Kristina Larsen

Presence, Absence, and the Fear of the Unknown

Terror, degeneration, and isolation in Victorian Fiction

Master's thesis in English Literature
Supervisor: Yuri Cowan
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Abstract

This thesis looks at three works of fiction from the Victorian Gothic genre. Presences, absences and the unknown are generators of fear, and this thesis explores how they generate it. Three aspects are used to analyse the texts. First is the historical aspect, from which Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* is scrutinised. Xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and fear of the unknown is made visible by the reverse colonialism which the titular character brings to British soil, and is underlined by the ambiguity of its gender and form, as well as its influence on the psyche, respectability, and body of its victims. The Beetle engenders presence, absence and the unknown through its existence, making it the embodiment of fear generation. Second is the psychological and psychoanalytical aspect, which focuses on Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan*. The Other pierces a 'veil' that then reveals the realm of horror. Characters are forced to employ defence mechanisms to protect themselves from the terror of the unknown. Psychological and degenerative influences are embodied by Helen Vaughan's gender, uncanny looks, and her formlessness in her death. Last is the short story *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, analysed through a thematic and textual lens. The text's narrative structure is full of absences, gaps, contrasts, and sudden endings. James uses those textual aspects to make clear the presence of something Other. Thematically, the novella focuses largely on fatalistic isolation, more specifically self-inflicted isolation, and how isolation generates the fear of the unknown.

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Terror, degeneration, and isolation in Victorian Gothic Fiction

In H.P. Lovecraft's "The Beast in the Cave", the reader is brought on a horrific journey alongside a man who gets separated from his group while touring Mammoth Cave, the longest cave system in the world. As his torch burns out and the light fades, terrible thoughts of what may await him in the vast darkness emerge. The protagonist hears noises he cannot truly explain, and in his desperation, he throws a rock at what he assumes is some creature following him. As he stands peering into the space which should be devoid of other presences, he realises with horror that he might never know what the thing truly looks like.

Lovecraft utilises a very abstract type of horror, the cosmic kind where we cannot always see or fathom the thing we fear: "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" (Lovecraft 1043). Cosmic horror is the fear you feel when you look up at a starlit sky and are overcome by your own insignificance and minuteness in a vast, ever-expanding universe. Gothic fiction and cosmic horror have that same helplessness in common—that you are facing something beyond yourself, something you have no power over, but which you must survive nonetheless. In the opening paragraph of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" H.P. Lovecraft declares that "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (1041). The fear of the unknown is more than just a fear of what is unseen. It is a presence where there should be none, or an absence where there should be something, which gives the individual what Mark Fisher refers to as "the sensation of the eerie" (61). The notion of something eerie is marked in various literary fictional genres, but it is especially notable in fiction from the nineteenth century and the literary movements following the Gothic.

This thesis focuses on presences, absences, and fear of the unknown in three fictional works from the late 1800s. The first is *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh, where an Ancient Egyptian entity brings misfortune and horror to a British politician through shapeshifting and reverse colonialism. The second work of fiction is *The Great God Pan* by Arthur Machen, which Lovecraft praised for being full of "cumulative suspense and ultimate horror with which every paragraph abounds without following fully the precise order in which Mr. Machen unfolds his gradual hints and revelations" (1088). The novella depicts insanity and the ability to see the supernatural, and how this sight spurs madness in the beholder. The last

is *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, accompanied by some thematic additions from *The Beast in the Jungle*. These are two shorter works of fiction that handle the unknown, presence and absence in different ways: The first by way of apparitions and the unholy intentions of said ghosts, and the other by an illogical sense of doom that prevents the main character from living his life fully. *The Turn of the Screw* is our main focus, but we will look to *The Beast in the Jungle* for certain trends in Jamesian writing that are of importance, as well as for the topic of fatalism.

The focus will be on the historical and literary aspects of the presence, absence and the unknown, as well as on psychological theories that might help in explaining how readers interpret horror. I seek to explore which tendencies reoccur in different works, while having a primary focus on nineteenth-century fiction, especially within Gothic fiction. The intention is to show that realism and fantasy can be and often are tied together. A fantastical plot or theme can be grounded in real-life problems or experiences upscaled and put on paper. An interdisciplinary approach is crucial when one seeks to understand the particulars of Gothic fiction, fear of the unknown, presence, and absence. This will supply a broader and more in-depth analysis of the phenomena at hand, as well as putting the works in a contemporary setting that aids in understanding their significance for the genre and showing their historical value. Victorian England, as well as the preceding era, was marked by changes within British politics, industry, economy, social hierarchy and class division, and in the expanding British Empire, and these changes were undoubtedly influential on the literary works produced through the century.

The main body of this thesis will analyse the primary literary sources, discuss them from a) a historical aspect b) a psychological aspect, and c) a textual and thematic aspect. I will be assigning one author to each of these sections; Machen in a psychological aspect, James in a textual and thematic aspect, and Marsh in a historical aspect. While I say "historical aspect", this will also include a few post-colonial analytical points with heavy focus on the cultural identity, subjectivity and power of the colonising state. Some cross-referencing of relevant points of contrast between these primary works will also be relevant to get a coherent and connected discussion on the presence of absence and the fear of the unknown in nineteenth century fiction.

As a whole, these analyses will show which generators of fear are recurrent in Victorian Gothic fiction, how these fear generators act and influence their surroundings, and how the presences and absences of these terrors create fear of the unknown.

Contexts of presence, absence, and fear of the unknown

> Above every ideal being is the ghost of Hamlet, with all its attendant incidents of time and place. The dark watch upon the remote platform, the dreary aspect of the night, the very expression of the officer on guard, 'the air bites shrewdly; it is very cold;' the recollection of a star, an unknown world, are all circumstances which excite forlorn, melancholy, and solemn feelings, and dispose us to welcome, with trembling curiosity, the awful being that draws near; and to indulge in that strange mixture of horror, pity, and indignation, produced by the tale it reveals (Radcliffe 148).

In the above passage by Ann Radcliffe, she describes the sublime emotions involved in facing the unknown. The fear of the unknown is more than simply a fear of the consequences of an action not yet taken. It is the fear of a thing itself, of the possibilities that lie beyond the known which we cannot control. It is also the prejudice or misunderstanding of something we cannot comprehend. The sensation of loss of control we experience when facing the unknown is natural, and often follows a dreadful feeling: terror. Since we have no idea what, if anything, awaits us, nor whether we are equipped to deal with what may or may not await. We may experience cognitive dissonance, "the unpleasant psychological state that occurs when people notice that their attitudes and behaviours … are inconsistent with each other" (Douglas and Sutton, 186), or feel displaced among our peers.

James, Marsh and Machen all utilise the unknown in terms of throwing the reader into a narrative they have no previous knowledge of. Finola Anne Prendergast, in her analysis of *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer, suggests that "by locating us imaginatively in a weird, alien space, *Annihilation*" and, in this case, *The Beetle, The Great God Pan* and *The Turn of the Screw*, "estranges us from consensus reality and thereby allows us to see it more fully" (343). Estrangement evokes fear, and also enforces the acceptance of suggestion. This is supported by Ersoy, who proposes that "the prospect of entering the complete unknown would arouse fear" (256). A mix of fear and heightened openness to suggestion purports the influence of the reader. In other words, reality is influenced and certain elements are magnified in such a way that the reader's focus is shifted to the core of the narrative.

We can compare the eerie with contemporary psychological examples of some phobias. The fear of the ocean, thalassophobia, includes not only the fear of water, but also a fear of emptiness and distance. This is also true for astrophobia. Nyctophobia pertains to fear

of darkness. These phobias and many more can affect an individual to such an extent that their daily life is inhibited, or they cannot do certain things out of fear of encountering what they are most afraid of. Though these phobias might not seem to have much in common, one thing is true for all of them: They are all grounded in anxiety toward the *unknown*, toward things that one does not know whether are there or not, or that one cannot reasonably say is actually going to hurt them. Some variations connected to thalassophobia are specifically tied to the submersion of things that are not supposed to be submerged in water, like aeroplanes, houses, and so on. Here we see the presence of something that should not be there as a source of fear, whether rational or not.

My initial interest in presence, absence, and the unknown as a trigger for fear followed a video essay called "Fear of Depths" by Jacob Geller about cave diving and the feeling of claustrophobia mingled with existential insignificance. Geller describes caves "built to mess with how we usually take in the world" (6:14-6:18), yet they feel "elemental …, how untouched, but how unnervingly welcoming" (10:13-10:22). As I watched, I remembered reading "The Beast in the Cave" by H.P. Lovecraft some years back, and a particular line came back to me: "Then I remembered with a start that, even should I succeed in killing my antagonist, I should *never behold its form*" (Lovecraft 3). Lovecraft's characters sometimes find themselves in situations where they are lost or confused. Their confusion makes them unable to fathom their surroundings or understand the world around them, which leads them to try to imagine what their situation is. When we are lost and afraid, fear tends to cultivate fear, and our imaginations run wild with terrors unseen. Lovecraft shows us that our imagination is only the beginning, that terror can be lying in wait and that true horror is beyond what we can imagine. Monsters of indescribable form and cosmic proportion, masses of undulating and ever-changing traits, unknown numbers of eyes and tentacles; these are but some of the hints Lovecraft gives of the creatures that lurk just beyond human comprehension.

According to Karen Douglas and Robbie Sutton, fear may be used to persuade groups of people (266). "Fear is a powerful tool of persuasion" (ibid.), but denial is an equally powerful tool for overcoming fear, especially when we are faced with a situation we don't know how to solve, don't want to solve, or feel too anxious or frightened to do anything about (267). In *The Beast in the Jungle*, Marcher makes a decision not to lean into denial, but is instead persuaded into denying himself the joys of life because of fear of the unknown. His fate, as one would have it, is not to be struck by a sudden tragedy, but to inflict it upon himself throughout his long, loveless life. Isolation is a generator of fear which is of

particular interest here. Complete isolation perpetuates an individual response to loneliness, which is often fear of being alone or abandoned. Human beings have historically and biologically always been pack animals, which causes us to seek confirmation and support from others not only on an emotional and physical level, but on a metaphysical level. What I mean by this is that isolation does more than just spur loneliness; it may be an outset for an individual's distortion of reality. A society's isolation from other societies may perpetuate loneliness, but the communal response to isolation may strengthen the in-group bonds to make up for global or national isolation. Thus, the group becomes more closely knit, while also being alienated from any otherness of outside groups. In other words: isolation on an individual level creates more primal fear, while isolation on a larger scale, i.e. a whole nation or a larger group creates cultural fear, or fear of otherness.

Gothic fiction, according to Punter, "has, above all, to do with terror" (14). Its focus on things that may or may not be there culminated in more extreme versions where the imagination of the reader is what is to be feared, rather than there being ghosts or monsters. Some narratives may depict a secondary battle going on in the background of the main plotline, for example a war, a political battle, a failing romantic pursuit—issues that are based in reality but that must yield to the power of the supernatural or psychological terror at hand. Karin Kukkonen argues that "[w]riting … depends on the cognitive and bodily equipment of mankind" (300). In other words, literature relies to some extent upon logical assertions about human reactions to certain stimuli, as well as assertions about human imagination. Gözde Ersoy argues that the Weird is a "challenge for us to see and interpret our world differently" (255), which is supported by Andrew Strombeck who believes that "texts are a negotiation between site and human" (1367). To generate fear, gaps and absences must be in the presence of well-known fear generators. The fear of the unknown is one such generator. It is my expectation that I will discover a variety of uses for presence of absence and the unknown as generators of fear, and that there could be a connection between the fear of the unknown in fiction and the fears of everyday Victorian life. It is my suggestion that literature can function as a filter from which we safely subject ourselves to our fears. These chosen works display a fear of the mind—some would argue that that in itself is a greater danger than death—that may function as a mediator for the call of the void.

William Goldsmith notes that "There is a quality of ambivalence in horror" (18). The fear of the unknown is rooted in a sense of ambiguity, in an uncertainty of the motivations, identities or even existence of opposing forces, and in feeling unsure of how an eerie presence or the uncanny absence of something might impact us. By looking at historical,

psychological and textual aspects of these ambiguities, an understanding of Victorian fiction and fears is uncovered. This reveals not only social and cultural trends that may have influenced literature—or vice versa—but also how different one phenomenon or theme can appear in fiction from the same era. Such findings prove that fiction is and continues to be diverse and unique, yet familiar and connected.

The absence of something can be just as unnerving as an unwelcome presence. One moment something is there, the next it is gone without a trace. It makes us unsure of our own ability to experience and decipher reality; it warps it and makes us doubt our own eyes and sanity. Absences make us question whether what we saw was real, whether anyone would believe us if we told them what we saw, even whether or not we can trust our own eyes. A presence of something that should not be there could be applied to ghosts and entities, of course, but it may also be the unseen which is there. The wind, though not visible on a stark, dead plain, can still be heard or felt. In the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster, there were invisible particles in the air, nuclear ions which broke one's body down, unknown until it was too late, morphing the victim into something that no longer resembled who that person was, and even affecting future generations. Absences are terrifying not only because they leave a space that should be occupied empty, but also because they leave space for the imagination to run amok.

Generally, when discussing presence and absence, the meaning will point to the feeling that something is missing or that something is amiss. For example, a presence will refer to a creature or 'thing' that does not belong, while absence will refer to something that is gone that shouldn't be. The feeling can unilaterally be connected to a sense of 'wrongness', which gives the narrator, the characters or the reader an eerie feeling or a sense of uncanniness. In an essay by Ernst Jentsch called "On the Psychology of the Uncanny", Jentsch discusses the word *unheimlich*, which "appears to express that someone to whom something "uncanny" happens is not quite "at home" or "at ease" in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him" (8). Jentsch himself does not attempt to define uncanniness, as he deems such an endeavour to be of "very little value" (ibid.) because everyone experiences uncanniness differently, and what is uncanny cannot be defined by anyone other than the individual. He does, however, adhere "lack of orientation" and "feeling of uncertainty" (9) to the emergence of uncanny feelings. What this means is that when the familiar, that which we know, gains an unfamiliar element or characteristic, we become confused or anxious, sometimes lost. This is relevant when it comes to the uncanny feelings present in *The Great God Pan*.

If the uncanny is diffuse and up for interpretation, so is horror and terror. According to Charlotte Boyce, "[p]hobia is closely linked with abjection" (174), because the feelings involved in abjection "function as phobic markers, helping to delineate that which must be excluded in order for the subject to maintain its physical and psychical integrity" (173). Since everyone views the world differently, one must also assume that one may see ghosts, monsters, madness, and so on, in different ways. Julia Kristeva argues that sublimation can keep feelings of abjection "under control" (11), thus making the abject "edged with the sublime" (ibid.). Indeed, she argues that the abject is "delightful" (18), possibly because the presence of the abject and uncanny touch upon those repressed urges humans seek to quell. *The Great God Pan,* in 'lifting the veil', allows the reader to feel this delight from a safe distance. One person may see ghosts as a threat, another as the lingering of a loved one or as a comfort. One person may see descension or the unravelling of the mind as terrifying, another as the freeing of the mind. In "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example, the descent into madness ultimately frees the main character from the prison that has been created for her in her own home, both by her supposed illness and by her patriarchal, oppressive husband.

Gabriela Tucan discusses the connection between literature, science and humanities and iterates how cognitive narratology can be applied in order to understand how we "recognize and produce stories" (299). Tucan argues that "most of our mental work is largely unconscious and extremely intricate" (299), and therefore, our interpretations of what we read are also unconsciously made. "[C]ognitive narratology is a narrative theory used as a new possibility for a cognitive approach to narrative analysis and a new research method for the cognitive processing of literature" (303). For this reason, it goes well with a psychoanalytic analysis of a text, since it goes more in-depth on questions about "mental models of the narrative world" (ibid.) and aids in understanding how the brain interprets meaning.

When it comes to the uncanny, Masahiro Mori argues for a concept he dubs "the *uncanny valley*" (98). Mori explains that "in climbing toward the goal of making robots appear like a human, our affinity for them increases until we come to a valley" (ibid.), and theorises a graph in which human affinity lies on the y-axis and human likeness in robots (or, in our case, objects and creatures that appear in literary environments), lies on the x-axis. This graph shows a slow rise in affinity which sees an abrupt plunge beneath the x-axis once the human likeness reaches a point where it is very close to being lifelike, yet fails in some aspects to recreate that likeness completely (Mori 98-99, Figure 1). Not only does the failure to prove life-likeness create in us an uncanny feeling, but so does our own realisation of it.

When seeing a lifelike robot, we may feel nothing is wrong at a distance, but upon closer inspection it may evoke revulsion because we become aware that something is amiss. The trigger could be appearance, movement and movement speed, or sound. Mori exemplifies this thusly: "when a prosthetic hand that is near the bottom of the uncanny valley starts to move, our sense of eeriness intensifies. … If someone wearing the hand in a dark place shook a woman's hand with it, the woman would surely shriek" (99-100).

The uncanny can be more than that which is vaguely human. Imagine being out in the wilderness, walking along a path trekked by wild animals. There is no road nearby, and tall trees surround you. Suddenly, you stumble upon a car. It is too large to be able to manoeuvre between the trees, and there are no trails to indicate it has been driven there. Such a sight, especially when you are alone and the light is dim, would surely give you a feeling of wrongness. Something is there that does not belong. It is *uncanny*, because something is wrong and you do not know exactly what. Another example can be taken from *The Turn of the Screw*, where the Governess spots a stranger upon one of the towers of the manor. Though she is initially confused and curious, the remoteness of the manor and the trouble it would take to climb the tower's steps ultimately fills the Governess with uncanniness.

