UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

This is a peer-reviewed, final published version of the following document and is licensed under All Rights Reserved license:

Beyer, Charlotte ORCID: 0000-0002-2701-5443 (2023) “No Picturesque Village is Safe”: Agatha Christie’s Cornish Crime Scenes in “The Blood-Stained Pavement” and “Ingots of Gold”. Clues: A Journal of Detection, 41 (1). pp. 95-105.

EPrint URI: https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/11257

Disclaimer

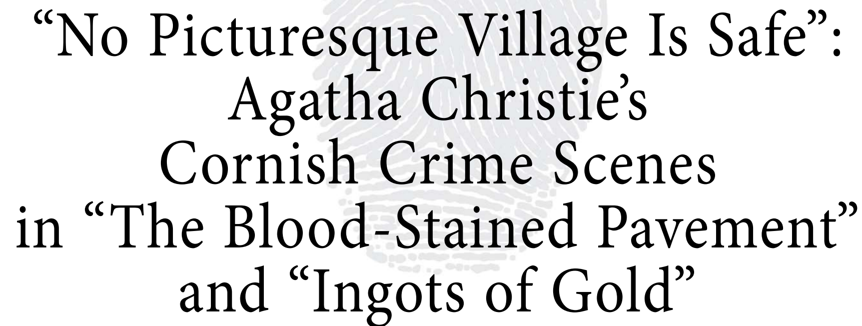
The University of Gloucestershire has obtained warranties from all depositors as to their title in the material deposited and as to their right to deposit such material.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation or warranties of commercial utility, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or any other warranty, express or implied in respect of any material deposited.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation that the use of the materials will not infringe any patent, copyright, trademark or other property or proprietary rights.

The University of Gloucestershire accepts no liability for any infringement of intellectual property rights in any material deposited but will remove such material from public view pending investigation in the event of an allegation of any such infringement.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR TEXT.



"No Picturesque Village Is Safe": Agatha Christie's Cornish Crime Scenes in "The Blood-Stained Pavement" and "Ingots of Gold"

Charlotte Beyer

Abstract. This article explores Agatha Christie's representations of Cornwall and Cornish crime scenes in two crime short stories, "The Blood-Stained Pavement" (1928) and "Ingots of Gold" (1928). The author argues that Christie looks behind popular cultural representations of Cornwall, uncovering dark tourism, heritage crime, histories of oppression, misogynist violence, and murder.

Investigating Cornish Crime Scenes

Christie's Cornish crime short stories focus on a specific geographical setting to investigate the politics of representing identity, marginality, and inequality. This article explores Christie's portrayal of Cornwall in "The Blood-Stained Pavement" (1928) and "Ingots of Gold" (1928), both from her 1933 collection, *The Thirteen Problems*. Christie has depicted Cornwall in other crime short stories—for example, "The Companion" (also from *The Thirteen Problems*) and "The Hound of Death" (1933). However, my investigation here focuses on "The Blood-Stained Pavement" and "Ingots of Gold," as these two short stories complement

Charlotte Beyer *is senior lecturer in English Studies at the University of Gloucestershire in the United Kingdom. She has published widely on crime fiction and contemporary literature, including* Murder in a Few Words: Gender, Genre and Location in the Crime Short Story *(McFarland, 2020), and* Intersectionality and Decolonisation in Contemporary British Crime Fiction *(Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2023). Her six edited books include* Teaching Crime Fiction *(Palgrave, 2018) and* Mothers Who Kill *(Demeter, 2022).*

CLUES • A Journal of Detection / Volume 41, Number 1 / Spring 2023 / pp. 95–105 /
ISSN 0742-4248 / eISBN 978-1-4766-5163-7 / © 2023 McFarland & Company, Inc.

and contrast one another in their portrayal of Cornish crime scenes. “Ingots of Golds” employs elements from the colonial adventure genre to scrutinize the Cornish history of dispossession, whereas “The Blood-Stained Pavement” echoes the marriage thriller in its investigation of patriarchal violence against women as the dark underbelly of Cornish tourism. This article argues that, as well as drawing on the uncanny and the supernatural as the haunting remnants of past Cornish culture, Christie’s Cornish crime scenes examine more contemporary and realistic transgressions such as misogynistic murder, insurance fraud, and heritage crime. The uncanny dimension of Christie’s short stories has hitherto received little specific critical attention, Julia Panko a notable exception. Likewise, Rebecca Mills has examined Christie’s portrayal of seaside settings, Cornwall among those; however, Christie’s Cornish crime scenes specifically invite further scholarly research. Arguing for a greater understanding of Cornwall’s history and culture, Joan Passey concludes that “the absence of Cornwall from Gothic literary histories—and literary analyses more generally—is a significant gap in our understanding of the role of space and place in the literary imagination” (1). Using the uncanny to allude to supernatural realms and a feeling of foreboding and dread, Christie’s stories extend the crime genre to encompass elements of the Gothic, a textual technique that enables her to convey the hidden narratives of Cornwall through allusions to unsettling or frightening psychic phenomena triggered by the landscape and its people—phenomena that themselves are manifestations of gender, class, and historical trauma. Christie’s Cornish crime short stories repeatedly evoke the uncanny, described by Freud as “all that arouses dread and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread” (75). Both “The Blood-Stained Pavement” and “Ingots of Gold” employ the second category of the uncanny identified by Mark Windsor, namely the “unsettling” or “strange” transformation of “the world of normal experience.” (61)

