohr, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

Hillard, Tom J. "Deep into That Darkness Peering: An Essay on Gothic Nature." *ISLE*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2009, pp. 685–95.

Hillard, Tom J. "From Salem Witch to Blair Witch: The Puritan Influence on American Gothic Nature." *Ecogothic*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 103–19.

Hogle, Jerrold E. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 3–19.

Hogle, Jerrold E. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to the Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1–20.

Holmes, Urban T. *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*. Seabury, 1980.

Hughes, William. "On the Gothic Nature of Gardens." *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. xiv–xvii.

Hughes, William. "'A Strange Kind of Evil': Superficial Paganism and False Ecology in The Wicker Man." *Ecogothic*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 58–71.

Hurley, Kelly. "British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 189–207.

Hutchings, Peter. "Horror London." *Journal of British Cinema*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2009, pp. 190–206.

Hynes, Samuel. *Edwardian Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century*. Routledge, 1972.

Ireton, Sean, and Caroline Schaumann. "Introduction: The Meaning of Mountains: Geology, History, Culture." *Heights of Reflection: Mountains in the German Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann, Camden House, 2012, pp. 1–19.

Irving, Washington. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories*, 2014.

Jacobsen, Knut A. *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*. Motilal Banarsidass, 2008.

Joshi, S. T. *The Weird Tale*. Wildside Press, 1990.

Joshi, S. T. *The Evolution of the Weird Tale*. Hippocampus Press, 2004.

Joshi, S. T. *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction*. Hippocampus Press, 2012.

Joshi, S. T. *Driven to Madness with Fright: Further Notes on Horror Fiction*. Sarnath Press, 2016.

Joshi, S. T. *The Development of the Weird Tale*. Sarnath Press, 2019.

Joshi, S. T. *The Advance of the Weird Tale*. Sarnath Press, 2020.

Joshi, S. T. *The Progression of the Weird Tale*. Sarnath Press, 2021.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward an Old Testament Theology*. Zondervan, 1978.

Kavka, Misha. "The Gothic on Screen." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 209–28.

Kaye, Heidi. "Gothic Film." *A New Companion to the Gothic*, edited by David Punter, Blackwell, 2012, pp. 239–51.

Keetley, Dawn. "Introduction." *Plant Horror: Approaches to the Monstrous Vegetal in Fiction and Film*, edited by Dawn Keetley and Angela Tenga, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Kehl, D. G. "The Chiaroscuro World of Par Lagerkvist." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1969, pp. 241–50.

Kendrick, Walter. *The Thrill of Fear*. Grove Weidenfeld, 1991.

Kerr, Howard et al. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to Present Day*. University of Georgia Press, 1983.

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Alastair Hannay, vol. 1843, Penguin, 1985.

Kinneavy, James L. *The Theory of Discourse*. Norton, 1971.

Koepke, Wulf. "Epistolary Fiction and Its Impact on Readers: Reality and Illusion." *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, edited by Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape, de Gruyter, 1990, pp. 263–74.

Kotovych, Maria et al. "Textual Determinants of a Component of Literary Identification." *Scientific Study of Literature*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2011.

Kroger, Lisa. "Panic, Paranoia, and Pathos: Ecocriticism in the Eighteenth-Century Gothic Novel." *Ecogothic*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 15–27.

Labourg, Alice. "'Exhibiting Awful Forms': Mountains and the Pictorial Framing of the Gothic in Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho." *Mountains Figured and Disfigured in the English-Speaking World*, edited by Francoise Besson, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 317–33.

Lanone, Catherine. "Monsters on the Ice and Global Warming: From Mary Shelley and Sir John Franklin to Margaret Atwood and Dan Simmons." *Ecogothic*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 28–43.

Łaszkiewicz, Weronika. "Into the Wild Woods: On the Significance of Trees and Forests in Fantasy Fiction." *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles WIlliams, and Mytopoeic Literature*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2017, pp. 39–58.