It is also important to distinguish horror and terror. There is a tendency to consider terror as the frightening tension before a pinnacle, while horror is the after where we feel sickened by the experience. In other words: terror is anxiety, and horror is a panic attack. I have another suggestion for how to distinguish them. Horror, usually stemming from the imminent threat of physical repercussions or violence, is more often connected to the fear of injury to one's own flesh. Death, while frightening, might be seen as mild compared to what terror implies. Horror has the ability to make us think twice before entering an unknown location, to listen for a noise in the silence, to look for movement in the loneliness, to feel a presence when there is none. Terror is the fear of destruction of sanity, of those things we cannot see that may destroy us without anyone knowing, of that which awaits us in the darkness that steals our humanity, of being spirited away without a trace, of being changed so brutally that we lose our sense of self and our autonomy. There may be things we fear which we do not see as an immediate threat, but that we must nonetheless conquer because it might one day stand before us, ready to pounce. The suspense these threats create is terror.

The human imagination is able to machinate terror of things that may not be present or even exist. This is where Lovecraft and James can be connected. Henry James writes about ghosts, but also about the terrible sense of foreboding, that something is bound to happen soon and we should guard ourselves from that which is awaiting. Both in *The Turn of the*

Screw and *The Beast in the Jungle*, James explores the feeling of an inevitable doom that lies in waiting. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the Governess's fear is first at those ghostly faces that she encounters, then it morphs into fear of what they want. In hypothesising the intentions of the ghosts towards the children, the Governess explains that Miss Jessel "gave [her] never a glance. She only fixed the child. [...] With a determination – indescribable. With a kind of fury of intention" (James 116). This is furthered by that which has been omitted or denied, or in subtle changes in personality or tones, like hints that something is amiss with the children in the speech patterns they adopt or actions they perform that do not reflect their personalities or their ages. Some of the readings require a certain amount of reading between the lines, especially for short stories where events leading up to a climax may be partially omitted.

Gothic literature builds on the romantic notion of pleasure derived from nature, only twisting and undermining pleasant emotions from beauty so that they are derived from terror instead. The disorientation one experiences from terror is combined with pleasure, which becomes the narratological tool referred to as The Sublime. Sublimity was first defined by Longinus as 'the echo of greatness of spirit', and this mindset was then furthered by Edmund Burke's definition that "[w]hatever is fitted … 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" (45). These definitions provide us with three conclusions thus far: one, that sublimity is to do with strong feelings; two, that terror is one of the more intense feelings of human emotion; and three, that there is a sense of delight in being terrified. Burke's rendition of sublimity demands that the sublime, beautiful as it may be, is separate from beauty itself. The Gothic sublime is thus more than just awe of nature: it is awe of terror, and delight from fear.

The beautiful, which is simply something that is nice to look at, falls short in comparison with the Sublime, which could ultimately have the power to ruin the onlooker. It has nothing to do with the level of perfection, proportion or pleasantness something has; rather, it has to do with "largeness", so to speak. The more vast, endless or magnificent something appears to be, the more Sublime it is, because it creates a tension within us that causes us to feel our own insignificance in the grand scheme of things. Since humans derive pleasure from the pain that terror provides, it suffices to say that using fear in literature is effective not only for the sake of provoking emotions: This disturbance of harmony can be employed to promote certain ideals, ideas, or politics. According to Cleanth Brooks, literary works are documents that "can be analyzed in terms of the forces that have produced it … It

mirrors the past, it may influence the future" (18), meaning that the text may reflect the contemporary trends and socio-political climates of its time, as well as influence those that will come. Fear underlines the troubles, anxieties and restrictions of not only characters in a novel, but of the audience that reads that novel. The sublime may function as a lens through which to understand fear and how fear shapes the narrative.

A recurrent feature in Lovecraftian fiction is that of deep time. Deep time, the time before humanity's recorded time, appeared as a concept within philosophy even before the term was coined by John McPhee in 1981. Deep time entails Earth's geological age, but could arguably also pertain to ideas about the age of the universe itself. At the centre of such a measure of time sits the measure of humanity, which is such a minuscule part of deep time that one might find the very thought daunting. Deep time, with both its past and future, raises questions about humanity's influence on its surroundings: whether our impact will leave any traces at all in the stretch of eternity that lies before us or if we are only a blip, visible for a moment and gone the next. Deep time, though disparate from the anthropocene, tells us something about how we perceive our own existence, whether we are important or not, but also about the very real impact our existence has on the world around us. In anthropocene terms, humanity is sublime, because we irreversibly impact deep time. It allows humanity to become a ghost of its own once our time has passed. Our remnants may remain in geological time way beyond us.

James, Marsh and Machen explore deep time in various ways. Ghosts such as those haunting Bly Manor could be tied to deep time in that they give humanity a chance to traverse body, life or normal human power. They return from a past long gone, influencing the future and causing devastation. For Marsh and Machen, their other-worldly creatures, whose power and abilities transcends what a human might only dream of possessing, create within their narrative a world in which man is reduced to a helpless, minuscule creature that has no choice but to watch on as disaster unfolds. This is Lovecraftian in nature. While we may not initially recognise these novels as environmental, they still reflect themes within environmental literature that create metaphors for "today's transformed and slightly deformed and desubjectified humankind, which is, in fact, a serious warning" (Ersoy 260). The otherworldly creatures, the ghosts, and the uncanny are there to serve as warnings against stagnation but also against contamination, not just to evoke fear.

One thing to note about these literary works is the trend towards rejection of nature and the fear of twisted evolution. This is where Darwinism and the Victorian reluctance to new ideas comes into play. Roger Luckhurst notes that the Victorian era was defined by "new

authority given to scientific knowledge … and the consequent pervasion of science across a culture previously organized on largely religious and classical authorities" (xviii-xix). For *The Great God Pan* especially, but also in *The Beetle*, we see experimentation taking place which incorporates something unnatural or otherworldly into the human realm. This can be tied to Darwinian evolutionary theories that, at the time, seemed 'unholy' and in direct opposition to traditional views of creation. Paul Weindling refers to Darwin's evolutionary theories as "a complex amalgam of natural selection and other mechanisms of evolution, so that natural selection was a significant but not the exclusive engine of evolution" (36). Darwinism, which stipulated natural selection and inherent reproductional codes, became widely accepted during the late middle 1800s. In fact, a darwinian sociology dubbed 'Social Darwinism' would spring forth not long after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Social Darwinism focused on materialism as a source of a quality lifestyle and health, but also on self-consciousness as a strength needed to propel humanity forwards. Thus, survival of the fittest is translated into the prosperity of the rich. Such a mindset can create tension between groups, and could also reinforce imperialistic, social, economic, racial or ethnic preconceptions and differences. According to Keith Robbins, "[r]acial stereotypes were quite common in late-Victorian England" (8), which Joy Sperling explains could be because "[f]oreigners were described in the press with a frisson of fear, anxiety, and curiosity, were hailed variously as entertaining diversions from the ordinary, as destabilizing forces that might breach British social mores, and as diseased polluters of English culture" (185). Evolutionary theories caused many Victorians distress, for they felt that the very base of British society was now being questioned.

An extension of that evolutionary fear, then, was the fear of the foreign. In his discussion about Lovecraftian writing, David Punter assesses that "the role of the 'Other Gods' is simply to giggle at human posturings" (288), that "the fear is not of slaughter but of a kind of trivialisation" (ibid.). What he means is that these Others are not outright malignant toward humanity, but that their indifference to humanity and to the pain they might bring upon humanity is a danger in itself. If the Other turns its magnifying glass upon the anthill of humanity, there may be no hostility in the Other, but humanity will certainly perceive the action as such when we are set ablaze. In the Lovecraftian epoch, some entities are not aggressive or show even a trace of interest in humanity, yet they still pose a threat in that their power is far beyond that of man, and that instilling their wrath could mean life or death. If an entity is ignorant of man's existence, terror would be when the entity finally becomes aware of us. They are here speaking in ecocritical settings, but this idea can be utilised in any genre

of fiction. People need dramatisation to understand the impacts of certain mindsets upon nature, society, and culture.

Ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and fear of the unknown in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*

Thomas Carlyle, an influential historian and philosopher during the 1800s, spoke of the "condition of England" as "one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest, ever seen in the world" (7). The Victorian era was one rapt with changes in most arenas of life and living, for example within science, religion, art, industry, politics and literature. The repeal of the Corn Laws, industrialism, new discoveries within science, and differing political agendas increasingly led to the British citizen's wavering trust in the motherland. At home, women were increasingly discontented with how they were treated. In mines and factories, workers were suffering health issues and low income. Poverty was becoming a larger issue, especially with the increasing unemployment rate. Even religious faith struggled to find a foothold when new scientific discoveries were being made. According to Robbins, the United Kingdom's "social, cultural, political, economic and religious complexity … reflects a conviction that the conflicting conceptions the British had of themselves had, in turn, a subtle bearing in the world" (7). This is supported by Rémi Labrusse, who argues that "[t]he speed and violence with which the process of colonization was expanding was as much a matter of anxiety as of satisfaction" (147). Many movements that sprung forth as a reaction to the changes of modernity during the 19th century influenced Victorians in ways that brought unease because of the rapidity of their occurrence. The constant shifts in an industrial world, along with the threat of poverty and disease, were marked presences in Victorian society.

It was not only possible poverty that lay as a threatening shadow over people's everyday lives. Death was, for the 1850's child, expected to strike at the age of 41. During the nineteenth century, public health and mortality rates within the cities would improve through actions such as isolation of diseased individuals, cleaner streets, along with a heightened standard of living as a result of economic growth (Daunton 358). Higher incomes meant that families could live off of one salary, which improved home life as a result of more wives and mothers to tend to the house and their children (ibid.). By strictly looking at health and economy, this shift was positive.

One thing to consider is the role that class had on general health and mortality. Those living in the countryside or, alternatively, those that could afford to travel outside of the cities, were expected to live longer than those that never left larger towns (Daunton 351). This is why class was important. For children, the environment was certainly one of the more

important factors for health. Meanwhile, adults were more heavily impacted by their occupation and social standing. Martin Daunton ascribes the "flight of the middle class" to "an aversion to industry and a retreat into rural nostalgia" (358), but also to the evident danger of the environment in the cities. Not only did middle class or higher standing families afford better housing, they could also afford to leave the cities when they had the time.

The industrial revolution had turned cities into polluted areas, filled with smog and disease. When the standard of living rose with the economy, a cultural change occurred when it came to attitudes towards dirt and towards cleaning products. While the 1850s had seen a mass influx of urbanisation and people moving into the cities, this was now taking a turn. Daunton explains that "housing conditions improved from the 1870s [and] [s]tricter public regulation after the Public Health Act of 1875, and control over the courts, insantary common privies, and cesspits, prevented the recurrence of health problems, and local authorities cleared some of the worst slums" (361). One can only assume that this shift led to greater awareness of cleanliness. There is also the possibility that this awareness contributed to a fear of *un*cleanliness, as dirt was connected to disease and disease to death. Furthermore, death was a religious and spiritual thing, as the threat of hell and eternal damnation still weighed heavily as a moral compass, though this idea would come into question due to variations in belief and due to rising interest in science.

According to Patrick Brantlinger, imperialism is "understood as an evolving but pervasive set of attitudes and ideas toward the rest of the world, [and] influenced all aspects of Victorian and Edwardian culture" (8). A historical analysis of *The Beetle* cannot be executed without taking into account imperialism and how it was transfixed in Victorian culture. Though he is mainly focused on the early Victorian era, Brantlinger spends some time discussing how these earlier imperialist ideas were employed in the late-Victorian. Gothic fiction within the late 1800s, in this case Urban Gothic, was often seen in combination with fin-de-siècle fiction. Fin-de-siècle fiction often includes degeneration and change, where evolution, science, descension and destruction, as well as decadence, had their distinct place within literature. During the Victorian period, mediaevalism became increasingly important to Victorians, and stories, poems and non-fictional prose emerged in great numbers. These allowed the public an escape from the troubles of their daily lives. "Imperial Gothic frequently expresses anxiety about the waning of opportunities for heroic adventure" (Brantlinger 239), which meant that in the face of imperial anxieties, authors had the opportunity to return to heroism, especially English heroism, through the written word. Mediaevalistic writings portrayed human heroism, sense of morality and duty, nobleness and

pride, and allowed the reader to dream of a "great England". Mediaevalist discourse brought up modes of conduct that were integrated into middle- and upper-class culture, such as chivalry, selflessness, nobility, honour, and fidelity. The writer also tended to integrate stories of the mediaeval era with issues and ideas of the Victorian era.

Brantlinger explains that

The early Victorians felt they could expand naturally, with trade goods and Bibles as easily as with guns. They could sail to the far corners of the world as explorers, missionaries, abolitionists, traders, and immigrants, opening new fields for the expansive wonders of their industrial revolution, their special forms of religious, political, and economic grace, and their bourgeois-heroic values of self-help and upward mobility (32).

For Victorian citizens, acts of opposition from the colonies could therefore be met with confusion. A.N. Wilson points out that attitudes towards the colonies were becoming more formal during the late 1800s (48). People were more concerned about the implications of the Empire losing foothold in certain colonies during the 1890s than they had been previously, especially with the rising unease regarding the uncertain position of the Empire in Egypt.

Douglas and Sutton argue that "the most profound anxiety we confront as human beings stems from the knowledge that one day, we must die" (79). People deal with this "'existential anguish'" (376) by "organizing, structuring and giving meaning to their lives" (ibid.), or by relying on the company of other people to make them feel safer. Furthermore, it has been suggested in terror management theory that we manage this fear by "affirming cultural worldviews that promise to outlive [us]" (Douglas and Sutton 593). In other words, we might turn against someone we recognise as an outsider, whether it be cultural, racial, economic or based on sexuality, because they pose a threat to the way we wish for ourselves and the culture we belong to to be remembered. The Victorians, living in a predominantly heteronormative white society, at the brink of the collapse of the Empire, and having learned that other races and ethnicities were 'savages', were prime subjects for ethnocentrism.

According to J.A. Mangan, "[r]eligion was not a spiritual commitment but a social habit" (88). Even so, Victorian ethnocentrism prided itself on the "salvation of souls" (Wilson 493): An "imperialistic motivation" (ibid.) was colonising 'savage' geographies and 'civilising' those 'savage peoples' inhabiting them. That was true for more than just culture. Religion was also an issue in many cases. The first time Marjorie feels the presence of the

Beetle, she prays for God to save her, yet "God had chosen to leave [her] to fight the fight alone" (163). Ailise Bulfin argues that *The Beetle* represents a "monstrous pagan threat" ("In that Egyptian den" 143), and that it could be seen as "an oblique expression of Victorian doubt, of the loss of faith in a just God" (ibid.). Such a reading requires us to see the Beetle as a 'demonic' entity, while also raising the question about higher powers. When Marjorie's prayers are left unanswered, she becomes more vulnerable to the influences of the entity. She asks Sydney "Don't you want to get away from it, back into the presence of God?" (Marsh 164) after her first encounter with the Beetle, when she began to hear and feel its presence everywhere. Marjorie's fear bleeds into the ethnocentrist fear of vulnerability to not only other religious influences, but arguably also the fear of influence by other cultures, especially if religion is as intrinsic a part of the culture as Christianity was in Victorian England.

Punter argues that, at least when it came to the "middle-class reading public" (23) at the beginning of the 1800s, there emerged "a taste for a kind of reading which, while dealing in unreal incident, nonetheless located such incident in a readily recognisable world, rather than in the idealised and remote countries of the Elizabethan romancers" (ibid.). What can be observed in this statement is that the interest of the reader may be higher when they explore and read stories based on a recognisable world. By placing a story in a setting that is recognisable, terrors become manifold, since their danger could be more palpable. Such an approach suggests that it is easier to feel fear from something hiding in your own house than in a castle which may or may not exist, or which you do not know the interior of.

The role of the Gothic is important to expand upon here. Jerrold Hogle and Andrew Smith explain that "Gothic actively instigates discourses appropriate to it rather than just passively providing evidence for theory's retrospections about literature, art, drama, and film" (2), meaning that it, joined with other approaches, creates room for varied interpretations of the themes at hand. A historical approach demands a certain viewpoint from which to observe the subject. Post-colonial ideas about Britain and *The Beetle* reveal points about fear which were perhaps less apparent during the Vicorian era than they may be in the present. Britain, especially in the late 1800s, saw such rapid change that may have been met in a handful of different ways: by accepting and adapting or conforming, by reluctant acceptance, by indifference, or by opposition. Since changes were occurring across almost all arenas of Victorian living, the second option seems more plausible, though opposition to certain changes would certainly be expected. One may have no qualms with certain elements of one's reality changing, but strongly against others. Indeed, Brantlinger connects imperialism to racism and sexism, claiming that these are related to each other in social class, gender and

political reform (11). This could be argued to be a force that drives the xenophobia in *The Beetle*.

The idea of revenge, of the colonised repaying the wrongs done unto them, was not atypical of Egyptian-themed Gothic fiction, and was a reflection of the anxiety felt back home during the late 1800s. Many Gothic tales contained the assault on Egyptian artefacts or historical sites. Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* is one such example, where a young Brit, along with a group of archaeologists, try to revive a mummy. Possession, death, and avenging entities are recurrent themes in *The Jewel* which we also see in *The Beetle*. In *The Beetle*, the assault that serves as the onset of the Beetle's revenge is also bodily: the murder of a priestess of the cult of Isis. The Beetle claims that Lessingham is the cause of the spilling of "innocent blood" (Marsh 136), and swears to have "vengeance in [its] own fashion" (Marsh 138), regardless of British law. Plots about the revenge of the colonised, and especially of "ancient Egyptian curses" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 413) could be a representation of "the powerful desire for full control of the Suez Canal [or of other colonial areas of interest], and the corollary dread of losing access to it" (ibid.). The state of the Empire in Egypt became increasingly controversial in the 1890s, since the uneasiness regarding politics in the East induced "anxiety" among the masses, a sort of "imperial paranoia" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 416). The Suez Canal was critical for trade between the British Empire and the East. As such, the question of upholding power over the canal brought on a sense of uncertainty not only for the British economy, but for the Empire itself. Additionally, fears were beginning to form about the safety of the metropole of the empire. The UK was becoming an "imperial democracy", though Robbins notes that the concept itself was loaded with "inherent tension" (40), possibly due to the reluctance of accepting that the power of the Empire was diminishing. This is important with regard to *The Beetle*, where an Egyptian force seeking revenge for British trespass follows the Englishman home to exact that revenge. Indeed, the Beetle's disregard for the laws of Britain is frightening in itself, since it gives some idea of the entity's power. If it does not fear the power of the Empire, it must hold incomprehensible potential for destruction.