Cornwall as a region is associated with tourism and breathtaking landscapes but has also witnessed industrialization and resource extraction through activities such as mining. Due to the opportunities for concealment afforded by the Cornish coastline’s coves, the area has historically been associated with crime such as smuggling and piracy. Cornwall has provided authors of Gothic and suspense thrillers with rich creative inspiration, drawing on the cultural narrative around Cornwall as primitive, rustic, geographically circumscribed by a rugged landscape, and culturally defined by superstition, the Gothic, and myth. Through their Cornish crime scenes, Christie’s stories thus foreground what Paul March-Russell refers to as the county’s “ambiguous relationship towards the English heartland” (55). This article reads Christie’s texts and their representation of Cornwall as uncanny landscapes of marginalization and dispossession. Her crime short stories draw on the region’s ambivalent relationship to England, showing Cornwall to be a target for tourists seeking idyllic natural landscapes and villages but bringing dark tourism, heritage crime, misogyny, and murder into the region. Shelley Trower observes that the Cornish landscape presents a liminal space “not quite . . . detached from the nation, to be neither home nor elsewhere, part way between the two . . . part of and yet quite separable from England” (200). This sense of separation is also evident in Christie’s portrayal of Cornwall’s landscape and coastline as offering both seductive pleasures and deadly dangers to English visitors (see also Rebecca Mills). Christie’s crime stories thus explore constructions of the Cornish landscape as an uncanny liminal space and of its people as being not quite English, separate in mindset and cultural habits, and associated with criminality and delinquency.

The crime short stories “The Blood-Stained Pavement” and “Ingots of Gold” are from

the short story collection *The Thirteen Problems*, which first presented Miss Marple as a character. The stories in *The Thirteen Problems* introduce the reader to the Tuesday Night Club, a group of friends who regularly meet at Miss Marple's house in St. Mary Mead to solve mysteries. The Tuesday Night Club consists of Miss Marple; writer Raymond West, her nephew; artist Joyce Lemprière, her niece; a former Scotland Yard detective, a clergyman, and a solicitor (Christie, "Tuesday Night" 3). The stories establish Miss Marple's character, emphasizing her age and marginal position within the Tuesday Night Club as she sits in her chair seemingly preoccupied with her knitting (Christie, "Tuesday Night" 3), while its members take turns to tell the story of an unsolved real mystery—a true crime—to see if anyone can solve the mystery. Thanks to her life experience, observational skills, and knowledge of the dark side of human nature, Miss Marple emerges as the detective able to solve the crime. However, she is not the sole narrator of the Tuesday Night Club stories; rather, crime solving is a communal narrative effort. As Halford explains in her assessment of Christie's narrative technique, this "domestic setting" (12) contributes to giving *The Thirteen Problems* crime short stories an episodic, anecdotal feel, as though these were oral stories or tales told in an informal setting. In this staging of her crime short stories, Christie draws on oral storytelling traditions, creating a sense of community and collective participation in the stories' crime solving endeavor (Halford). In these stories, Miss Marple serves both as a detective and a mediator between the uncanny Cornish landscape and the reader, her insight enabling her to provide a rational explanation for the unsolved crimes.

