

A horror story of algernon blackwood

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How does Algernon Blackwood use the conventions of Gothic Horror to create a sense of fear and horror in “ The Kit Bag”?

INTRODUCTION

Gothic Horror is a genre which tries to create a sense of fear and horror in the reader. Writers of gothic horror use a number of conventions to achieve this. Some of these include setting, the supernatural, isolated hero, the climax and sound. In ‘ The Kit Bag,’ Blackwood uses a number of these conventions to create a sense of horror.

PEE 1

The setting in gothic horror is used to create a sense of horror and tension. The setting in gothic horror is usually very dark and mysterious so that it creates the sense of fear and the unknown. In ‘ The Kit Bag’ Blackwood writes ‘ There was not a stick of furniture large enough to hide a dog.’ When he says ‘ not a stick of furniture’ it suggests that the rooms are completely empty and the little furniture that is in some rooms, are just simply so small compared to the size of the room he describes them as ‘ sticks’. The last part of the quote states that there is not a piece of furniture ‘ large enough to hide a dog’ and this implies that all of the furniture in there is so thin and petite that not even a dog could hide itself from sight. The fact that the rooms are so large and the furniture inside the rooms are so small, it creates a sense of loneliness and that if anything was there, there is nowhere for you to hide. This would make the reader feel trapped, and in danger and therefore creating the sense of fear and horror that Blackwood is trying to create.

PEE 2

Another gothic convention is the idea of the isolated hero. This is seen in 'The Kit Bag' when Blackwood writes 'Who's there? he called again, in a voice unnecessarily loud and that only just held firm.' When he writes 'Who's there? He called again,' implies to the reader that he has already asked this and there was no reply, which creates the sense of fear of being alone, and trapped. Also in the quote when he says 'in a voice unnecessarily loud' suggests that he himself is scared because he is trying to raise his voice louder, when there is no need, the word 'unnecessarily' implies this. And finally when he says 'that only just held firm' it suggests that he is so struck with fear and is trying extremely hard to keep his voice steady and firm, but he is only just about able to manage this difficult task, and because the character is so struck with fear that it is starting to show, the reader then feels the same emotion and is beginning to feel fear and horror themselves. This convention is also seen in Dracula when Bram Stoker writes 'and found myself in an old, ruined chapel, which had evidently been used as a graveyard.' When it says 'found myself in an old, ruined chapel' it has been written in a way that is suggesting that he didn't willingly go there, he was put there, and then 'found' himself there. Also the fact he found himself in an 'old, ruined chapel' creates the sense of fear as he is alone, in an abandoned, ruined chapel. Afterward he writes 'which evidently been used as a graveyard' the reader's feelings of fear and horror are really intensified when they realize it is, in fact, a graveyard because a graveyard is related to ghosts and being haunted, which is the unknown and cannot be stopped. And the fact that earlier in the quote it says 'I found myself' really emphasizes

the fear of ghosts and the unknown. And all this really creates a sense of being alone, trapped and in danger, and therefore creating the gothic horror convention of the isolated hero.

PEE 3

Another example of a gothic convention that creates a sense of horror is the use of unexplained noises. This is seen in 'The Kit Bag' when Blackwood writes 'But then the steps ceased suddenly, and he heard no more'. In the quote it says 'But then the steps ceased suddenly' and when it says 'suddenly' this suggests that whatever noise was being made, just stopped, went away. Also when he describes them as 'the steps' evokes the idea that it isn't a person, it is just the sound of steps. It is also seen in 'Wuthering Heights' when the author, Emily Bronte, wrote 'the fir bough repeat its teasing sound'. The fact that she said 'the fir bough' already makes it seem quite suspicious, as they don't usually make sounds. Also when she writes 'repeat its teasing sound' makes the writer think, what teasing sound? How can it make such a sound? And so, it creates the sense of fear and horror as the reader doesn't know what is happening or how.

PEE 4

A major technique writers use to create a sense of fear and horror is the description of the main villain. In 'The Kit Bag' Blackwood writes 'The man who had carried out with callous detail one of the most brutal and cold-blooded murders of recent years'. When he wrote in the quote 'the man' suggests that he doesn't even have the right to be called by his name. So evil is he that, he won't even say his name. He then writes 'who carried out

with the callous detail' implies that he is so dangerous because he planned every step so precisely, with such detail. Also when he describes him as 'callous' implies that he is so insensitive and has a cruel disregard for others around him. Also in the quote 'one of the most brutal and cold-blooded murders of recent years' evokes the idea that with his callous detail and planning has resulted to a devastating murder. 'Brutal' suggests that it was so horrific and horrid: that it backs up the idea that he is insensitive to others around him. Describing him as 'cold-blooded' really creates the sense of horror and fear to the reader because it implies he has no human feeling or emotion, and he doesn't feel any remorse for what he has done.

PEE 5

A further convention of gothic horror used to create a sense of fear is supernatural plot elements. In 'The Kit Bag' Blackwood writes 'The top of the kit-bag lopped over towards him with an extraordinary resemblance to a human face'. This will create a sense of horror and fear because bags can't move to their own approval. Also the fact that it resembles a face is suggesting that it is trying to tell him something, warn him off perhaps. This is a very good gothic convention because it causes the reader to want to know what has happened and how, and therefore creates the sense of fear. Similarly, in 'Wuthering Heights' it says 'obscurely, a child's face looking through the window'. When it says 'a child's face looking through the window' it is almost suggesting it is just the face. So horrifying is this that, the reader would then feel a sense of fear and horror, and therefore this convention is another excellent convention to use in a Gothic Horror book. Which many authors do!

PEE 6

Finally, the climax is when the sense of horror and fear is at its highest point. In 'The Kit Bag' this is seen when Blackwood writes 'Not three feet from him the man stood, the fringe of black hair marked plainly against the pallor of the forehead'. In the quote it says 'Not three feet from him the man stood', when Blackwood refers to him as 'the man' it is implying that he has no name, perhaps not even human. Also when he writes 'the fringe of black hair marked plainly against the pallor of the forehead' creates the sense of horror because, black hair usually represents the villain, also the colour black makes the reader think, darkness, evil and many other things like this. Also when Blackwood writes 'marked plainly against the pallor of the forehead' evokes the idea that if the black hair stands out so much, he has extremely pale skin, and again pale skin usually represents the villain. But also, pale skin could represent a spirit or a ghost, or the white skin could symbolize that he has no human emotion, and that all the humanity has been drained away.

CONCLUSION

Blackwood uses the following techniques to create a sense of fear and horror: Setting, the isolated hero, unexplained noises, the description of the main villain, a supernatural plot and the climax. Perhaps the most effective technique is setting because the setting, when described properly, the reader can have the image of that in their heads. And it's almost like they are there themselves, witnessing all these horrifying things, and that itself creates the sense of fear and horror. The most horrifying moment of the story is when Blackwood writes 'When he got upstairs he heard the sleet

volleying against the window panes.' This is because when he describes the voice as been ' volleyed against the window panes' it is suggesting that there is someone up there talking and the fact that it is echoing so much implies that it is empty. No furniture, no warmth, just a cold, empty floor of the unknown. And the unknown then creates the sense of fear and horror.