Bulfin argues that *The Beetle* is part of "a subgenre of Egyptian-themed gothic fiction" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 412). Such stories often contain "English trespass into an ancient Egyptian tomb, the misappropriation and removal of a mummy or its artifacts back to England, and the unleashing of a curse which sees an ancient supernatural invader exacting revenge in the heart of the imperial metropolis" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 413). Paired with the fear of "foreign import of plague" held by the "propertied classes"

(Wilson 36), it is not far-fetched to assume that retaliation from the colonised was a legit worry for some of the less imperialist Britons. Leslie Allin suggests that while *The Beetle* "activat[es] numerous stereotypes about the Orient and articulat[es] various forms of threat, Marsh's text participates in the established discourse in order to highlight these fears and draw reader's attention to his real target: British conduct and fantasy" (116). In other words, the novel may be trying to make the reader think about why they feel fear: whether their fear is based in reality or not, whether the threat is realistic, and if so, if it is self-inflicted or deserved. If someone is the target of a revenge scheme, one must take into consideration what that person has done to become the target of that scheme in the first place. Since the reader is initially 'out of the loop' when it comes to why Lessingham is being targeted, they may create scenarios that support this persecution. Whether Lessingham deserves what is coming to him or not thus becomes a matter of imagination, until his past deeds are exposed. Such a mindset opens up for two sources of fear: 1) fear of the Beetle and what it may do to Lessingham and 2) fear of Lessingham and what he might do to those around him. Since the motives and actions of both these characters are unclear until Marjorie's kidnapping, their impact on other characters becomes that much more frightening. It is only when the narrative shifts to Champnell, who then hears Lessingham's recount of the affairs in Egypt, that the reader is presented with a new view to take into consideration. Before this, Lessingham is viewed with some suspicion, at least through a post-colonial lens, but once it is revealed that he was kept prisoner, his murder of the priestess seems more justified.

In Lovecraftian terms, the individual would be "cramped by alien encroachment" (Punter 281), though *The Beetle* differs in that the 'alien' is wittingly encroaching. Bulfin suggests that works like *The Beetle* show "a spectrum of sentiment about Egypt, ranging from fear to desire" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 421) and reflect "broader imperial anxieties about decline and fall" (ibid.). After Holt's break-in, Lessingham lives in constant fear of the Beetle, knowing it hides itself somewhere nearby and invading 'his' London, threatening not only his life, but the very fabric of his identity. The Beetle's presence, whether merely by mention or physical proximity, threatens to unravel Lessingham's mind, reducing him to a "victim of a delusion" (Marsh 181) and a "frenzied animal" (182) by the terror inflicted upon him. Vuohelainen supports this notion by suggesting that the Beetle "poses a threat not only to the individual, but also more generally to British culture" (314). Tales about degeneration and persecution might be symbolism for imperialism in decline – the tables have turned, and now the persecutor is being persecuted. Sloan differentiates between xenophobia and racism, describing racism as "outwards, a projection of racial otherness upon those perceived to be

both distinct from and inherently inferior to one's own racial group" (57) and xenophobia as "the belief that one's collective identity is under attack" (ibid.). Xenophobia in this instance suggests that one's negative reaction is not due to the colour of another's skin, but that what they represent is a threat to one's own culture and ways of living. In making Lessingham, Holt and Marjorie victims of reverse imperialism, Marsh shows the terror of being overrun by an outside force, whether such a form of persecution is deserved or not.

Science and evolution creates unease when it becomes occult or inhabits occult characteristics. Allegra Fryxell suggests that "Ambiguous phantoms and prophecies that conceivably were the product of supernatural agency or causal conditions unexplainable by modern science, the curse of the mummy was a 'science of possibility' that blurred the boundaries between science and pseudo-science" (535-6). In *The Beetle*, twisted evolution occurs in two characters: the Beetle, in the amorphousness of their body; and Sydney Atherton, with his experiments. Whether the latter can truly be considered a heroic figure is up for debate. Atherton's life's work is the creation of a mass-destruction weapon: "legalized murder" (Marsh 80), he calls it. When the Beetle morphs—or evolves—it is considered grotesque, especially when combined with the mesmerism of its victims. Mangan notes that "[s]talwart and less stalwart Christians adopted a Darwinian posture when it suited them" (89). Atherton traverses the Darwinian, denies and then embraces it as it pleases him, which would have made his character rather discomforting for the Victorian reader, yet he is justified in his actions because he is doing it as a means of aiding his country. The morphosis of life is seen as worrying and disgusting when performed by the Other, yet accepted when performed by oneself. "What a sublime thought to think that in the hollow of your own hand lies the life and death of nations" (Marsh 80), Sydney says, but this sentiment is not shared by others that come to know what his experiments entail. Though Darwinian thoughts were slowly being embraced by British society, there were still qualms about the 'ungodliness' of modern science. The same holds true for Dr. Raymond in *The Great God Pan*, whose experiments set loose upon the world an entity that can "ruin[…] [a] man, in body and soul" (Machen 19).

There are several displays of xenophobia in *The Beetle*, and some of these are textual rather than cultural. Language is one such example. Simon Marsden suggests that "[t]he absence of the *logos* … offers a link between the novel's images of privation and its navigation of the cultural anxieties of late-Victorian modernity" (59). *The Beetle* is rife with descriptions of the Beetle that are inconclusive to age, gender or ethnicity, but that emphasise the otherness and disagreeableness of the entity. Atherton describes the Beetle as "oriental to

the fingertips … yet … [he] could not make up [his] mind as to the exact part of the east from which he came" (Marsh 129), but also that "he was not a flattering example of his race, whatever his race might be" (ibid.), and lapses into a rather racist internal tirade about the 'Arab's' supposed black genes and the "extreme rapidity" (ibid.) of ageing in black people. Champnell, too, notes his doubt at the Beetle being "any more an Arab than [he] was" (332). Holt, when asked to describe the Beetle, says that "[t]o do so adequately would be beyond [his] powers" (221). The amorphous body of the entity is uncanny not only because it defies Victorian expectations about race and gender, but because these ambiguities contribute to the eerie gap between the British 'heroes' and the Egyptian 'villain'. Characters often find themselves tongue-tied or at a loss for words when they are confronted by the Beetle or its mesmeric power, and they struggle to figure out what its true form is.

In *Fear, Loathing, and Victorian Xenophobia*, Marlene Tromp, Maria K. Bachman and Heide Kaufman have collected a variety of essays that pay attention to "the complexities of colonial and imperial contexts and ideologies" (1) in regard to xenophobia and literary trends of the nineteenth century. Tromp et. al. believe that "Victorian xenophobia [is] a way of interpreting the perceived foreignness of people, objects, and locations as a threat to English culture and identity" (2). Furthermore, xenophobia may mean fear of "foreign bodies and/or the transgression of physical boundaries of homeland, nation-space, community, and family" (ibid., 2-3). Looking at xenophobia as a form of fear that correlates to identity enables us to better understand how works that focus on otherness, presences or absences may instil horror within a contemporary audience. Defining foreignness is less easy, since what is foreign depends upon not only one's own culture, but also one's level of exposure to other cultures and peoples. We must therefore define the foreign as anything "not British" or "not Human" in the context of Marsh, Machen and James.

Bulfin suggests that works like *The Beetle* show "a spectrum of sentiment about Egypt, ranging from fear to desire" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 421) and reflect "broader imperial anxieties about decline and fall" (ibid.). The point is not just that the 'otherworldly' is at large in *The Beetle*, but that something the British characters cannot fully understand, even after they learn the origins of the creature, is threatening the very fabric of their existence. The Beetle threatens their lives in ways they cannot comprehend or know how to oppose (and they ultimately find chance is what saves them). The Beetle, the 'Other', is the reverse colonialism which encroaches on the coloniser's land, or, in this case, body and soul. The entity's "foreign origins … render the monster particularly loathsome, indeed animalistic and parasitic" (Vuohelainen 315), and it is described as "the most awful-looking creature"

(Marsh 301), "the personification of evil" (332), "a monster" (ibid.) and so on. The uncanniness of the Beetle is its vagueness, the way it shapeshifts and morphs, its ambiguous gender and form, and the reason for its hatred. It could be any ethnicity, and that is unnerving.

Ethnocentrism, at its very core, reduces the out-group to something less than human, and "in its strongest sense is often a feature at least in the early history of relations between racial and ethnic groups" (Douglas and Sutton 498). When the Beetle first speaks, Holt has no doubt the owner of the voice is foreign. He describes it as "the most disagreeable voice [he] has ever heard" (Marsh 17) with the "most disagreeable effect" (ibid.) on him. Indeed, the 'Arab's' voice is likened to "a rusty saw" (60) because of its "queer foreign twang" (ibid.). Sydney also finds the Beetle's human form and voice disgusting, and tells the Beetle that "this is London, not a dog-hole in the desert" (85) when told of the Children of Isis. The British characters' disdain for the 'Arab's' form of speech could be utilisations of xenophobic remarks against foreign accents and foreign speakers. Furthermore, Sydney's 'dog-hole' allegory of the East exemplifies a disillusion of the East as barren, god-less and evil. Lessingham's account of his first meeting with the Beetle underlines this, but also expands it. Another thing to note is the "mesmeric quality" (Marsh 84) in the 'Arab's' eyes Sydney is struck by when he meets the entity. Sydney theorises that "his was one of those morbid organizations which are oftener found, thank goodness, in the east than in the west" (ibid.). By indicating that the Cult of Isis could be anywhere in Egypt, hidden and performing horrible crimes against Englishmen and -women (Marsh 330), Marsh points to a xenophobic aversion to Egypt and its religious practices, warning against visiting such 'savage' places and being careless with the foreign.

According to Marsden, "the Beetle's monstrosity remains closely linked to its namelessness". The reader relies on descriptions or nicknames given by the British characters to recognise the entity. The most descriptive encounter with the entity is given at the very beginning of the novel, just after Robert Holt has sought refuge in what he assumes is an abandoned house. As he stands in the room he has crawled into, Holt becomes "aware that something was with [him] in the room" (Marsh 12), even though there is "nothing … to lead [him] to such a conviction" (ibid.). He is struck by "panic fear" (13) which freezes him to the spot, and he felt that "the presence in the room was something strange, something evil" (ibid.) Since he cannot see the presence, Holt is left to imagine what is with him, and he is "shivering at his own imaginings" (ibid.). The presence at first makes itself known through two yellow, shining eyes, but nothing else of its body is revealed, spare for noises that are both wet and reminiscent of the scurrying of a large spider. The creature's movements are

uneven, and move in such a way as to betray any living creature Holt can attribute them to. If the Other is not only alien, but may also be amorphous, our understanding of it becomes muddled and confused. According to theories of the Uncanny, that which confuses us creates fear in us, precisely because we cannot fathom what is before us. It is not only an amalgam of the Other's *otherness*—its features, qualities, ethnicity or morals—but of what we cannot entirely place. The Beetle "is one of the most loosely defined creatures in *fin-de-siècle* gothic—not a mummy, but rather some type of demonic scarab incarnation" (Bulfin "The Fiction of Gothic Egypt" 419). The Beetle transcends gender, species, and form. It can hypnotise, mesmerise and prevent or cause death. Those it encounters are left feeling helpless, unable to withstand its power. It is reverse imperialism made into a creature. That Paul Lessingham is a politician makes this comparison no less apparent. Since Victorians were convinced that the Empire was a blessing for those colonised "savage" states, but not vice-versa, this reverse imperialistic connotation would engender horror within the imperialist reader.

The viewpoint of some thinkers is that history is fallible at best, and there does tend to be a bias in history toward the victors of battle or of the writers of history. Walter Benjamin contends that "[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (739), and argues that "if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize[,] [t]he answer is inevitable: with the victor" (ibid.). Awareness of such a bias must be present, which is why a historical approach also must take into consideration the negative impacts of the victor upon the vanquished. Note, for example, that during the Victorian era, "Victorian Britons appropriated the Egyptian past by collecting artefacts, composing travel narratives, and incorporating Egyptian themes into English Gothic fiction" (Fryxell 520). This is supported by Rajani Sudan, who argues that xenophobia "operates … as a fetish: a something in which we invest and cathect a good deal of cultural meaning in order to organize and clarify our own culture and nation as something distinct" (94). According to terror management theory, this appropriation of Egyptian culture into Gothic ethnocentric fiction is therefore hypocritical, since it falsely represents another country's culture to put its own culture in a better light.

Some views of imperialism were painted both with the reluctance of encroaching upon other nationalities, but also by a sense of inevitability stemming from racist views of other races and their physical, mental and emotional abilities (Brantlinger 22). British imperialism was, in certain ways, upheld by consensus that it was Britain's duty to colonise and civilise "savage" countries that had not conformed to western culture, while also

claiming resources which were useful for the Empire. Indeed, Tromp et. al. argues that xenophobia emerges as a by-product of nationalism and nation-building" (5). Ignoring the reason for native 'savagery'—colonisation and violence enacted by settlers and colonists—is a cognitive dissonance in itself, and as such, Victorian xenophobia was hypocritical, especially considering the appropriation Britons themselves were guilty in terms of Egyptomania. Marsden argues that it is "easy for a society to make its monsters out of those it perceives as Other. It is more difficult … to recognise in its monsters the image of itself" (65). The colonising state being afraid of colonisation is a testament to the hypocrisy of the privileged. It also insinuates a deeper issue: that the colonising state itself is the degenerative power over the individual. Holt, for example, is already degenerated before he stumbles upon the Beetle, as it is in no way related to the ethnic Other. His degeneration begins, first and foremost, with the oppressing forces of his birth country, whose norms and internal hierarchies regress him into something 'savage': a vagabond. Filth and sin were degenerative and associated with lower classes, which makes Holt's situation terrifying in that he is being 'cast down' and reduced to a criminal. The idea of degeneration implies that there is something like the 'perfect specimen' from which humanity can become degenerate from, that there is a perfect version of someone that they must strive to be. This is not to say that the primitive or wild were inherently bad qualities, for nature itself, in the mediaeval sense, carried "positive value in and for itself" (Punter 6). The return to nature was not necessarily a fear generator, but reverting to 'savagery' was very much so.

The hierarchical Others within Victorian England were met with some level of disgust or fear. The industrial revolution and the growth of cities was a point of anxiety. Urbanisation as a result of rural population decline led to the formation of suburbs, which blurred the lines between country and city. This change on a large scale had some people feeling "gloomy about the swelling 'masses' who inhabited the cities and felt that the link between 'urban' and 'urbanity', the 'city' and 'civilization' was about to dissolve" (Robbins 57). England was during the middle- to late-Victorian era divided into three social classes, where the rich and influential occupied the Upper class, the bourgeoisie and working populace made up the Middle class, and the Under class were those below poverty thresholds that were reliant upon the goodwill of the classes over them. Carlyle lamented the the treatment of the poor and the idolisation of the rich, and felt that the distribution of wealth was unfair: "We have more riches than any Nation ever had before; we have less good of them than any Nation ever had before" (11). On the other side, the class system combined with the new industry could allow those in the lower classes to "rise … through the ranks" (Wilson 60), if only they worked

hard enough and accumulated enough wealth. More often than not, those considered 'alien' or 'other' would be found within the category of those less fortunate, and those in the "gutter-snipe class[es]" (Marsh 333) could be treated with something akin to xenophobia despite being 'full blooded' Englishmen. Weindling explains that "[t]he grime and dirt of the poor was a sign that they were degenerating into African savages" (37), which supports this sentiment.

Xenophobia thus makes itself known in the form of degeneration. Brantlinger explains that a "principal [theme] of imperial Gothic [is] individual regression or going native" (230). Holt is forced to strip naked and wear only an eastern cape which, paired with his inability to be articulate, reduces him to something other British characters see as "alien" or "lesser". For example, Lessingham sees him as an amalgam of English and foreign, while Sydney perceives him as dirty, a "lunatic" (Marsh 75) and a life-time criminal come "face to face with the devil" whose look is "far worse" than that of a "madman" (ibid.). Additionally, the cape itself spurs fear since it alludes to otherness in-and-of itself: "Why do you stand there in that extraordinary garment–it's worse than nakedness (49). Holt himself describes the cape as "increas[ing] [his] sense of helplessness" (40). Holt is reduced not only to being 'criminal', he becomes a 'foreign madman'. In Victorian upper society, such a person would be appalling and terrifying. During Holt's hypnosis, he is met with disgust by those that find him lying in the street. Nary a soul touches him, Marjorie Lindon is looked upon with disbelief for taking him in, and his presence at the Lindon house must be kept secret from Mr Lindon.

Holt's 'descension' or degeneration begins once he loses his job. Idleness was, during the nineteenth century, viewed as detrimental to good mental health and to one's character. Fifty years prior to *The Beetle* hitting the shelves, Thomas Carlyle had described idleness as "perpetual despair" (196), likening work to "perennial nobleness … even sacredness" (ibid.), but also faulted the upper class for not enabling those idle ones to work. He said that "[w]e have sumptuous garnitures for our Life, but have forgotten to *live* in the middle of them" (10), meaning that he noted a shift in luxury-attention of the average Brit, where monetary value was becoming more important than life-quality value. Carlyle doubled down on the idea that the aristocracy has a responsibility to bear the responsibility for what happens to the lower classes, because to be an aristocrat is to stand warrior and leader for those that are weaker than oneself (181). When Holt is reduced to being 'gutter-snipe', he has lost all purpose and nobleness. The fault is not his, however, for he has sought work to no avail to the point that he has become exhausted and left no choice but to become a burglar to have

somewhere safe to stay for the night. Indeed, he does not become open to corruption before "the city has expelled him from its centre and pushed hom toward the margins at which the urban landscape itself is unmade" (Marsen 64).