Latham, Robert. "The Urban Horror." *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares 2*, edited by S. T. Joshi, Greenwood Press, 2007, pp. 591–618.

Lawrence, David Haldane. "Sowing Wild Oats: The Fallen Man in Late-Victorian Society Melodrama." *Literature Compass*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 888–98.

Leffler, Yvonne. "The Devious Landscape in Contemporary Scandinavian Horror." *Gothic Topographies: Language, Nation Building and "Race,"* edited by Matti Savolainen and P. M. Mehtonen, Routledge, 2013, pp. 141–52.

Lewis, Michael. Ed. *American Wilderness: A New History*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Lindow, John. "Supernatural Others and Ethnic Others: A Millenium of World View." *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 67, no. 1, 1995, pp. 8–31.

Lovecraft, H. P. *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Ben Abramson, 1927.

Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921.

Luckhurst, Roger. "The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn.'" *Textual Practice*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2002, pp. 527–46.

Luckhurst, Roger. "Corridor Gothic." *Gothic Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1–2, Nov. 2018, pp. 295–310.

Machin, James. *Weird Fiction in Britain 1880-1939*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Magill, Frank N., editor. *Survey of Fantasy Literature*. Salem Press, 1983.

Manlove, C. N. "The Image of the Journey in 'Pilgrim's Progress': Narrative versus Allegory." *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter), 1980, pp. 16–38.

Marder, Michael. *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. Columbia University Press, 2013.

Martin, Dale Basil. "When Did Angels Become Demons?" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 129, no. 4, 2010, pp. 657–77.

Masterman, Charles F. G. *The Condition of England*. Methuen, 1909.

Matless, David. "A Geography of Ghosts: The Spectral Landscapes of Mary Butts." *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2008, pp. 335–57.

McKellar, Hugh D. "Twelve Days of Christmas." *The Hymn*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1994, pp. 1–6.

McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. Penguin, 1990.

Merola, Nicole M. "'For Terror of the Deadness Beyond.'" *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, pp. 23–40.

Michie, Ranald C. *Guilty Money: The City of London in Victorian and Edwardian Culture, 1815-1914*. Routledge, 2009.

Mighall, Robert. "Gothic Cities." *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, Routledge, 2007, pp. 68–76.

Miller, John. "Introduction." *Weird Woods: Tales from the Haunted Forests of Britain*, edited by John Miller, British Library, 2020, pp. 7–14.

Miller, T. S. "Lives of the Monster Plants:The Revenge of the Vegetable in the Age of Animal Studies." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2012, pp. 460–79.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Edited by Judy Boss, Translated by 1667, Gutenberg, 2011.

Mobley, Gregory. "The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient near East." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 116, no. 2, pp. 217–33.

Mohassel, M. Rashed et al. "The Manifestations of a Mountain in Ancient Persia with a Glance at Its Reflection in Persian Literature." *Journal of the Iranian Studies*, vol. 21, 2012, pp. 119–46.

Monleón, José B. *A Specter Is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic*. Princeton University Press, 1990.

Morris, David B. "Gothic Sublimity." *New Literary History*, vol. 16, no. Winter 2, 1985, pp. 299–319.

Murphy, Bernice M. *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness*. Palgrave, 2013.

Nepal, Sanjay, et al. "The Beyul: Sherpa Perspectives on Landscapes Characteristics and Tourism Development in Khumbu (Everest), Nepal." *Religious Tourism and the Environment*, edited by Daniel H. Olsen and Kiran A. Shinde, CAB International, 2020, pp. 70–82.

Newman, Hilell. *Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period: A Review of Lifestyle, Values, and Halakha in the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Qumran*. Edited by Ruth M. Ludlam, Brill, 2006.

Nicolson, Marjorie Hope. *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*. University of Washington Press, 1997.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human*. Edited by R. J. (translator) Hollingdale, Cambridge University Press.

Offredi, Mariola. "The Mountains in Contemporary Hindi Literature." *Archiv Orientalni*, vol. 79, no. 3, 2011, pp. 281–312.

