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English Composition II

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Seductive and Eerie Loneliness

*The Trod* is a battle between fleshly desires and earthly futures. In the short story, *The Trod*, the elaborate word choice surrounding the setting is critical to the tone and mood. By describing the setting, Algernon Blackwood evokes intense feelings of loneliness and bleakness, creates strange yet enticing beauty, and establishes an unnerving atmosphere for both the characters and the reader.

Firstly, Algernon Blackwood creates a bleak and lonely atmosphere through his description of the setting. Throughout the story, the author emphasizes the desolation, bleakness, and loneliness of the countryside multiple times. For example, while Norman is traveling on the train, he realizes that "The country was getting wilder, lonelier, less inhabited" (3). This is one of the first examples of Blackwood emphasizing the loneliness of the countryside. Then Norman is dropped off at the train station, a "deserted platform amid swirling mists a damp wind" (3). The isolation and loneliness are emphasized once again, describing how he is entirely alone with alone the wind to keep him company. Over and over again, the author repeats this: "the air of desolation and loneliness that hung over all the countryside," "wilder and less inhabited even than the Scottish Highlands," "a sense of desertion, due partly to the dusk no doubt, hung brooding over everything," "bleak and inhospitable," "desolate and uninhabited," "desolate spot at the best of times," "dim blue distance," "of loss, of cold, of isolation, a realization of homelessness, yet of intense attraction towards a world unrealized" (3,8,10). This repeated and

explicit description of bleak and lonely conditions creates a bleak and lonely atmosphere. It repels the readers, negatively affecting their mood, but seems to entice the main characters. Through his vivid word choice, Blackwood creates a dark and gloomy tone.

Secondly, the strangely beautiful description of the setting entices the main characters. Algernon Blackwood creates a conflictory tone with detailed references to the setting and his intense depiction of the feelings evoked by the character's surroundings. Blackwood creates this conflictory atmosphere with descriptions like "wild beauty" (3,8), "too lovely to look at – and keep your senses" (5), and "eternal loveliness" (9). These descriptions of strange beauty are highly contradictory to the desolation and bleak setting described in other parts of the short story. What is even more bizarre is the description of the character's feelings. This strangely beautiful yet bleak setting evokes feelings of "wonder, delight, and passion" from the main character (7). The sense of otherworldliness is introduced with descriptions like: "intense, seductive, loveliness that appealed to all the strange, unearthly side of him" (8), and "primeval loveliness, unkempt, and wild as when God first made it" (8). All of these intense descriptions play vital roles in the intended tone. Without the contradiction, there would have been no reason for the reader to keep reading. Without his vivid descriptions and manipulation of thought, the story would have been confusing (with no purpose), and bland.

Lastly, Blackwood's word choice conveys an unnerving atmosphere, both for the reader and the characters. Otherworldly and strange descriptions create an unnerving atmosphere. For example, the setting is described as "soulless, without hope or future" (9), "a queer kind of 'aunting" (5), "A haunted countryside" (4), "ain't right" (4). If the reader hadn't picked up on the strange sensation Blackwood was trying to create, they would have with these vivid descriptions of the setting. To help them along, he depicted how the characters felt about this as well. For

example, “A queer, yet delicious feeling in him” (5), “strange, eerie sensation” (10), “It made me feel queer all over” (6). In effect, these descriptions left the reader with strange and eerie feelings. It left the reader, figuratively, feeling and seeing the haunted countryside and the otherworldly creatures.

In conclusion, in the short story, *the Trod*, Algernon Blackwood creates a bleak, beautiful, and haunted countryside all within the same story. The contradictory and intense descriptions of the setting are vital to both the tone and the mood. The vivid description of the setting and of the feelings evoked by the setting completed the author’s purpose. The battle between fleshly desires and ‘right’ was expertly conveyed in vivid detail, leaving just enough room for every readers’ picture to be slightly different.

Works Cited

Blackwood, Algernon. "THE TROD.pdf." *Google Docs*, drive.google.com/file/d/1zrN3z46V7MRKJQSezh1fnzMApgc3s1xz/view.