Those within this 'gutter-snipe class' are met with surface level politeness. Vuohelainen notes that the upper-class characters "regard [East End slum-dwellers] with evident suspicion as culturally and racially alien" (318). Champnell calls those lower-class citizens he relies on during his investigation 'gentlemen' and 'ladies', but mentally ridicules their ways of speaking, i.e. "pleesman" (Marsh 335), and calls them '"ragamuffins" (ibid.). These characters are ultimately helpers, but are often portrayed as resistant and difficult to work with, because their heavy accents are "incompatible with upper-class English accents" (Vuohelainen 318).

Another way that degeneration occurs is through the loss of oratory power or ability to think. "Britishness is here associated with measured linguistic expression, which itself is associated with knowledge, culture, and order" (Vuohelainen 321). This means that loss of words and trouble speaking that the characters are subjected to while in the presence of the Beetle reduces them to something akin to the 'savageness' Victorians often attributed to the colonies. Holt is not the only victim of degeneration. Lessingham, after Holt's break-in, loses his ability to properly form sentences, and while searching for Marjorie, his "looks and manner, his whole bearing, so eloquent of the agony and agitation of his mind" (Marsh 347) are visible to the point they unnerve Champnell. Marjorie finds that "words would not come; my thoughts would not take shape" (212) during her first encounter with the Beetle. The inability to produce speech or have conscious thoughts places "British identity … under threat" (Vuohelainen 325), because "the loss of language erases the British characters' cultural identity and replaces it with a markedly foreign register" (326). Furthermore, Marjorie, in tearing off her "lovely frock which … [she had] specially made for the occasion of the Duchess's ball, and … in honour of Paul's great speech" (Marsh 213) subjects herself to degeneration, both in terms of madness and propriety. Marjorie describes the action as "a veritable holocaust of dainty garments" (ibid.), which could also mean the annihilation of her purity and composedness. In failing to suppress her fear and thereby tearing off her British garb, she makes herself open to the influence of the Beetle, which promptly attacks her.

After Marjorie is kidnapped, the search team wonders what horrors she is being subjected to and whether she will return "untouched, unchanged, unstained" (Marsh 328) or a "mere soiled husk of the Marjorie whom [they] knew" (ibid.), if returned at all. Bulfin argues that this is a question of "contested ownership" ("In that Egyptian den" 136), and that the real

question they are asking is "whether she will remain suitable marriage material" (ibid.), especially since "the offended Egyptian entities attempt[] … to dispossess the male trespassers of the women who are their most precious belongings" (135). Marjorie's situation is a reflection of Victorian fears regarding the influences of other cultures, especially eastern influences, which were believed to be barbaric and uncivilised. The fear of the unknown is represented in something less abstract, yet the lack of explanations about what has truly happened leaves absences to be filled by imagination only. These events reflect fears of feminine purity being ravaged and traditional female traits being desecrated or replaced. The only hints at what has happened to her lie in her abandoned clothes, the bloody lock of hair, and past knowledge of the Beetle's actions. There is no way to know for sure what or where Marjorie is, but there must be something horrible at foot. Both cultural and individual values are at stake, but so are gendered values.

In "Leaky Bodies", Allin discusses the degeneration of male identity through the loss of autonomy and the "threat of female envelopment" (118), alluding to emasculation as a sort of "subjugation" (ibid.) that I argue could align with reverse imperialism. "The Beetle is presented gender-fluidly, and the way it gains access to its victims is through "sexual penetration" (Harris and Vernooy 353). Additionally, "inability to read the "Other", especially in terms of gender, renders [Holt's] powers of discernment dubious" (119). In being stripped of his identity, Holt loses the chance of understanding what he is facing. Holt is ordered to strip naked, go out, and steal away with letters Lessingham has locked away in his desk. Consequently, he is reduced to nothing but his body, and his body to the shame and dangers of nakedness, filth, wounds and blood.

When speaking of presence and absence, concealment and secrecy must be included. Just as threatening as the otherworldly is that which hides or is deliberately hidden. In *The Beetle*, we see a few examples of this type of concealment and how concealment creates aversion or terror. To Mr Lindon, Marjorie's relationship with Paul Lessingham creates aversion even before Mr Lindon knows the extent to which they are involved. Mr Lindon is terrified of the secrets he is sure Lessingham hides, but he also views Marjorie's loyalty to Lessingham as madness and disloyalty to him. His fear is that their union not only emancipates Marjorie from her father and breaks his control over her, but that it may destroy her because of whatever Lessingham is hiding.

Another thing to consider here is the way Marjorie is perceived. According to Vorachek "women … represented a less-evolved state" (200). The way Marjorie speaks of her father describes the expectations placed upon her: "Papa regards a speechifying woman

as a thing of horror" (Marsh 191). She is expected to be compliant, silent, and to never question her father's decisions. Marjorie challenges these gender expectations by pursuing Lessingham on her own, by disobeying her father, and by taking in vagabonds to tend to without her father's knowledge. Even so, W. C. Harris and Dawn Vernooy argue against the notion that Marjorie is an example of the New Woman—the modern, independent woman—because her independent acts, such as leaving with Lessingham rather than her father or speaking at a women's club, are done "as a bid to impress him" (346). Certainly according to Victorian standards, Marjorie would have been skirting the edges of liberal attitudes, yet she never fully steps over that edge. In the end she forgets the time spent in the Beetle's captivity, and after years of monitoring and healing, she is married to Lessingham, her more feminist traits now abandoned. The Beetle's influence actually halts Marjorie's would-be independence completely. This makes the Beetle somewhat oxymoronic, as the fear of subversion of female roles, which the Beetle now has upheld, clashes with the fear of reverse colonialism.

There is very little visible religion in *The Beetle* save for the Cult of Isis, but one must remember that Christianity was a significant part of Victorian life, so signs of deviation from Christian values would be viewed with much scrutiny. According to Wilson, Charles Darwin "knew that there would be those, including himself, who felt that his theory of natural selection did away with the necessity of believing in a Creator" (227), and this was true for many Victorians. Brantlinger agrees that "[i]mperial Gothic expresses anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy" (229). In this line of thought, mesmerism seemed to the Victorians an almost magic form of 'medicine', with claims that it could cure anything from "neurasthenic conditions such as asthma" to "hysterical or functional illnesses" and even "deafness" (Wilson 106). Vorachek notes that mesmerism was "a source of fascination and anxiety for Victorians" (205), one of the major fears being "the individual's loss of autonomy under the invisible influence of the mesmerist" (ibid.). Holt, after being mesmerised by the Beetle, describes his state of being as "conscious that [he] was helpless, and the consciousness was agony" (Marsh 31), which reflects these anxieties about loss of autonomy.

The hypnotism of the Beetle is likened to the British Empire being "penetrated as a consequence of Eastern Desire" (Allin 126), a sexual and political infiltration that is equal parts intriguing and terrifying. Indeed, the Beetle employs sexual intimacy to perform its hypnotism: "the soul of something evil entered into me in the guise of a kiss" (Marsh 24), and being touched and kissed is described as a "horror of horrors!" (ibid.) or being "filled … with an indescribable repulsion" (258). The body is being subjected to an assault that inflicts not

only physical revulsion, but "mental, and moral horror" (ibid) as well, breaching all sense of propriety and erasing power structures. The Beetle thus serves as a demonic entity in the Christian Victorian view. Its purpose is not solely to create an aversion on an imperialistic level, but a religious one as well. The Beetle is a trespass against Britain, against Christianity, and against the body. The latter may be more pointedly aimed at the Englishwoman, since the Cult of Isis sacrifices women to their deity, "preferably white Christian woman, with a special preference … to young English women" (Marsh 331). The other side of the coin is that the Beetle, being of unknown gender, is a trespass against the male body, especially since it spends months sexually assaulting and hypnotising Lessingham.

Allin suggests that the Beetle reveals "patriarchal governance and imperial legitimacy" as "leaky, grotesque, and thus profoundly unstable" (114), meaning that the male body and empire are considered two sides of the same coin, and that the destruction of one equals the destruction of the whole. In his account of his ordeal in Egypt, Lessingham says he was in "a state of mesmeric stupor" (Marsh 261), a "fibreless, emasculated creature" (ibid.), and that the Woman of the Songs was trying to "trick [him] of [his] manhood" (ibid.). Allin points to mesmerism as the power of the masculine over the feminine (120). Holt appears as 'feminine' in his unstable existence within society and Sydney Atherton appears 'masculine' in his stability, and only one of them is unable to withstand the Beetle's mesmerist hypnotism. Then again, the indecisive way Atherton speaks about others may just mean he is not open to hypnotism because he is not easy to manipulate. Lessingham is according to Champnell "rapidly approximating to the condition of a hysterical woman" (Marsh 324) while they chase after the Beetle, which underlines the degenerative notion of the masculine into the feminine. To Robert Holt, the mesmerism of the Beetle conceals his consciousness, leading to his descension into filth, crime, degeneration and, finally, death.

Proximity is important for fear generation. Allin also describes the Beetle as "a destabilizing force engendering madness works as a metaphor for the inability to distinguish reality from imagination" (133), which is important because the uncanny and the fear of the unknown makes you question reality from imagination. The noises of the scarab can be heard by those under the Beetle's spell and those in the process of being mesmerised. The noises avoid logic and cannot be explained, and seem to come from all directions and belong to all creatures. It drives Marjorie so desperately afraid that she rips her clothes asunder. Combined with the "sense of loathing" (Marsh 38) and the "awful sense of the presence of an evil thing" (59), the Beetle becomes that abstract presence which does not belong but enforces its will regardless. After Marjorie's disappearance, the men search the house thoroughly, but find

nothing, despite the cab driver's insistence that he saw an "old gent peeping through the window of the room upstairs" (Marsh 283). The Beetle can be sensed at will, often provoking a "horrible persuasion, though unseeing, [of being] seen" (12). The novel is stocked with such presences and absences, where the Beetle appears, disappears, or becomes hidden at will. Even when it cannot be seen, those in its proximity are able to feel its presence. Bachman suggests that *The Perils* by Charles Dickens "constructs the bodies of … foreign others as non-human, as fearful and threatening, … because they have gotten too close" (108). The same can be said of the antagonist in *The Beetle*. The 'Arab' is not viewed as a particular threat by Sydney when he is approached by them, but the danger the entity poses to Marjorie, Lessingham and, as an extension, England, makes the threat pressing. Boyce supports this sentiment, stating that "proximity of sameness and difference in the other … elicits a phobic response" (156). Thus, race itself is not enough to explain xenophobia or the Victorian fear of the eastern force in *The Beetle*. Instead, it is The Beetle's encroachment, combined with confusion about form, purpose and power, which creates fear. It is in the unknown, yet also in the knowledge that the entity must have evil intentions, that fear originates. This is not only true for *The Beetle*, but for *The Turn of the Screw, The Beast in the Jungle,* and *The Great God Pan* as well.

      The Beetle engenders fear of the unknown through less abstract fears about empire, gender and sexuality, class and hierarchy, religion, and nature. The intrusion of the Beetle upon English soil is an act of reverse colonialism, yet the trespass does not end there. The Beetle's shifting form, which has no certain sex or ethnicity, strikes fear in the English characters, because it threatens to tear down English ethnocentric and imperialist sentiments about grandeur and greatness. The Beetle is a danger to the present England just as much as it is to the memory of England. Its degenerate abilities, especially in reducing individuals to filth and sin, threatens the fabric of civility, and, therefore, also the propriety of those upper-class characters it endangers. Men and women alike find their bodies used in the most horrendous ways to satiate a 'demonic' entity's need for revenge: men become victims of sexual assault; women are stripped of their purity; they all are stripped of their pride, their religion, and their social hierarchy. Their sense of reality is torn asunder by the power of the entity. The unknown and the fear it generates is a result of the shapelessness of the Beetle, of its presences and its false absences.

Psychology and Degeneration in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan*

Machen wrote in his memoirs that *The Great God Pan* was "an endeavour to pass on the vague, indefinable sense of awe and mystery and terror that [he] had received" (*Far Off Things* 20) when he visited Wales as a child. Fear, that biological and primal emotion, is innate and serves an important purpose, even when it is irrational. Furthermore, the fear of the unknown, which we have now adhered to concrete historic trends, can also take more abstract forms.

> Children will always be afraid of the dark, and men with minds sensitive to hereditary impulse will always tremble at the thought of the hidden and fathomless worlds of strange life which may pulsate in the gulfs beyond the stars, or press hideously upon our globe in unholy dimensions which only the dead and the moonstruck can glimpse (Lovecraft 1043).

This fear of "fathomless worlds" and "unholy dimensions", referred to as cosmic fear, has "always existed, and will always exist" (ibid.), especially since writing horror may "discharge from [the writer's] minds certain phantasmal shapes which would otherwise haunt them" (ibid.). Fictional words are thus an outlet for those otherwise hidden or unconscious fears which an author carries with him or her. Cosmic horror in itself may not be physical, but the effect of the cosmic upon the body still perpetuates cosmic horror. *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer is an example of body horror and cosmic horror mixed in with ecological horror. Bodies and nature are changed by an alien force, and the outworldly entity is never explained or described. Since the source of horror is shapeless and alien, our association with it is the same as with cosmic fear. We don't know what the entity wants, *if it wants*, only that it is altering us and our surroundings in ways that make us frightened or apprehensive, even physically unwell. The abstractness of will is prevalent in *The Great God Pan*, where the entity's intentions seem to view human life as inconsequential, peripheral. Our point of interest in this case is the entity, Pan, and his vessel Helen Vaughan. Pan could, according to psychoanalytic concepts, reflect unconscious fears, whether they be those of the author, the reader, or the characters within the short story. This makes Pan and Helen our primary fear generators.

My understanding of the psychological aspects is in certain ways phenomenological, in that I attribute the subjective experience of the fear generator. It differs, however, in that the historical dimension leaves less room for such subjective interpretation. The goal is to give an overarching view of the Victorian mindset, which demands less subjectivity, yet some subjectivity must be retained in order to fully grasp the psychology of fear. Our main areas of focus in this case are psychoanalytic and cognitive narratological analyses. Keep in mind that the following psychoanalytic analysis of *The Great God Pan* is concerned more with the psychological assumptions I draw than of the dream-aspect of psychoanalysis. To expound upon more cognitive aspects, cognitive narratology could be employed to analyse how interpretation may be conducted. Kukkonen suggests that literary texts may be "understood as a *designed sensory flow* that guides the revision of the predictive, probabilistic model in particular ways" (296). This means that we don't need to know exactly what is being conveyed by the words: we supply that intrinsically or subconsciously. The interpretation depends on the reader's experiences, and literature can be a means of "understanding and … of helping individuals to structure and make sense of their experiences" (Tucan 300). Later Gothic writers were in little need of 'reinventing the wheel' or to overtly explain the finer details of the reality they presented, since writers before them had already normalised these concepts. They could rely in greater amounts on the unconscious understanding of the reader and the reader's cognoscenti (Punter 132). Readers use "cognitive mechanism[s] of 'minimal departure' from the real world" (Tucan 306) to reconstruct the imaginary world, meaning that they supply their imagination with logic acquired from their life experiences. Most interpretation is conducted based on reader knowledge.

The unknown has been referenced in many theories within psychology, but is especially prevalent in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories. According to psychoanalytic views, the human psyche is divided into three parts: the Id, Ego and Superego. These are not physical parts within the brain, but rather compartments for personality. The Id is instinctual, the Ego realistic, and the Superego moral. The psychoanalytical discipline views humans as driven by biology, and biological urges within the Id must be repressed in order to live in civilised society. Randi Larsen, David Buss and Andreas Wismeijer explain that ""Freud used the term repression to refer to the process of preventing unacceptable thoughts, feelings or urges from reaching conscious awareness" (234). The issue, then, is that those repressed 'baser' urges create "a second self" (Rivkin and Ryan 567) and prevents an accurate perception of reality" (Larsen et.al. 234), which in turn facilitates uncanny feelings. Our unconscious mind manifests 'uncanny' moments, and these

moments are derived from past experiences, as well as feelings and yearnings that drive us, or frustrations that are deeply rooted but have seemingly no origin. According to Freud, helplessness furthers this uncanny feeling (602), or is "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (604).

According to Gilles Menegaldo, Machen's works are often concerned with ideas that "trivial daily life reality is only a mask behind which unnamable terrors lurk, hence the use of the recurrent metaphor of the «tearing of the veil» to perceive reality as it is" (403). From the first pages, Machen establishes an environment which is familiar, but bears signifiers of the uncanny. Machen describes the world vividly, marking it as both beautiful and serene, then makes the reader doubt the legibility of that world when Dr Raymond says of his surroundings: "I say that these are but dreams and shadows: the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. There *is* a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision, … beyond them all as beyond a veil" (2). One of the driving factors of the uncanny is the ability to discern new-ness in the familiar. If an answer to the unfamiliar cannot be found, confusion and fear follows. In stressful situations or in situations where we find ourselves in a new environment, our judgement may therefore be fallible, which creates in us fear of what we cannot explain, of the *unknown*. Even when we know we are being set up to feel this uncertainty, we cannot help but feel frightened. When Dr Raymond speaks of 'lifting the veil', he sparks in the reader a feeling of uncanniness, because he has added an element of novelty, perhaps even unnaturalness, to a previously natural and beautiful environment.

To fully comprehend the fear of the unknown, the psychological aspect must expand beyond the psychoanalytical. The focus on sexuality and repression does give some insight, especially with regard to the role of women and the other's attack on humanity through women, but I contend that social psychology and cognitive narratology may expand upon the fear generators. Fear of the unknown is concerned with subconscious or more abstract emotions, with the familiar made unfamiliar. The liminal space between the uncanny valley and reality is where fear begins to form. The emotion is not yet established, but unease has begun to build, the coil tightening. Mori argues that the uncanny valley and eerie feelings are "a form of instinct that protects us from proximal, rather than distal, sources of danger. Proximal sources of danger include corpses, members of different species, and other entities we can closely approach. Distal sources of danger include windstorms and floods" (100). Helen could be said to be a proximal source, while Pan, who is closer to a supernatural phenomenon, is a distal source of danger.