Olderr, Steven. *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary*. 2nd ed., McFarland & Company, 2012.

Parker, Elizabeth. *The Forest and the EcoGothic: The Deep Dark Woods in the Popular Imagination*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Patte, Daniel. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Penzoldt, Peter. *The Supernatural in Fiction*. P. Nevill, 1952.

Poole, W. Scott. *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*. Baylor University Press, 2011.

Proust, Marcel. *Time Regained*. 1923. Chatto and Windus, 1960.

Punter, David. "Algernon Blackwood: Nature and Spirit." *EcoGothic*, edited by Andrew
Smith and William Hughes, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 44–57.

Punter, David. "Algernon Blackwood." *Supernatural Fiction Writers*, edited by E. F. Bleiler,
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985, pp. 463–70.

Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the
Present Day*. 2nd ed., vol. 2, Longman, 1996.

Punter, David, and Glennis Byron, editors. *The Gothic*. Blackwell, 2004.

Purkiss, Diane. *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories*. Penguin, 2000.

Radcliffe, Ann. "On the Supernatural in Poetry." *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-
1820*, edited by E. J. Clery and Robert Miles, Manchester University Press, 2000, pp.
163–72.

Rall, Hannes, and Daniel Jernigan. "Adapting Gothic Literature for Animation." *New
Directions in 21st-Century Gothic: The Gothic Compass*, edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell
and Donna Lee Brien, Routledge, 2015, pp. 39–53.

Read, Donald. *Edwardian England 1901-1915: Society and Politics*. Harrap, 1972.

Rest, Friedrich. *Our Christian Symbols*. Pilgrim Press, 1954.

Ridenhour, Jamieson. *In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape in Victorian Literature*. The
Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Ringe, Donald A. "Chiaroscuro as an Artistic Device in Cooper's Fiction." *PMLA*, vol. 78,
no. 4, Sept. 1963, pp. 349–57.

Ringel, Faye. *New England's Gothic Literature.* Mellen Press, 1990.

Riquelme, John Paul. "Modernist Gothic." *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*,
edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 20–36.

Risse, Guenter B. *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Robertson, Edward. "Where Was Eden?" *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1912, pp. 254–73.

Rogers, Alisdair et al. "A Dictionary of Human Geography." *Oxford Reference*, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-2021. Accessed 7 January 2021.

Roper, Derek, editor. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: "Lyrical Ballads" 1805*. 3rd ed., Northcote House, 1987.

Rust, Stephen A., and Carter Soles. "Ecohorror Special Cluster: 'Living in Fear, Living in Dread, Pretty Soon We'll All Be Dead.'" *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2014, pp. 509–12.

Sage, Victor. *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*. St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Sarbacker, Stuart. "Power and Meaning in the Yogasutra of Patanjali." *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained through Meditation and Concentration*, edited by Knut A. Jacobsen, Brill, 2011, pp. 195–222.

Scarborough, Dorothy. *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*. Putnam's, 1917.

Schweitzer, Darrell, editor. *Discovering Classic Horror Fiction*. Starmont House, 1992.

Scott, Christopher M. "Gothic Eden: Gardens, Religious Tradition and EcoGothic Exegesis in Algernon Blackwood's 'The Lost Valley' and 'The Transfer.'" *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 65–81.

Seed, David. "Hell Is a City: Symbolic Systems and Epistemological Scepticism in The City of Dreadful Night." *Spectral Readings*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, pp. 88–107.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein; Or The Modern Prometheus*. Edited by Judith Boss et al., 1818th ed., Gutenberg, 2008.

Singer, Isidore, editor. *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. 1901.

Smith, Andrew, and William Hughes, editors. *Ecogothic*. Manchester University Press, 2013.

Smith, Andrew, and William Hughes. "Introduction." *Ecogothic*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 1–14.