The pieces of information about the result of Mary's union with Pan are delivered in fragments, through letters, memoirs, diary entries, and so forth. The meta form is used to cement the presence of something unknown or otherworldly, since it proves to a large extent the amount of confusion characters experience with regard to Helen Vaughan. *The Great God Pan* exemplifies presence in connection with the unseen: What comes creeping into the world, seemingly normal, but that is revealed to be something terrifying. Helen Vaughan is the embodiment of this kind of presence. Additionally, the shape of the narrative leaves gaps and absences that perpetuate fear, since absences give space for imagination to run wild in order to fill the spaces. With the world within the pages altered as it has been, the veil lifted, the subsequent fillers could be rife with terror imagery according to the experiences of the interpreter. The text hides just enough information to enforce imaginative compensation, yet reveals just enough to lead the compensation in a given direction., while the narrative absences build tension and allow fear of the unknown to slip in almost unnoticed.

Presences and absences also involve the fear of the destruction of the mind. Social cognition "seems to happen outside the self" (Douglas and Sutton 143), which means we learn to function alongside other human beings by interacting with them. As social creatures, human beings will to some degree worry about how others perceive them. When in doubt about a situation, emotion, or thought, humans have some defence mechanisms that can be employed to keep the Id repressed. We may use different means to prove we are right, both to others and to ourselves. We manipulate information, use confirmation bias by leaving "intentional absences in the text ('negative markers') or by 'positive signals' dropped in the fictional world (allusions, hints, insinuations, etc)" (Tucan 306) or "[r]estricting the amount of information a person is able to provide" (Douglas and Sutton 140) to make sure "expectations and stereotypes [are] confirmed" (ibid.), or employ projection to "attribute our own characteristics (be they attitudes, emotions, habits or traits) to other people" (142). Sublimation is another form of defence, whose role is to change those norm-defying urges into something more socially acceptable. To avoid 'madness', characters are forced to avert their eyes or restrict information in order to spare not only themselves from reliving the experience, but to shelter others from the experience of seeing as well. We fear not only the presence that may be, but also the implications of what that presence might inflict upon us. We also fear the absence of the thing we think is there, because in relaying our belief in that presence only to be proved wrong could make others think we have lost our minds. In the case of *The Great God Pan*, the presence has made itself so pressing that, despite this fear of

social reprehension, recounts of interactions with the entity or with Helen Vaughan *must* be shared, lest the supernatural harm others.

The call of the void and intense fixation on understanding the unknown transcend time, place and media. Burke asserts that curiosity is the "first and the simplest emotion which we discover in the human mind" (31), that curiosity has "an appearance of giddiness, restlessness and anxiety" (32), and such an emotion may be the base for feelings of the sublime. In "The Enigma of Amigara Fault" by Junji Ito, an earthquake has revealed a fault with man-shaped holes. A young man, Owaki, travels to the fault because he saw a hole he recognises as being shaped like him. These holes seem to call out to people: "Th-this is my hole! It was made for me!" (Ito 234). This displays the feeling of being controlled by curiosity and disregarding fear for the sake of discovery. Here we see people come from all over Japan to a mountain, drawn towards human-shaped holes that were 'made' for them, and in which they fit perfectly should they enter. The horror lies not only in the outcome, which depicts a grisly morphing of the body and mind, but also in the push-and-pull of resistance seen in Owaki. The moment he succumbs to the urge to enter "his hole" and realises he cannot turn back is chilling, for we know not what awaits him further inside. If we were to take this sentiment even further, we could connect it to ecocritical themes. If curiosity is sublime, it is also natural, and here we see that curiosity leads to the consumption of humans by the earth. Curiosity denounces self-preservation. Clarke is described as having a "character caution and curiosity [which] were oddly mingled" (*The Great God Pan* 9), and that he has always had interest in the occult, eccentric and strange, and to "recondite and esoteric elements in the nature of men" (ibid.). His curiosity is what leads him to Dr Raymond.

Doing something that opposes one's attitude results in "a state of *cognitive dissonance*" (Douglas and Sutton 61), meaning one feels "negative arousal" (ibid.) and tries to amend this uncomfortable feeling by changing one's attitude, thus creating consistency between attitude and action. Repression is another way of amending these opposing emotions. The fear of the otherworldly could be said to be a process of repression. Clarke, in the years after the experiment, has been plagued by "[t]he horrors that he witnessed" (*The Great God Pan* 9), to the extent that he has repressed his memories of it. "[H]e was conscious of being involved in an affair not altogether reputable, and for many years afterwards he clung bravely to the commonplace, and rejected all occasions of occult investigation" (ibid.). He has been so terrified and disgusted by the experience that he tries to shut it out, to sublimate it, yet he "still pined for the unseen" (ibid.). To repress is to deny one's internal

desires. Clarke is a point-in-case of the psychoanalytical repressed urge. He has peered into the terrors of that 'Other Realm', yet cannot stop being fascinated by it, and must thus sublimate his interest to keep his moral and mental stability. L'appel du vide—the call of the void—is still very much alive within him, though he views it with that sublimity which intermingles the wondrous with the revolting.

Clarke is not the only character that is greatly affected by the presence of Pan. To see is to believe, but seeing does, to a certain degree, lead to disbelief, and if not, leads to madness. Those that see Pan are at first delighted, but then fall into terror. Most also either regress into various states of psychosis or commit suicide. Mary, upon seeing The Great God, is reduced to "a hopeless idiot" (*The Great God Pan* 8). Young Trevor falls into "violent hysteria" (*The Great God Pan* 14) after seeing Helen "playing on the grass with a 'strange naked man'" (13) and then being exposed to the 'man' again weeks later—the 'man' being a statue of the head of "a faun or satyr" (14) that is a "vivid presentment of intense evil" (ibid.). Rachel, Helen's playmate, returns from the woods "half-undressed, … evidently in the greatest distress" (15), and later disappears in "broad sunlight" (16). Clarke is determined that the events he is told of are "too incredible, too monstrous; such things can never be in this quiet world" (ibid.). The tendency to deny evil, to close our eyes to the horrors we are witness to and project the reality we wish for instead, is evident in Clarke's denial of information.

Abjection due to "blindness" (Kristeva 84) creates ambiguity and evokes fear once realisation of fault—in Clarke's case, the fault of proximity and impassive participation—hits. Before the experiment begins, while Dr Raymond prepares for the 'operation', Clarke becomes aware of an odour that makes him doze off. While he dozes, he dreams of a time long past, of a path he used to walk when he was younger. He becomes suddenly aware that his surroundings have changed, which is not unusual for dreams, yet what follows serves as a warning of what is to come:

> an infinite silence seemed to fall on all things, and the wood was hushed, and for a moment of time he stood face to face there with a presence that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of form, and in that moment, the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved, and a voice seemed to cry, 'Let us go hence,' and then the darkness beyond the stars, the darkness of everlasting (*The Great God Pan* 7).

The lines regarding 'darkness' warn of oblivion, of the abyss, which is later referred to on a pillar dedicated to "the great god Nodens (the god of the great Deep or Abyss)" (*The Great God Pan* 62). Pan is the God of the Abyss, and abysses contain things that should not be seen, things that should not see sunlight, or are often referred to in connection with death. The 'darkness everlasting' is Pan's domain, and should be respected and feared. Even so, Dr Raymond, who had previously seem "the unutterable, the unthinkable gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, … the great empty deep stretch[ed] dim before [him]" (3-4), is undeterred, and Clarke allows himself to be strung along. More extreme scenarios than regular life must be applied for delight in terror to occur: "terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close" (Burke 57). There is fear of the unknown, but also a pull towards it, a feeling that if you just push on forward into it, there must be something there worth seeing, learning or experiencing, there has to be something. Clarke's interest in the occult makes him disregard the warning signs, and thus his delight in terror has been destroyed by the proximity of the fear generator. His curiosity, his Id, overrides logic and fear, ultimately terrifying him to the point of regret. By not adhering to moral and logic, his Ego and Superego, he has forever changed his own perspective of the world.

There are other very clear warning signs to discourage Clarke from participating in Dr Raymond's experiment. The natural world within his dream shifts and falls silent, and reveals a form that is simultaneously formless. Though it is within a dream, nature gives Clarke a warning before revealing the Other. Whether it emerges from uncanniness Clarke feels in anticipation of what is to come, or if it has been 'sent' by some Other Power, the dream itself is a warning. It could be perceived as Clarke's unconsciousness trying to dissuade him. This is further underlined by theological ideas such as "the sacrament of body and soul [being] dissolved" (*The Great God Pan* 7). Not only is his unconscious (or this suggested Other Power) cautioning him, but his religious sensibilities are, within the dreamscape, reduced to nothing. "Terrors are linked to privation: privation of light, terror of darkness; privation of others, terror of solitude; privation of language, terror of silence; privation of objects, terror of emptiness; privation of life, terror of death" (Lyotard 99). In other words, terror hits us when we stand in the absence of what gives us comfort or that offers solace. We may not be in the presence of evil, but we know there is nothing good waiting, and thus, we are left with only a feeling of fear and anxiety. In view of privation, the sublime would be the feeling one gets when faced with these fears without the threat of them being immediate. The rush of adrenaline from standing atop a cliff but far enough from the edge to avoid falling could evoke the sublime. The sublime is the push-and-pull of danger and safety. There can be no

relief if there is no danger. There is nothing 'holy' about what Dr Raymond is about to do. In actuality, the experiment is suggested to be a trespass against nature, religion and the flesh.

David B. Morris says there is "no essence of the sublime" (300), but that Gothic sublimity "explores a terror of the unspeakable, of the inconceivable, of the unnameable" (312). Though a trespass against the 'human realm', Pan is part of nature, and could be connected to the Sublime: that terrifying, awe-inspiring, overwhelming feeling one gets when standing in nature and feels its enormous power, as beautiful as it is frightening. Indeed, the force of Pan "cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol" (*The Great God Pan* 54). Thomas Weiskel argues that the Sublime in itself is no longer enough to evoke grandiose feelings, but rather that a reduction must occur for the Sublime to please us should we follow the Freudian viewpoint (8). A sense of uncertainty must be present for the Sublime to take root. It is the not knowing, the uncertainty of our own perception and sanity, which truly touches onto this fear of the unknown and blends so beautifully with the Sublime. We are reminded, as we stare into the void, that it could contain *anything* just as much as it could contain *nothing*. The question is whether we'd prefer the former or the latter.

Freud adhered the uncanny to the omnipotence of thoughts in that he believed imagination mixed with reality equaled uncanny feelings (606). Jean-François Lyotard's understanding of the sublime is that a "failure of expression gives rise to a pain … [that] in turn engenders pleasure …: the impotence of the imagination attests *a contrario* to an imagination striving to figure even that which cannot be figured" (98), meaning that the incompleteness of something forces us to fill in the gaps to create harmony. Our imagination must blend with reality to complete the picture. The sublime is thus the chaos before the calm, and the uncanny and the sublime are tightly knit. "In its excessive violations of excess sense, Gothic sublimity demonstrates the possibilities of terror in opening the mind to its own hidden and irrational powers" (Morris 306). This mindset not only supports the notion of an Id which controls the unconscious, but also underlines the terror of imaginative thinking, of the imaginative filling of absences.

This imaginative thinking is not necessarily logical, nor does it need to be grounded in reality. Fiction, after all, is not bound by the rules of reality. As such, the meanings the human brain concocts when faced with the uncanny or the unknown can be tied in with the abject. Abjection is something that has separated itself from social logic and reason: abjection undermines the order of things and of society. Abjection is to exclude things that do not adhere to the ego. In being abjected, one is separated from the moral and lawful. The abject

pulls us toward "the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 2), creating within us an inability to comprehend what is happening or what we are experiencing. Abjection is when the uncanny creates helplessness and loathing, when we can no longer stand to be in the presence of the fear creator and desperately seek refuge in our defence mechanism. Abjection is not entirely the same as the uncanny or, indeed, as the idea of fear of the unknown, it describes a certain otherness which could very well be an outlier to these ideas. The abject, in describing the subjective experience of horror and repression, creates uncanniness in the dissonance of the known being pushed from recognisable parameters and acquiring features that we deem unnatural in the context of the object. For example, the face of a child may in a sense be calming to us, but could quickly become uncanny if, when the child speaks, a deep, raspy voice emanates from its lips, or the child smiles in a cruel, unhinged way. These things create fear within us because they take away the innocence children are expected to inhabit. Uncanniness arises when that which is harmless gains a feature that makes it abruptly threatening. Helen Vaughan is described as "at once the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive they had ever set eyes on" (*The Great God Pan* 24), and "very handsome, … and yet there is something about her face which I didn't like" (44). When someone possesses a quality that brings unease, such as eerie beauty, they may be fascinating, yet terrifying. That quality, however, does not follow the 'rules' of normalcy. In a way, the strangeness becomes a defilement in itself.

Kristeva argues that "[d]efilement is an element connected with the boundary, the margin, etc., of an order" (66). The boundary could refer to many things: the boundary of civilization, of humanity, of sanity, perhaps. When order is lost, so is civilization, humanity, sanity. Defilement, then, is the destruction of the stabilisers, the repressors of terror and destructive urges. Pan enters the human plane of cognition through the 'defilement' of the brain, and then again through the defilement of the flesh. The abject makes its presence known through occultism and occult science, which is a defilement of religion as well as the physical body, and through the sexual awakening of the Victorian woman, whose duty was to remain pure and 'marriageable'.

Machen undoubtedly influenced Lovecraftian writing, and he may very well have influenced Marsh as well, especially in terms of the demonic or possessed female and her sexual freedom. Helen is the femme fatale, the black widow who kills her husbands. Menegaldo refers to her as an "evil heroine" (419), which would suggest she is more of an antagonist than a villain. She lives off of her lovers, revels in their pain and suffering, then takes pleasure in seeing them lose their minds when she exposes them to the existence of her

father, at last revealed to be the Great God Pan. The story is a warning to those who mistreat women, but it is also a warning against dabbling with things one does not know the consequences of. Clayton Carlyle Tarr argues that "Helen, the messenger of evil, the vessel for Pan, actually contains and conveys her father's horror" (54), while Samantha Morse describes her as "the most obvious embodiment of evil" (486). The entity itself, Pan, is male, and yet the perpetrator of terror is his daughter, the amalgam of human and non-human.

The possession of Mary could be said to represent psychosis, sexual awakening, and loss of identity. The first sight of the Great God has her amazed, yet when she supposedly touches the entity, her very soul is "struggling and shuddering within the house of flesh" (*The Great God Pan* 8). Mary's body is nothing but a house of flesh, and Mary herself is no more. Her consciousness has given way to 'idiocy', and something Other has taken hold of her physical form. It is sexual liberation and a mingling with the bestial. This mingling that occurs during her possession is the same as loss of agency. Her body no longer belongs to her. This is hinted at by her entrance in the laboratory, dressed "all in white" (*The Great God Pan* 7), the image of a 'blushing bride'. Then again, Mary's agency is taken from her long before she sees Pan.

Kristeva discusses at length the Freudian idea of dread of incest and the "murder of the father" (57). Incest and the aversion to it provokes uncanny feelings, because it is considered culturally and theologically abhorrent, and additionally, in darwinian terms, does not promote genetic diversity. The relationship between Dr Raymond and Mary could be read as incestuous, in that he raised her from a young age, and thus their interactions are uncomfortable, painted by the uncanniness of their relationship, despite their union not being directly in opposition to Darwinian ideas of diversity. Perhaps even more discomforting, then, is Dr Raymond's attitude toward his ward-become-lover: "I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit" (*The Great God Pan* 4). Morse explains that Raymond's "claim to ownership of Mary's life … makes her consent irrelevant" (489), especially since he seems to "render[...] Mary [as] an essentially-dead-human" (ibid.) because she was doomed to die when she was a child. Mary's fate is reliant solely on the whims and faulty logic of her supposed saviour. Though Pan's effect on her is not exactly a 'murder of the father', it does in a sense liberate her from Dr Raymond, who now has lost power over her.

Gendered power is important as a fear generator, because it ties in with the power of the Other and the reversal of dominance, especially in terms of the supernatural. Ann Radcliffe described the "wild attire, the look *not of this earth*" as "essential traits of supernatural agents" (147). The wild attire mingles with fear to create terror. One

interpretation of the wild attire may be unhinged behaviour or the look of madness in someone's eyes; another may be the alienness of an object or person; the third the estrangement of nature. The prior supposes some unnaturalness to something familiar, the second complete inability of comprehension, and the third uncanniness in the natural world. The wild attire could therefore also refer to the otherworldly: ghosts, ghouls, demons, and other supernatural forces. Helen Vaughan, with her uncanny likeness to Mary, yet with the supernatural look which she possesses, materialises this wild attire. Austin describes her expression as "strange" (44), and that she left him with "that odd feeling one sometimes has in a dream" (ibid.). She is uncannily familiar, even though he has never met her before. She has a look '*not of this earth*'. Usually, when one refers to 'supernatural agents', one would think of superheroes, of a higher power, perhaps, yet Helen is, at best, an antagonist. What her wild attire does allow her, however, is the power to assert dominance over men, to reverse the power-balance of Victorian London.

Psychoanalytic theories often denote sexual and genital imagery as reflections of envy of the organ or sex itself, but a feminist interpretation stresses that "the penis was a symbol of social power rather than an organ women actually desired" (Larsen, Buss and Wismeijer 265) when it came to the Freudian notion of penis envy, especially in the Horneyian view, which "stressed the point that, although biology determines sex, cultural norms are used to determine what is acceptable for a typical male and female in that culture" (ibid.). In this vein, Helen Vaughan's actions would not be due to envy of the male sex, but of male power. Kristeva explains that "ritualization of defilement" (70) has a tendency to separate men and women in terms of power. This points to those 'lesser', those institutionally treated worse than those in power, in this case women. "That other sex, the feminine, becomes synonymous with a radical evil that is to be oppressed" (ibid.), especially when posing a threat to male power-structures. This idea of women as abject could be the reason that female empowerment and sexual independence creates fear. The fear of the unknown then becomes painted by a fear of reverse suppression, of the flipped power balance, which is frightening for the oppressor because he cannot know to what extent reversal of power will affect him. We see this power-struggle clearly in *The Great God Pan*: "'Mary, … the time has come. You are quite free. Are you willing to trust yourself to me entirely?'" (*The Great God Pan* 7). Morse notes that Raymond's speech is "framed by markers that make it read as disingenuous" (490), marked by time-pressure as it is. Raymond gives Mary the guise of freedom, yet there is little doubt that she has been groomed for this moment, and that she does not understand exactly

what the procedure could do to her. Mary's revenge is in some ways enacted through her daughter, who relishes in torturing men with the presence and sight of Pan.

Keeping in mind that literature is not necessarily a reflection of subliminal mind works, since most literary works follow an "artificial, contrived nature of the scene rather than inviting narrativization" (Kukkonen 299), there is room for interpretation about Helen's degenerative spree in Victorian England. Tarr suggests that "Mary's name encourages a consideration of her pregnancy as immaculate, wherein Pan uses Mary's body to engender Helen, an antichrist" (54). Moralistic female traits give way to degenerate, Id-controlled actions. Consequences do not exist for Helen, not until she is exposed. Being a woman, a beautiful one at that, despite her strangeness, has allowed Helen to do as she wishes almost unchecked. For a female Victorian reader, such a notion could evoke different feelings: envy, amazement, disbelief, anxiety, and so on. For a male reader, her behaviour would most likely be read with dread or fear.

The femme fatale is often portrayed as a destroyer of men, and is more often than not promiscuous, devious, deceitful, and hiding an underlying cruelty aimed at men. Freud notes that when we speak of people as uncanny, "we do so when we ascribe evil intentions to him" (605), and that "his intentions to harm us are going to be carried out with the help of special powers" (ibid.). Helen Vaughan has "corrupted [Herbert's] soul" (*The Great God Pan* 19) and exposed him to "hell" (20) during their marriage. Others that have been involved with her have "died of fright, of sheer, awful terror" (24), or seen "a world before which the human soul seemed to shrink back and shudder" (38). Helen's existence is abject because she exposes a dimension that threatens the delicate fabric of human sanity, but also because she threatens male power over the female, creating fear of patriarchal loss. That patriarchal deprivation could be a reflection of repressed urges regarding domination, a sort of socio-political castration, which, according to Kristeva, is the same as the fear of loss (64).

The Great God Pan is not only about the sexually independent woman, but also about the taboos of nature and science. Works like *The Beetle* and *The Great God Pan* both fall into what Bulfin would describe as "extreme instances of the degenerate of fin-de-siècle pseudo-science" ("The Fiction of Gothic Egypt 426). Tarr describes the psychosurgical experiments and operations performed by Gottfried Burckhardt during the late 1880s, whose practices often resulted in "rendering the patient insensible" (51), and suggests that Machen's Dr Raymond is a representation of these sorts of operations (ibid.) due to Mary's degenerated mental state. The difference, Tarr argues, is that "rather than using psychosurgery to control hallucinatory sounds and visions, [Machen's] amateur surgeon[...] unleash[es] [a] violent

monstrosit[y]" (52). Dr Raymond's psychosurgical experiment could then be considered a trespass against the natural order, making it abject since it destroys the known universe and gives way to something Other. In some ways, the procedure's success and subsequent horrors is a testament to repressed fears of one's actions being detrimental to oneself or to others, that one's ambitions have destructive potential.

During the experiment, Mary's eyes "shone with an awful light, looking far away, and a great wonder fell upon her face, and her hand stretched out as if to touch what was invisible" (*The Great God Pan* 8). Hope emerges, only to be squashed a moment after: "in an instant the wonder faded, and gave place to the most awful terror. The muscles of her face were hideously convulsed, she shook from head to foot" (ibid.). What is 'beyond the veil' has terrified Mary to the point of madness, and the presence of Pan and the 'real world' has been established, forever altering the reality of the fictional world. The Paleolithic mindset "depicts wilderness as a threat" (Garrard 68), and Pan, being an ancient entity that exists preternaturally with nature, becomes such a threat when he encroaches upon human lives. Deep time, which transcends human lifespan manyfold, is terrifying in its vastness, and in *The Great God Pan* it is painted by the 'real' realm which Dr Raymond, the "prototypic hubristic mad scientist" (Menegaldo 408), sets loose upon the world. Raymond does retrospectively come to understand what his actions have led to, but by then, deep time (Pan) has already done much mischief:

> I broke open the door of the house of life, without knowing or caring what might pass forth or enter in. … I forgot … that when the house of life is thus thrown open, there may enter in that for which we have no name, and human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express (*The Great God Pan* 62-3).

Deep time is more than the ancient power set loose upon the present. It is also the ancient reaching into the far future, the unknown terror that stretches its claws into the possibilities of tomorrow. The influence of this terror, since abstract and unknown, mars hope and stains every moment with an uncanny hue. The house of life, the realm of the living, is no place for the powers of the Abyss, yet Raymond's hubris allowed for the mingling of life and death. By doing so, he has allowed for the human body to be possessed by the Other. *The Great God Pan* may therefore reflect a fear about reverse consumerism, about being reclaimed by the earth without religious, social or moral salvation.

What we cannot see, we supply with imagination. Marsh and Machen use mists as forces of enshroudment and foreboding. Mists may hold anything and nothing, according to the observer. Mists have frequently been used in other works for the purpose of hinting that something is 'closing in', that something is about to happen. In *The Great God Pan*, mists give two different effects in the course of the story. In the very beginning, they have a mystifying yet beautiful effect, since neither the reader nor the main character yet know what awaits; Clarke shivers at the mist and at Dr Raymond's words. After the experiment and the stories about the otherworldly creature, they have a foreboding and terrifying effect, since Clarke (and the reader) now knows something 'other' is lurking in their realm. Indeed, Herbert is described as having an "indefinite terror which hung about him like a mist" (*The Great God Pan* 20). Mists become omens, harbingers and preservers of terror. These natural phenomena are thus given supernatural characteristics, which we have now established are generators of uncanny feelings, and therefore generators of fear.

At the pinnacle of *The Great God Pan*, Helen Vaughan is convinced to commit suicide, lest she wishes to be exposed for what she truly is. As she hangs, her body begins to shift and 'melt'. Susan Jennifer Navarette defines Helen's substance as a "protoplasm" (190), a "sublimely abject substance—indefinite, unstable, amorphous" (ibid.), which makes it all too clear that Helen is no more human than her father. The following passage displays that inhuman quality in the deconstruction of Helen's body:

> I watched, and at last I saw nothing but a substance as jelly. Then the ladder was ascended again … [*Here the MS. is illegible*] for one instant I saw a Form, shaped in dimness before me, which I will not further describe. But the symbol of this form may be seen in ancient sculptures, and in paintings which survived beneath the lava, too foul to be spoken of … as a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast, was changed into human form, there came finally death (*The Great God Pan* 58).

This passage encompasses not only notions of deep time and supernatural nature, but also employs absences to underline the uncanny emotions Helen Vaughan's death evokes. The language used, marked by omissions as it is, "reveals its atavistic character" (Navarette 190), or in other words, its regressive nature. The shifts between shapes, 'horrible and unspeakable', reveal a terror of the failure to adhere to civilised life, a fear of the Other that refuses to follow the rules of civilisation. Helen's suicide "leads to a gruesome tableau of bodily dissolution" (Worth 215), and her shapelessness is the repressed Id breaking free. Filth

and secretions are abject because they "defile" (Kristeva 65), and this 'jelly' substance that Helen seems to be composed of is a defilement of the human shape, of what Clarke knows a human to be. Punter suggests that one's transformation from human to possessed or demonic, like that of Jekyll into Hyde, is "the reversion of the species, the ever-present threat that, if revolution is a ladder, it may be possible to start moving *down* it" (244). Boyce supports this notion, arguing that "[t]he closeness of human and beast … effectively conflates the one with the other. A flawed, yet pervasive syllogism suffused Victorian socio-political and popular discourse" (165). Tales about degeneration and persecution might be symbolism for imperialism in decline—the tables have turned, and now the persecutor is being persecuted—or they may be synonymous with fear of the regression of humanity itself, of human cognitive capabilities and characteristics that differentiate the human from the animalistic.

Looking to *Melmoth* by C. R. Maturin, Lovecraft describes fear as "taken out of the realm of the conventional and exalted into a hideous cloud over mankind's very destiny" (1053), an observation that could also be applied to *The Beetle* and *The Great God Pan*. The threats the entities in these books describe affect not only individuals, but also British society on a larger scale within their respective universes. By placing modernity at odds with nature, and then making the natural terror blend in and camouflage its murderous tendencies, the text invokes fear and doubt within the reader. There is no knowing where the entity is, who it is disguising itself as, or where and how it might strike. Eduardo Valls Oyarzun notes that the "patterns of change and metamorphoses the novella articulates operate as a multi-layered and materialistic process of becoming" (696). Helen Vaughan's different identities, and her final transformation, is an othering of the flesh. She was born Other in the disguise of a woman, but she lives in a way that enforces the 'othering' of those around her as well. Those that see Pan are forever altered, and the transformation of the body "exposes the unstable and wavering condition of consciousness" (Oyarzun 695). Clarke writes to Villiers: "I am like a traveller who has peered over an abyss, and has drawn back in terror. What I know is strange enough and horrible enough, but beyond my knowledge there are depths and horrors more frightful still" (*The Great God Pan* 34). The final horror is the knowledge now acquired: that there is more than we know between heaven and earth, and yet more beyond what our senses allow us to experience. These forces may lie in wait, ready to pounce.

In *The Great God Pan,* the otherworldly is walking among humans and showing them things so disturbing they'd rather kill themselves than live on knowing what they now do. Daily life hides horrors, in this case behind a 'veil' that conceals the realm of the Other. The

familiar is influenced by the uncanny, and the uncanny qualities generate fear of the unknown. This is supported by a fragmented narrative and text, because they force the reader to compensate for the information that is missing by using imaginative thinking. That form of thinking is in turn dependent on the reader's life experiences, but since the text follows a somewhat predictable narrative form and gives sufficient information, it can also lead the imaginative supplementary thoughts in a specific direction. The destruction of the mind is caused by the domination of the Id, and characters are forced to use defence mechanisms to protect themselves from the influence of the Other. Suppression is significant here. Clarke employs suppression to free himself of the horrors that haunt him after Raymond's experiment, though it does not truly help him in the end. His curiosity, which was what caused him to ignore those warning signs to begin with, nullifies fear and rationale, replacing them instead with the call of the void. The 'lifting of the veil' then causes characters to have their views of the world irreversibly changed, and with it they are exposed to the degenerative, regressive qualities of the Other. This is displayed through: the loss of patriarchal power, in which women are viewed as abject and something to be controlled, but that ultimately cannot be controlled; through the reversion of species, especially visible in Helen's suicide, where her body transforms repeatedly; and through deep time, in which the ancient power becomes a clear threat, made real by the way the reveal of the Other causes mental anguish to those that see it.

Thematics and textuality of terror in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*

The Turn of the Screw is one of Henry James's most distinct stories in terms of fear of the unknown. The novella has instances of classist fears, yet its monsters are not the perpetrators of this fear, but rather the victims of it. Its (supposed) heroic figure, the Governess, is a victim of her own undoing in facing the presences of these ghosts. Her sense of unease begins early on, though she pushes her worries to the side because she is entranced by the beauty of the children. Her actions, meant to protect and save the virtue and perfect, childlike innocence of the children she governs, isolate her and, ultimately, leads to death and destruction. Henry James writes about ghosts, but also about the terrible sense of foreboding, that something is bound to happen soon and we should guard ourselves from that which is awaiting. The human imagination is able to machinate terror of things that may not be present or even exist. This is where Lovecraft and James can be connected. Both in *Turn of the Screw* and *The Beast in the Jungle*, James explores the feeling of an inevitable doom that lies in wait. In *The Screw*, the doom follows an unearthly presence which causes the main character to isolate herself, thus creating room for degeneration and fear to slip in and destroy what she seeks to protect. In *The Beast in the Jungle*, the doom is a result of fear of a supposed presence that, ultimately, never manifests (though some argue the terrible thing John Marcher is waiting to happen *does* indeed happen). Prima facie, *The Screw* may be explicitly considered a ghost story and nothing more. Yet, as one begins to pick the ghosts apart and reduce them to mere ideas, the true horrors of the story are revealed.

In the first episode of *The Twilight Zone* (1959), "Where Is Everybody", the main character finds himself in a small town devoid of people, amnesiac and searching for answers. As he gets locked inside a phone booth, the camera pans outside, and the viewer watches in anticipation, waiting for something to appear abruptly, when ultimately nothing does. It is moments like these that raise questions of what would be more terrifying: to truly be all alone, or to *not* be. The protagonist later says he has "the crazy feeling of being watched. Listened to" (19:19-19:29), which turns out to be true, though not in the way the viewer expects. The build up to the reveal, as well as the realisation of what awaits the main character *after* his ordeal, is more mystical and uncanny than the reveal itself: that he is part of an isolation experiment to see if he can make it to the moon and back in a small chamber without losing his mind. The pinnacle of the horror element here is isolation.

There is a likeness between the man in "Where Is Everybody" and the Governess in their shared feelings of being watched, that there is something waiting for them which they cannot protect themselves or their loved ones from. This is also a prevalent theme in *The Beast in the Jungle*, another short story by James. Isolation themes are charted waters for James. John Marcher is haunted by what he calls "[t]he apprehension that haunts me" (*The Beast* 12), "a mysterious fate" (17), "his perpetual suspense" (ibid.), "the thing that waited" (32), and "the great vagueness" (35). Marcher's ghost is the feeling that "[s]omething or other lay in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years, like a crouching Beast in the Jungle" (*The Beast* 19). The presence that haunts the Governess and Marcher is the foreboding feeling one may get when something is amiss, yet there are few things to indicate that they are truly being threatened. If anything, both these characters become victims of their own undoing, haunted by their own sense of fatalism. Robert C. Solomon describes life as being "out of our hands" (440), and this makes us "extremely uncomfortable" (ibid.). That uncomfortability could generate fear of the unknown or of a presence which we cannot explain, for we cannot foresee our future.

We tend to apply significance to the events of our lives, whether we believe these events are due to our own free will and influence or not. Marcher wants to spare May from his "fate", since he reckons it will alter his life in such a way that it could also disturb hers, but in rejecting her and dismissing her suggestions that his fate may not be negative, he subjects her, too, to that same his "fate" that he has put himself in to suffer. Were she not affected by his decision in this way, May would still be subjected to the loneliness of facing her illness and fear of illness alone. In much the same way, the Governess's overbearing and oftentimes belittling attitude towards the children and the other servants at the manor creates tension that, ultimately, makes the children pull away from her and sends Miles to his death. The issue, then, is the attribution of events to being the fault of the entities. Marcher blames his 'mysterious fate'. The Governess blames Quint and Jessel. By attributing events to fatalism, we can remove guilt from ourselves.

When the Governess moves blame onto other servants, or onto the ghostly entities, she is effectively pushing others away, which only serves to isolate her further. Equally as feared as the ethnic other was anarchism, as its communist and anti-nationalist ideologies contradicted traditional Victorian sentiments about nation and people. It is therefore conceivable that xenophobia entailed more than only fear of other ethnicities; it entailed fear of *all* otherness, even of ideas that appeared alien. Anarchy had a stigma of "indiscriminate violence" (Miller 271), a stigma usually applied to "savage" peoples like those of lower

classes, criminals, minorities, and people of colonised states. Anarchism was equally feared as the ethnic other, as its communist and anti-nationalist ideologies directly contradicted Victorian sentiments about nation and people, something like "fears of the mob" (Luckhurst xiv) if you will. Thus, it is conceivable that xenophobia entailed more than a fear of other ethnicities; it entailed a fear of *all* otherness, even of alien ideas. We see this fear of anarchy in the Governess and her fear of change and of social disruption of status quo and social hierarchy.

The governess, according to Punter, "prides herself on her 'sensitivity', yet in her actual dealings with the children and with Mrs Grose this sensitivity is hardly apparent" (294). By dismissing the connection between the children, Quint and Miss Jessel, the governess has ruined any chance she might have yearned for to be liked by the children. The children might be mourning the passing of the 'offending spirits', and by being then met with the Governess's utter disdain for the mere memory of them, Miles and Flora are disconnected from her from the outset. In the end, with Flora and Mrs Grose away and Miles dead, the Governess is as lonely and isolated as she was when the story began. The difference is her transformation into something Other in the sense of reader trust. "Gothic abides by fairytale narrative rules;" Manuel Aguirre argues, "it is only that the Gothic individual who crosses over into the Other is no real hero" (11). In her attempt to be the children's saviour, the Governess has removed herself from normativity and become Other, and thus she can no longer be viewed as a heroic figure, even in her own mind.

In *the Turn of the Screw,* there are a multitude of literary devices, themes and symbolisms that need closer scrutiny in order to understand just how presences and absences create fear, and how the fear of the unknown drives the story forward. Before such an analysis can take place, there are some literary methods that must be established. Both formalist and structuralist theories have in common their separation of author from work. Structuralist theories, however, are more concerned with the system that a work can be placed within, meaning the contemporary and historical setting the book was written in. This thesis approaches structuralist sentiments in that it focuses on how Marsh, Machen and James, three authors with works published in the same decade, are unified within one theme and in the same societal signifiers. How they are separated is in the way they are analysed. Marsh and James were subject to the same societal influxes, the same historical influences, so to read them both in a historical fashion would tell little new about their place within a structuralist view. The structure of a text can reveal different points about the theme at hand than a historical or psychological approach may do.