Smith, Carlota S. *Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Smith, Jonathan. "Darwin's Plants and Darwin's Gardens: Sex, Sensation and Natural Selection." *EcoGothic Gardens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Phantoms, Fantasy and Uncanny Flowers*, edited by Sue Edney, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 99–113.

Smith, Richard E. *Elementary Information Security*. Jones and Bartlett, 2015.

Soles, Carter. "Sympathy for the Devil: The Cannibalistic Hillbilly in 1970s Rural Slasher Films." *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 2013, pp. 233–50.

Spark, David, and Geoffrey Harris. *Practical Newspaper Reporting*. SAGE Publications, 2011.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Edited by Chuck Greif, 1987th ed., Gutenberg, 2013.

Sullivan, Jack. *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*. Ohio University Press, 1978.

Suriano, Matthew. "Sheol, the Tomb, and the Problem of Postmortem Existence." *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, vol. 16, 2016, pp. 1–31.

Tarr, Joel et al. "The City and the Telegraph: Urban Telecommunications in the Pre-Telephone Era." *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1987, pp. 38–80.

Taylor, Charles. "Sex & Christianity." *Commonweal*, vol. 134, no. 16, 2007, p. 12.

Tibbetts, John C. *The Gothic Imagination: Conversations on Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction in the Media*. Palgrave, 2011.

Tillotson, Kathleen. *The Tale and the Teller*. Rupert Hard-Davis, 1959.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Edited by Trans. Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, 1975.

Tomer, John F. "Human Well-Being: A New Approach Based on Overall and Ordinary Functionings." *Review of Social Economy*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2002, pp. 23–45.

Torrijos, Esther Rey. "The Ghosts around the House: Repressed Fears and Literary Images in Elizabeth Bowen's Descriptions of Place." *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, vol. 64, 2012, pp. 131–44.

Toulmin, Stephen E. *The Uses of Argument*. 3rd ed., Cambridge University Press.

Trodd, Anthea. *A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature*. Harvester Wheatshaf, 1991.

Trower, Shelley. *Senses of Vibration: History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound*. Continuum, 2012.

Van Lissa, Caspar J. et al. "Difficult Empathy: The Effect of Narrative Perspective on Readers' Engagement with a First-Person Narrator." *Diegesis*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2016, pp. 43–63.

Vogel, Virgil. *The Land Unknown*. Universal Pictures, 1957.

Voller, Jack G. *The Supernatural Sublime: The Metaphysics of Terror in Anglo-American Romanticism*. Northern Illinois University Press, 1994.

Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. 1765. Edited by W. S. Lewis and E. J. Clery. Oxford University Press, 1996.

Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. 1764. Edited by Henry Morley. Gutenberg, 2012.

Warwick, Alexandra. "Lost Cities: London's Apocalypse." *Spectral Readings*, edited by Glennis Byron and David Punter, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, pp. 73–87.

Wasson, Sara. "Gothic Cities and Suburbs, 1880-Present." *The Gothic World*, edited by Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend, Routledge, 2013, pp. 132–42.

Waters, Michael. *The Garden in Victorian Literature*. Scolar Press, 1988.

Wells, H. G. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Edited by Judith Boss and Andrew Sly, 1896th ed., Gutenberg, 2004.

Whicher, Ian. *The Integrity of the Yoga Darsana: A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga*. SUNY Press, 1998.

Witchard, Anne, and Lawrence Phillips. "Introduction." *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination*, edited by Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard, Continuum, 2010, pp. 1–8.

Wolfreys, Julian. *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*. Palgrave, 2002.

Wolfreys, Julian. "Toward a Phenomenology of Urban Gothic: The Example of Dickens." *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination*, edited by Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard, Continuum, 2010, pp. 9–22.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. Hogarth, 1924.

Zettl, Herbert. *Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*. 8th ed., Cengage, 2017.

Zuffi, Stefano. *Gospel Figures in Art*. Edited by Mark Greenberg, Translated by Thomas Michael Hartmann, Getty Publications, 2003.