The first thing to note is the point of view of the novella. *The Turn of the Screw* has a sort of meta narration where one first-person narrator is witness to the story of another first-person narrator, told by yet another person. The short story opens on a party, where our nameless meta-narrator provides some background info of the origins of the main story. Douglas, another party-goer, has received a manuscript from his sister's old governess, and promises to tell her story. The narrative avoids digressions by, save for the opening act, having one whole, continuous narrative. Neill Matheson notes that "James seems to stage an imagined scene of reading for his "little book," playfully anticipating its reception by interpellating a readership whose respectability fails to mask the cruelty of its desires, desires fully as perverse as any that circulate within the story" (710). Before the main story begins, Douglas appeals to his audience's sensibilities by presenting its antagonists as a trespass against children, to which he is met by cries of excitement and an exclamation saying "how delicious!" (*The Screw* 72). By drawing "mock-affectionate attention to his preface" (Navarette 116), James could capture and thus enforce curiosity and some sense of responsibility to listen to the story in its entirety. The prologue also helps in building tension, as we await, like the other guests at the party, for Douglas to impart the story to us. Our curiosity, which we have now established has little care for self-preservation and can lead us down dangerous roads, now compels us to hear more of the incident at Bly.

One of the overarching reasons that *The Turn of the Screw* manages to create mystery is by the use of an unreliable narrator. The governess is, in many ways, blindsided by her own ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, as well as by what she perceives as a threat to the status quo which she has convinced herself should be the norm. Punter notes that the governess "prides herself on her 'sensitivity', yet in her actual dealings with the children and with Mrs Grose this sensitivity is hardly apparent. She claims to find Mrs Grose totally transparent, and considers herself justified in overriding the housekeeper's more experienced view of the situation at all points, even suspecting her of collusion with the children" (294). The governess effectively isolates herself by putting Mrs Grose and the children in a morally and socially inferior position. Since she is apt to be judgmental and easily distressed, the governess makes it impossible for herself to solve the mystery she fancies herself to be caught in the middle of. Her self-proclaimed status and importance is "at best peripheral" (Punter 294) to the children. This self-inflicted isolation furthers her descent into a sort of madness which is intensified by her fear of the presences at Bly Manor and the absence of fear in the children.

In "Gothic Fiction and Folk-Narrative Structure", Manuel Aguirre discusses the textuality of Gothic fiction and argues for its connection to folk-narrative structures, and adheres the pattern of the heroic to the genre. His idea of a *thematic pattern* (5) is interesting in that it sees textual patterns and themes as "two sides of a coin, but the abstract nature of the theme makes it less amenable to modification than the pattern" (ibid.). Furthermore, Aguirre proposes "[t]hree levels of abstraction" (ibid.): "from high to low these are theme, pattern and text" (ibid.). What Aguirre is suggesting is that Gothic fiction in many cases follows the conventions of the heroic adventure of epic prose, with the call to quest, the twists and turns of said quest, including refusal or acceptance of responsibility, the acquirement of helpers, *Crossing of the Threshold* (Aguirre 7) with the traversement of a guarded boundary, the journey through the unknown, the final battle, and then, finally, victory or failure to complete the quest.

The Turn of the Screw does contain some of the folk-narrative and epic prose patterns which Aguirre presents, though less straight-forward than, say, tales like those of the Brothers Grimm or Absjørnsen and Moe. The Governess has been called upon for a 'quest': to tutor and help raise two children. The end goal of this 'quest' is to raise the children well, teach them what they need to know, and keep them safe, healthy, and happy. Along the way, the Governess must face multiple complications and hindrances. Her threshold is guarded by the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, and her traversement through the unknown is haunted at every turn by their influence on the environment, her mind, and the children. She finds at every turn an obstacle, her "eyes unsealed" (*The Screw* 156) to the presence of the otherworldly that she fears. The final battle is her struggle to affirm whether the ghosts are truly there, which ends in her failure to complete the 'quest' when Miles falls dead in her arms.

The writing itself is full of gaps and lacks details, which, as evident in Machen, allows for reader imagination to fill those gaps. The spaces and semiotic absences, much like in Machen's work, force us to "become cocreators of an evolving horror that, in blasting speech, renders speechlessness expressive" (Navarette 201). Christopher Langlois states that when "[t]he narrative stalls before it encounters the possibility of beginning, … it has begun, precisely, by narrating the absence of any subjective coherence to a voice that is already in the midst … of performing a narrative function" (103-4). Ambiguity intensifies uncanny feelings, and thus these gaps create unease, if not horror. When the Governess realises that the apparition she saw by the lake is Miss Jessel, the children's previous governess, that Miss Jessel is the victim of falling from grace, and that she and Quint must be accomplices in their

"fury of intention" (*The Screw* 116), she cries out: "'I don't do it!' I sobbed in despair; 'I don't save or shield them! It's far worse than I dreamed. They're lost!'" (118). How exactly the children are 'lost' is still a mystery, yet the exclamation is unnerving, and the suddenness with which the chapter ends leaves the reader to linger upon the desperation and terror of her statement. Additionally, the novella never returns to the party that first introduces us to the governess's manuscript. It ends abruptly, with Miles's last breath, when his "little heart, dispossessed, stopped" (*The Screw* 200). Indeed, most chapters of the novella end on cliff-hangers. The abruptness of these endings makes the narrative rather breathless, and the jumps in the story underline the frantic state of the Governess's mind. Moreover, the ambiguity of the ending and the gaps forces reader engagement, which, as we have seen, spurs terror.

Matheson reads in James's language an innuendo and "indirect erotic language" (710), which creates a "virulent opposition between private and public, concealment and exposure" (ibid.), arguing that, from the very beginning, "Douglass's Gothic language, in which the intensity of horror is registered in its unspeakableness, is never far removed from various pleasures, aesthetic and erotic" (710). Sexual undertones are indeed prevalent, and their function, in their 'unspeakableness', is to create horror through the taboo of being overtly sexual. We see examples of this especially in Miles's way of speaking: "'Look here, my dear, …'" (*The Screw* 150). It is implied he speaks this way because of the past influence of Peter Quint, hinting at the degenerative influence of lower classes upon upper-class children. Miles points out that he is "getting on" (151), meaning he is growing and becoming a man. The Governess herself points out that he tends to call her with familiarity—"His 'my dear' was constantly on his lips for me" (*The Screw* 151)—though she dismisses it as a "respectfully easy" (ibid.) way of calling her. Kyriaki Asiatidou argues that Miles's attitudes towards the Governess could be viewed from the Freudian stance of sexuality and sexual repression, where the Governess's efforts to subjugate Miles's attempts at claiming authority over her only deepens his "unrestrained sexuality" (824-5). If female sexual liberation, as discussed with regard to *The Great God Pan*, is a fear creator, then surely textual aspects that involve innuendo made by a child character would cause the same uncanny feelings as does the character Helen Vaughan. Two things that are uncommon working in unison will generate fear.

Besides the narrative structure and language, the setting also influences fear generation. According to David Punter, "'Gothic' fiction is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts,

vampires, monsters and werewolves" (1). Lovecraft, too, notes the "infinite array of stage properties" (1049) that are prevalent in Gothic fiction, including "strange lights, damp trap-doors, extinguished lamps, mouldy hidden manuscripts, creaking hinges, shaking arras, and the like" (ibid.). In *The Turn of the Screw*, we see a return to the 'classic' Gothic setting which evaded us in *The Beetle* and *The Great God Pan*. Gothic fiction has an emphasis on emotions and on pairing contradictions like fear and curiosity, pleasure and pain, love and death. Morries points out that "[l]ife in Gothic fiction never frees itself from the presence or threat of death. The sublime is always waiting beyond the next turn of the staircase" (308). There are some elements which usually appear within Gothic fiction, though one or more may not be present. The story is usually set in a space that is in some way old-fashioned or dilapidated. The most striking is the old castle or manor, but it may well also be an underground space where deep time, not modern time, has passed and shaped the space. Usually, these spaces hold some sort of secret or presence which, as the story progresses, can no longer be ignored or repressed. Bly, with its towers and battlement, "stretches" (*The Screw* 80) of halls, staircases whose "next bend [is] lost" (130) in darkness, large grounds, sounds that are "less natural" (ibid.), the "faint and far … cry of a child" (81) heard within, and so on, fits such a description. The servants of the manor, too, reveal little of the events that have taken place there. Mrs Grose is less than eager to share what happened to Peter Quint or Miss Jessel, and the revelations of their deaths are revealed only after their presence have begun to press heavily upon the inhabitants of Bly: "Inhabiting a silence that is not silence, a subject without subjectivity, can … perhaps more tellingly be described as inhabiting a space of terror" (Langlois 113). In other words, these absences of information and dismissiveness of past events, mixed with the very real presence from the past that bleeds into the present, increases tension and sows doubt about the trustability of those that surround the Governess.

Before the reader 'arrives' at Bly, James places them in a safe, warm atmosphere, which serves to make Bly and its ambience starkly contrast the outset. Ann Radcliffe tries, through the narration of conversation, to explain why "force of contrast" (149) has such a strong effect on terror victims: "the effect, though sudden and strong, is also transient; it is the thrill of horror and surprise, which they then communicate, rather than the deep and solemn feelings excited under more accordant circumstances, and left long upon the mind" (ibid.). Abjection ties into the notion of changed meaning, where context urges terror. As such, something as innocent as a smile might become something sinister or uncanny, even provoke terror. The very title of the novella is a play on rising tensions: "'... If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to two children - ?' … 'We say, of

course, … that they give two turns!...'" (*The Screw* 71). The turns could also be said to affect the mental state of the Governess, too, for whenever the tension rises, so does her desperation. Contrast evokes feelings of uncanniness and fear because it shocks and appals us.

Sometimes there are certain gaps between what is unknown to the characters and what is unknown to the reader, and how that affects the narrative. The absence of explanation, of words and phrases that may uncover what is hidden, or omissions, can cause dread. The employer tells the Governess very little about what awaits her at Bly. The headmaster of Miles's school never specifies what exactly it is that Miles has done to get expelled. Mrs Grose and the other servants speak little or nothing of the previous governess or of Peter Quint. These omissions are apt to make the reader imagine the worst-case scenario; that something is horribly wrong with Bly, that something is wrong with Miles, and that something really is afoot with these entities that the Governess claims to have seen.

The Governess has been trying to convince the housekeeper that there are ghosts in the manor, and that they intend to harm the two children, Flora and Miles. When Flora disappears one day, the two come upon her at the lake, and the Governess sees one of the ghosts, Miss Jessel, by the water. Though the Governess points at the ghost, Mrs Grose says she cannot see, and Flora denies seeing it even when the Governess knows she can: "'[…] I see nobody. I see nothing. I never *have*" (*The Screw* 177). Sometimes, a presence becomes terrifying because one person can see something another cannot, or because of the implications of lying about being blind to something. James makes use of the supernatural in the form of ghosts and lingering presences, but also by giving the environment a certain strangeness as well. The Governess describes her first period at Bly as something of a calm before the storm: "that hush in which something gathers or crouches" (*The Screw* 91), and that the shift that later occurs is "like the spring of a beast" (ibid.).

One of the more notable shifts comes about the first time the Governess spots Peter Quint atop one of the towers of Bly. She describes a feeling that someone might appear on the path to meet her (92), and indeed, someone does appear. Before she spots him, she is taking in the "beauty and dignity of the place" (*The Screw* 91), having romantic dreams of "meet[ing] some one" (92) on the path. It is suggested that she hopes for it to be her employer, but she is struck by "shock", "surprise" and "bewilderment" (93) at seeing a stranger when she instead spots Quint. Her terror is palpable:

It was as if, while I took in what I did take in, all the rest of the scene had been

stricken with death. I can hear again, as I write, the intense hush in which the sounds

of evening dropped. The rooks stopped cawing in the golden sky, and the friendly

hour lost, for the minute, all its voice. But there was no other change in nature, unless

indeed it were a change that I saw with a stranger sharpness. The gold was still in the

sky, the clearness in the air, and the man who looked at me over the battlements was

as definite as a picture in a frame. That's how I thought, with extraordinary quickness,

of each person that he might have been and that he was not. We were confronted

across our distance quite long enough for me to ask myself with intensity who then he

was and to feel, as an effect of my inability to say, a wonder that in a few instants

more became intense (*The Screw* 93).

There are several things to note from this passage. The use of nature as a means of grounding the supernatural presence becomes marked by contrasting impressions. Nature, which had been marked by 'friendliness' and beauty, is suddenly "stricken with death" (ibid.), and the Governess's romantic dreams are plunged into thoughts of death. By making our initial setting feel welcoming, our sense of uncanniness and unease is increased when the atmosphere shifts. She describes the "stranger sharpness" (93) which nature undergoes, where nothing except her attention to another presence has changed. The presence, the Other, has affected nature without any other action than being present, and its contrast to the beauty of nature is enough to strike fear within the Governess and the reader. The passage also underlines the issue of isolation to some degree. The Governess, walking alone, is suddenly assaulted by the vision of a strange presence, and she has no-one to turn to to confirm that she is seeing what she thinks she is seeing. Indeed, she is halted and frightened to such an extent that she cannot move before the presence turns away and disappears. She thinks with "extraordinary quickness" (93), probably full of adrenaline, trying to decipher who this presence is, yet she has no recollection of ever seeing him before.

If we follow Aguirre's idea of the Gothic novel as thematically following the epic structure, the hero's role is greatly influenced by the need for "self-preservation" (12). "Because he opposes the Other everything the Other yields will be viewed as hostile, and this will include the creature, who, though placed in the Villain's role, at the same time … displays heroic traits" (13), which would mean that the hero also has villainous traits. While she seems genuinely concerned about the children, the Governess is also something of a know-it-all. She twists narratives to suit her, even twists the words coming out of other

people's mouths, or talks down to them. To Mrs Grose, for example, she says "you haven't my dreadful boldness of mind, and you keep back, out of timidity and modesty and delicacy, even the impression that in the past, when you had, without my aid, to flounder about in silence, most of all made you miserable" (*The Screw* 123). What she is really saying is 'it is a good thing I came to Bly, or else everything would have ended terribly, for everyone else is helpless, or not clever enough to deal with this'. The Governess considers herself a saviour not only to the children, but to the other servants and Mrs Grose as well, who had to have been 'miserable' before the Governess came to force her to think and voice her thoughts.

In trying to uphold a social hierarchy, the Governess is isolated from the other servants at Bly. Isolation then deprives the Governess of input from other people. She cannot contact her employer, since he does not want to be disturbed, and Mrs Grose and the other servants have little will and wish to acknowledge what the Governess claims to experience. The abject is "what disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva 4). Arguably, the ghosts could be said to represent the Governess's growing awareness of 'evil' in the world, and provocations for her fear of the destruction of class hierarchies. Isolation as a fear generator is present also in *The Beast of the Jungle*. Instead of allowing himself comfort and happiness, Marcher lives life in the absence of both, nurturing the "sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to [him], that [he] had in [his] bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps overwhelm [him]" (*The Beast* 10). Marcher is in no uncertain terms plagued by an absence that he perceives as an imminent presence. Likewise, the Governess spends her time in Bly working against an unseen force that she imagines will plunge the children she governs into a terrible fate. In truth, the governess effectively isolates herself by putting Mrs Grose and the children in a morally and socially inferior position. Since she is apt to be judgmental and easily distressed, the governess makes it impossible for herself to solve the mystery she fancies herself to be caught in the middle of. Her self-proclaimed status and importance "is at best peripheral" (Punter 294) to the children.

The Governess's fixation on morality and the order of things, for example the hierarchy between her, Mrs. Grose and the children, could be connected to Greg Garrard's argument that the pastoral anthropocene in many ways describes nature as "a stable, enduring counterpoint to the disruptive energy and change of human societies" (63). What I mean by this is that nature, or in this case, the otherworldly entities and Bly Manor, do not change their goals or care about the wishes of the humans that occupy the mortal plain. James's approach to the supernatural is more realist than Marsh's. The ghosts look like their human

selves, they do not act against the other inhabitants of Bly, and they make no noise. The ghosts are really just presences filling space they are not supposed to inhabit. Their presence is frightening not because of what they inflict upon others, but because of their effect on the Governess and, indeed, the children. In plain terms, the ghosts could be said to be representations of the revenging lower class, thus reflecting fears about hierarchical vengeance.

The Governess, young and inexperienced as she is, spends most of her time worrying about what Flora and Miles see or know. When she is convinced they know of the ghostly apparitions and their intentions, she becomes almost inconsolable: "'They *know* - it's too monstrous: they know, they know! … Why all that *we* know - and heaven knows what more besides!'" (*The Screw* 114). Some interpretations of the novella attribute her fervour with which she protects the children to her romantic feelings for her employer. Others argue that she is mesmerised by the children to the point that she dreams up these ghostly dangers to deepen her bond with them If we are to believe that the Governess is not falling into insanity, then the ghosts are real, Miles and Flora know about them, as does Mrs Grose, yet they all refuse to acknowledge the undead presences at Bly. The only reason we have reason to doubt that the Governess has just gone mad is that she is convinced she has never seen Quint or Jessel before. If we are to believe the opposite—that the Governess is going insane, or was always insane—then that insanity would most likely be due to isolation.

Strombeck explains that degeneration and degenerate humans serve as "an interface between the organised, rational world and the vastness of the inhuman world" (1377), which would mean that the Governess's degenerative mental state would be a fear generator in its traversal into the Other. Arnold Goldsmith argues that "[o]nly by withdrawing into their consciousness that contains the finite world in microcosm can James's heroes and heroines be superior to their destinies in times of great affliction" (125). In this view, madness itself would not be considered a negative thing, yet when that madness leads to death, it does not aid in preserving that which the heroes and heroines seek to protect. Madness evokes fear, not only because the presence might cause the maddened to act in frightening ways, but because seeing the descent into madness awakens a primal feeling of loss within us. Loss of control of oneself, of one's actions, or of one's surroundings is frightening not only for loss's sake, but also because we don't know what awaits us when we go mad. One cannot know what 'going mad' entails, or whether what one sees or hears is real or not. Being looked upon as mad may be just as—if not more—horrifying than the supernatural threat, because it undermines the individual's ability to understand and know what is true and what is false, but also the

individual's identity. For some, especially those set in their beliefs, being wrong is the ultimate threat to their sense of self. Madness is both the presence of something that does not exist, and the absence of something that should.

In *The Turn of the Screw*, contrast is present in the textuality and semiotics of the text itself, but also in the contrast of characters. The issue with the other characters of the story, and what makes the sanity of the Governess so hard to discern, is the mysticism surrounding those around her. Miles and Flora, described as being angelic, "remarklable" (81), are hardly described in terms other than in appearance, obedience, agreeableness, or innocence. Miles is "the little gentleman" (82), and Flora is "the most beautiful child [the Governess] had ever seen" (80). The Governess has yet to find any problems with the children, so she feels that Mrs Grose is a little too happy at her arrival in Bly, and this makes her "uneasy" (*The Screw* 80), possibly because the reason is still unknown to her, and anyone who has to be "on her guard against showing it too much" (ibid.) raises suspicion of the situation at hand. Then again, the Governess is quick to dismiss any unease she feels, for the simple fact of looking at Flora and Miles with rose-tinted glasses and feeling nothing *can* be wrong when the children are so perfect: "it was a comfort that there could be no uneasiness in a connexion with anything so beatific as the radiant image of my little girl" (ibid.). Note also that the Governess refers to Flora as 'hers', indicating her intention to traverse the role of educator and protector, to become more like a mother than a governess. We see this again in the second to last paragraph of the novella, where she calls Miles "my own" (200) while trying to calm him on what are ultimately his death throes. This display of ownership is hypocritical due to her insistence that Quint and Jessel are detrimental to the children's innocent minds due to their hierarchical position in the class system, especially since she herself is middle class at best. Asiatidou supports this sentiment, saying that "the governess breaks the rules to perform her duty as a motherly figure" (827). Furthermore, Asiatidou notes that this is the Governess's attempt to "prove herself a good professional and thus a worthy woman of the uncle's attention and possible love interest, the inexperienced young governess unintentionally exposes Miles to an unnatural environment—the domestic sphere—for a young gentleman" (824). The issue, then, is that the exposure makes Miles abandon his childlike innocence in a bid to appear more mature.

By marking the children as perfect, innocent, beautiful, and faultless, their increasingly 'uncharacteristic' actions become that much more uncanny. The contrast of their initial perfection with their final imperfection generates fear, because it betrays our expectation of what is good and what is not. One of the sources of horror, Navarette says, is

"the possibility that the hypocrisy so familiar to Victorian adulthood might already have infiltrated the carefully guarded nursery and infected those preternaturally precocious children" (126). The presences at Bly press upon the living, and especially upon the pre-made assumptions about the children and their innocence.

Douglas points out the respectability of the servants, but to have to point them out as "thoroughly respectable" (*The Screw* 77) is the same as insinuating that a certain group of people are inherently not respectable. Asiatidou notes that servants were believed to be "morally corrupted" (821) and have "negative influence on children" (ibid.), and that Victorian fathers were warned to not "bestow the physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral growth of their children upon servants" (ibid). The children, the very image of innocence and goodness, are then revealed to be the opposite, especially Miles. According to Asiatidou, Miles's name "reveals the big span of his behavior (from angelic to evil and vice versa), being always prompt to stretch the boundaries of his behavior" (829). When Miles is expelled from school, neither Mrs Grose or the Governess understand how he could be "an injury to the others" (85), especially with Miles being nicknamed "the little gentleman" (84) and apparently being the very image of a good, British boy. Children were considered icons of purity and moral goodness (Bachman, Kaufman and Tromp 133). Navarette supports this sentiment, pointing to the "Victorian celebration of childhood" (116) with the "tendency to sentimentalize and idealize childhood" (117) in the context of the introductory pages, where Douglas is building tension to propel the narrative into action.

The Governess may deny the possibility of the children harbouring any sinister intentions or thoughts, but Miles's way of speaking and actions disprove her and unsettle her regardless. Towards the end of the novella, she describes the children as "little wretches" (*The Screw* 147) and having "false little lovely eyes" (155). The possible degeneration of children and of childlike innocence builds tension not only for the reader, but also for the Governess, since neither know very little about the situation in Bly and about Miles himself. It is clear that degeneration creates unease and uncanny feelings. "Deep obscurity continued to cover the region of [Miles's] conduct at school" (97), but the Governess is convinced that Miles has "made the whole charge absurd" (ibid.) because his outward appearance and act liken to childlike innocence. She diminishes the expulsion as a misunderstanding, determined that Miles could never be cruel or ungentlemanly. By sticking to this notion, the Governess allows Miles's more sexual and aggressive proclivities to go unchecked.

The Governess continues to seek out the truth about the apparitions she has seen, if only to protect the children and a certain social hierarchy. Mrs. Grose actively avoids the

truth, and would rather live in willful ignorance than subject herself to the horrors that reality may have her face. One could chalk this avoidance up to unwillingness to accept their existence, to fear of past trauma, or even to ignorance. Another interpretation is that the Governess is able to see and 'accept' the presence of the ghosts because she has an instinct and a will to protect the children, but this would mean that none of the other servants at Bly care for the children's well-being. More probable is the idea that Mrs Grose is understandably afraid of the mere notion of ghosts, or that she sees the Governess is slowly unravelling. This idea of 'unravelling' while under threat from the unknown ties into the idea of fatalism.

Solomon adheres fear of the unknown becoming fatal when our sense of fatalism hinders us from seeing the truth: a sort of moira or karma (437) which strikes Marcher and the Governess both due to their determination to fight against their terrible fates. A. Goldsmith notes that Marcher, and in this case the Governess as well, being "notoriously weak of will, [is] held up not as objects of emulation but of pity. They are criticized, explicitly or implicitly, for the apathetic attitudes which blight their lives" (115). The Governess is convinced that Quint and Jessel want to show themselves to the children, for whatever reason, and decides that she will be "offering [her]self bravely as the sole subject of such an experience, by accepting, by inviting, by surmounting it all, [she] should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquillity of the rest of the household" (*The Screw* 107). May Bartram asks if perhaps what is to befall Marcher is the "danger … of falling in love" (*The Beast* 11), which Marcher rejects. Throughout the short story, May attempts to give John chances to see beyond his foreboding senses, but she is continuously dismissed. Likewise, Mrs Grose attempts to hide past events from the Governess in an attempt to stop her descent into madness and from driving the children away, yet nothing can dissuade these prideful main characters from facing their opponents.

Before he dies, Miles professes that he "know[s] everything" (*The Screw* 197), that he has seen Quint and Jessel, and confesses that the reason he was expelled for having "said things" (ibid.) that he "oughtn't" (ibid.). As he speaks, he becomes more and more distressed, and as his struggles to stay on his feet come to a peak, he cries out "'Peter Quint - you devil!' … '*Where?*'". According to Navarette, Miles' call of Quint's name before his death evades meaning: "it creates not meaning but its absence" (124). Whether it is an admission of 'knowing' or 'seeing', a call for help, or a "final condemnatory gesture" (ibid.) aimed at the Governess, cannot be determined. This creates an absence which, in this case, cannot fully be substituted by imagination. What the Governess does tell us, is that the noise Miles makes before he dies is one of "a creature hurled over an abyss" (200).

Langlois argues that "[d]eath presupposes the finite existence of the life it negates" (105), and as such, we fear death because we know it is the end of all we know. When Miles dies, the ghosts disappear, but so does childhood innocence. Death is sublime because "it remains a terrifying mystery, not simply unknowable but linked with human desires that we wish to keep unknown" (Morris 309). In the discussion of the sublime in *The Great God Pan*, the void and its potentiality was an important point. The sublime is important in James's works as well. John Marcher lives in fear of *something* but comes to learn that *nothing* is what brings him to ruin. The Governess, in her endeavour to keep the 'veil' safely in place, subjects herself to terror in a way that slowly chips away at her sanity, and that kills her student. The Governess is alone, now with nothing left to defend. Likewise, Marcher's fate was to rest upon the edge of companionship, to then plunge into solitude when his companion succumbed to illness. That is not all he has lost, however. With no 'Beast' awaiting, Marcher has lost the feeling of fatefulness, and with it his feeling of importance among his peers. Marcher tells May that "it seems to me I liked it better present … than I can like it absent with *your* absence. … With the absence of everything" (*The Beast* 51). In the end, the absence of May also means the absence of a Beast, yet Marcher would rather live in fear of the Beast with May by his side than wander the "beaten grass, where no life stirred" (55). The Governess, too, must now live on, knowing she has failed to protect the children.

Thematically, *The Turn of the Screw* touches onto ideas of fatal pride, isolation, and madness that have here proved to influence the occurrence of fear of the unknown to a great extent. Fatalistic senses bring characters to misplace their fear and efforts, only to then blame others for their miscalculations. The fear of the negative influence of the lower classes, especially of their influence over upper-class children, joined with a fear of anarchism and the destruction of social hierarchies, is especially notable. The overarching issue is the isolation and self-isolation that the Governess brings upon herself in her struggle to disrupt the degenerative forces she suspects is at large at Bly. Furthermore, the textual aspects of the text have proved to affix presences, absences, and the fear of the unknown in various ways.

The structure, form, and language influences the uncanniness of the text, for example by use of an unreliable narrator whose sanity is under scrutiny. The narrative structure, which closely resembles the heroic journey, underlines this scrutinisation, since the heroine fails in her quest to protect the children. The narrative is riddled with absences that accentuate the presences of the Other, while simultaneously forcing the reader to fill the gaps imaginatively. There are instances of concealment of information, of absence of explanation, of cliffhangers, and so on. This influence leads the imagination in a certain direction by creating specific

parameters within which the unknown forces can operate. Contrast is also used to create uncanniness, for example through innuendo performed by child characters, by shifting the setting from safe to unsafe, or by changing one's interpretation of the children from being sweet and innocent to being wicked.

Conclusion

In *The Great God Pan*, Herbert describes the feeling that is reflected in all three works explored in this thesis:

> [N]ot in your most fantastic, hideous dreams can you have imagined forth the faintest shadow of what I have heard - and seen. … I have seen the incredible, such horrors that even I myself sometimes stop in the middle of the street, and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live (Machen 19).

In *The Beetle*, *The Great God Pan* and *The Turn of the Screw* respectively, the seeing individuals struggle with coming to terms with what they have witnessed, and with contextualising their new knowledge within the realm of what they do know about reality. The Other, the supernatural, the unknown, all affect people's understanding of reality. One of the comparisons this paper has unveiled is that between the unknown and Burke's notion of obscurity with regard to the sublime. Obscurity, which so delightfully covers both that which is present and that which is absent, is a fixed mark in all three works I have reviewed. The antagonists have the ability to cause delight through the sublime, but only when observed from a distance. The entities in these three novels and novellas encroach upon the daily lives and intimate spheres of the characters within the texts, which serves to remove the delight of terror and replace it with uncanniness, genuine fear, and revulsion.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from the analyses thus far. First; that presences, absences, and the fear of the unknown mark themselves in Gothic fiction. Second; that fear generators have the primary role of plot progression and enforcing character interaction, while also representing historical, psychological, or thematic and textual instances of fear. Though these novels have been separated within different types of analyses, they inhabit many of the same historical, psychological and textual characteristics. These authors depict both concrete and abstract ideas about the fear and possibilities of the unknown. Lovecraft's entities are not always inherently hostile, but rather look at humanity as one might look with waning interest at a colony of ants. Their world does not revolve around the destruction of man, which is in stark contrast to the entities in Marsh, Machen and James' works. The exception is *The Beast of the Jungle*, which holds no entity save for self-isolation and self-destruction of the mind. The outward appearance of the in-text

entities—whether a monstrous shapeshifter, a god of the Abyss, or a malicious remnant of the past—have the same characteristic in that their presence, real or not, inflicts horror upon the characters and upon the reader. By leaving the appearance of the fear-creator formless, any reader may thus create whichever terror they see fit to fill the role. Fear of the unknown is the notion that something is waiting, out of sight but not too far away that it can be considered anything but a threat. Isolation and insanity are less abstract results of contact with that threat. In fact, they may only be a short distance apart, and are no less degenerative than poverty or racial otherness.

For all works under scrutiny in this paper, the narrators of the stories are fallible or even unreliable. For *The Turn of the Screw*, that unreliability is used to emphasise uncanniness and raise questions about the reality of the presences at Bly. What the protagonists of these three books have in common is their ignorance or inability to comprehend what they are seeing, feeling, or experiencing. Their fear becomes abstract, and they struggle to adapt to that which they cannot understand. Trying to force things to turn out the way they want them to, the protagonists might find themselves fighting a losing battle because one, the opponent they are facing is too powerful or indifferent to their supposed morality and honourability, and two, the setting they find themselves in has changed and the world is no longer bending to their will. In *The Beetle*, characters undergo mental and physical degeneration as a result of coming in contact with the Beetle. Marjorie Lindon is brought to such a frenzy by the Beetle's presence that she rips her own clothes to shreds. Not only, but very notably for Clarke in *The Great God Pan*, the knowledge of the Other's existence brings about such a level of repulsion that he feels he must suppress it and avoid the memory of it. Some of those that have seen Pan are affected to such a degree that they commit suicide, for they cannot live on after having witnessed the God of the Abyss. The Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* is so determined to protect the children from 'seeing' that she inadvertently distances herself from everyone, making her isolated and thus more vulnerable to her own imagination's destructive power.

A common feature in these works is the use of gaps, omissions, and absences. These absences of information function to make clear the impact of the Other, the presence, upon the characters and upon the environment. By obscuring the truth, whether by omitting details or descriptions or by using unreliable narrators, tension is built, and uncanniness gains foothold in the imaginative thinking that then occurs in an attempt to fill the absences. Contrasts, too, aids in the creation of the uncanny and eerie, which in turn generates fear of the unknown.

The Beetle reflects the concrete fear of the cultural alien and of the degeneration of imperial memory, as well as degenerations the entity enforces upon its victims; *The Great God Pan* of the sexually liberated woman and the domination of the repressed Id; *The Turn of the Screw* of the lower classes's influence on upper-class children and mental degeneration. Even so, the texts are multifaceted, and the abstract issues at hand actually serve to criticise the fear of these issues. The Beetle, in its quest for revenge and through its reverse colonialism, raises questions about colonialism and the hypocrisy of xenophobia and colonial fear perpetrated by the initial coloniser. In *The Great God Pan*, the experiment that reveals Pan to Mary brings about a femme fatale that finds joy in destroying the minds of men, but Helen's rampage could also be seen as the vengeance of her deceased mother, whose supposed saviour exposed her to a destructive power under the guise of giving her free will. For the Governess in *Turn of the Screw,* that struggle is an outright refusal to bend to the will or ideas of others that she deem unworthy or lower in the social hierarchy, which results in her failure to protect the children.

Finally, and perhaps most notably, there is the unshakable sense of foreboding which evokes a feeling of otherness of atmosphere. That which is supposed to happen or bound to happen lingers unsaid between every line, whether that which lies in wait is a ghost, a terrifying god, or an otherworldly entity of unknown proportion and power, or, in the case of John Marcher, nothing at all but one's own inability to embrace life out of fear of the future. The foreboding, which appears in many forms, creates monsters where there are none, yet also removes them where they are supposed to be. They are hidden threats, lying in wait, present within the mind even with their physical absence.

In a sense, these narratives hold anthropocene elements in that the forces of fate, nature and other-worldly entities are given power over humanity. The otherworldly, the unknown, and nature are one and the same. The entities' goals are not initially to destroy humanity, but the very nature of their existence may very well do just that nonetheless. Nature is amorphous, and may pertain to plant, beast, force, or enormity. Nature's, or in this case the unknown's, colonisation, infiltration and encroachment upon humanity can be seen as analogous to human colonisation of wilderness or the inhuman realm, where the expansion of the human empire does not offer compensation for the damages inflicted upon the nonhuman. The coloniser, fearing loss of control and power, fights against the unseen forces that threaten to upend their reign. The Victorian mindset is largely unable to move towards biodiversity and away from the human-centric.

Ghosts, unholy creatures and frightening rituals are certainly expressors of fear of the unknown within the works that have been explored here, but they are merely convoys for larger narratives that are reflections of contemporary issues and the human psyche's weaknesses to internalised fear. Additionally, they must be used with the right narrative techniques and language to properly convey the emotion that Gothic horror seeks to implement upon the reader. There was also an expectation that a historical approach to gothic fiction would prove mostly xenophobic inclinations. Further investigation and deeper analysis proves that such an inclination might indeed be factual, yet it is only one of many explanations. There are micro-, macro- and exo-cosmos to consider when looking at *The Beetle*, and these cosmos are interconnected.

There is evidence of not only historical and cultural effects on the fear of the unknown and presence and absence, but also psychological effects, as well as narratological devices that describe and display the terror these themes portray. Gothic fiction has proven itself a dependable medium for exactly these themes, for its focus on mystery, darkness and persecution evoke the feelings which the uncanny and the frightening so often purports.

These three analyses have given insight into different ways fear of the unknown could be employed: the first in a political way, where fear of the unknown is fear of the geographical and hierarchical other; the second in a psychological way, where the mind, emotions, and social influences create fear of the abstract and uncanny; and third in a textual way, where word choice, structure, context, omissions and so on creates fear of the unknown. Together, these works present presences and absences in different yet similar ways. A common denominator is their shapeless, untouchable villains, and the protagonists' inability to prevent horrors from striking them. Though the fear of the unknown can certainly pertain to ghosts, ghouls and monsters, the literary trend reaches much deeper. Fear of the unknown is psychological, historical and textual, and touches upon xenophobia as much as it may upon religious belief, l'appel du vide, or primal fear. The entities presented in *The Beetle, The Great God Pan* and *The Turn of the Screw* are presented in such ways that they transcend human comprehension to some degree. Their amorphousness and abilities to disappear and reappear as they see fit lends them an Otherness that comes across as uncanny or, oftentimes, horrifying. Exposure to these entities and their qualities as Other spur terror, isolation, degeneration, and madness. The supernatural functions as a fear generator, and since the origins or intentions of the supernatural is initially unknown, the fear that is generated from their presence is a fear of the unknown.

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