Christie's classic Golden Age novels feature textual and thematic elements that have been defined as central to this form, yet her short stories remain relatively overlooked by critics and scholars, a gap which my research seeks to redress. The crime short story, with its formal openness and relative brevity, provides a fascinating textual space for Christie's exploration of Cornwall, as well as complex issues such as transgression and trauma—themes seen in Christie's Mr. Quin crime short stories (Beyer, *Murder* 72–90). Crime fiction, with its unique focus on privilege and social justice, thus affords insight into the complex Cornish region and setting. The Cornish stories furthermore invite examination of Christie's character studies, use of dialogue, and astute eye for group dynamics and the inequalities that structure them such as gender, age, class, and sexuality. In "The Blood-Stained Pavement" and "Ingots of Gold," the crime short story as a form affords Christie the opportunity to re-create an informal episodic narrative format that emulates oral storytelling culture. The deceptively lighthearted ambience engendered by this format conceals deeply disturbing crime narratives, just like the beauty of the Cornish landscape conceals the violence and trauma of its history, also noted by Rebecca Mills in her discussion of Christie's representation of tourism and carnival (83). However, whereas Mills discusses several seaside settings from Brighton to Looe and novels by different authors in her article, my focus here is on Christie's creative and critical engagement with Cornwall and her use of the uncanny. Christie's "The Blood-Stained Pavement" and "Ingots of Gold" thus depict Cornwall as a tourist destination as well as a site for resource and gender exploitation by the privileged wealthy English elite.

Heritage Crime and Hidden History: "Ingots of Gold"

In "Ingots of Gold," Christie builds her crime plot around a masculine colonial adventure narrative (see also Clarke 9). The adventure plot of this story centers on dark

tourism in Cornwall, interrogating class-based criminal stereotypes of the region and its history through the portrayal of heritage crime. Cornwall has long been a target for exploitative dark tourism extending into the twenty-first century, with travel writers recommending “smugglers tours” and visits to Bodmin Gaol and St. Keverne, the site of the 1497 Prayer Book Rebellion (Collett). In “Ingots of Gold,” the dark tourism and heritage crime plot involves a hunt for treasure and gold in sunken shipwrecks by wealthy Englishmen coming to Cornwall to exploit the land and its people. The story’s narrator is writer Raymond West, Miss Marple’s nephew, whose unsolved mystery puzzle is an account of his Whitsun stay in the fictional Cornish village of Polperran on the rugged west coast of Cornwall. Traveling to Polperran by train, West had been visiting an acquaintance, John Newman, at his rented Cornish residence, Pol House. Newman claims to have bought the rights to extract vast rumored gold treasures from wrecked Spanish galleons sunk off a location known as Serpent Rocks on the rough shores of West Cornwall during the invasion by the Spanish Armada in the sixteenth century (Christie, “Ingots” 39). West’s and Newman’s presence in Polperran is due to the region’s new accessibility by both train and road to criminals and tourists. Passey comments on the touristification of Cornwall, explaining how the region’s “connection to the rail network and consequent increased presence in literature, periodicals, and travel writing made it a popular tourist destination in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (120). Trower also argues that “one of the main reasons for the popularized perception of Cornwall as different from England was its promotion by the tourist industry, through posters and publications produced by the Great Western Railway” (201) which depicted Cornwall “as a place of adventure, with its primitive traditions and folklore, its superstitious natives and dramatic landscapes” (202). These features, including train travel and rugged terrains, play a key role in West’s adventure narrative discourse. In Christie’s story, the local coastline and the cove referred to as “Smugglers’ Cove” are associated with piracy and smuggling, thus reinscribing cultural mythologies around lawlessness associated with Cornwall and the Cornish. Thus in “Ingots of Gold,” Christie employs stereotypes of both characters and settings to interrogate the meanings of Cornish crime scenes. Newman introduces West to local Cornish men whom he intends to employ as divers to enter sunken shipwrecks and extract valuables. However, Newman later goes missing, and when he is found tied up, he claims that thieves had seized him, restrained him, and subsequently stolen the gold extracted from the wreck that they had stored in caves located in “Smugglers’ Cove.” Newman then accuses Kelvin, the proprietor of the local inn, of conspiring with the thieves, an accusation that appears plausible, as Kelvin has a prior criminal record for assault. Thus, Newman almost succeeds in framing an innocent Cornish man for his crimes—except, at the end of the mystery story, Miss Marple steps in to explain to the other members of the Tuesday Night Club what really happened. Miss Marple explains that Kelvin was set up as the scapegoat by Newman, an opportunistic criminal from the privileged elite. In Betz’s words, how “the truth revealed by the crime’s solving is typically mundane rather than fantastic” (36). Through this unexpected twist, Christie shows that prejudice against this Cornish working man with a criminal record should not blind West or the reader to the obvious fact—namely, that the wealthy outsider Newman is the real villain. However, only Miss Marple’s judgment was unclouded by unconscious bias.

“Ingots of Gold” presents an examination of masculinity and social class, using the crime plot to interrogate assumptions about criminality and violence. Both the Cornish men described in the story are depicted as physically striking, hostile, and plainly spoken

or inarticulate. Passey discusses what she calls "a preoccupation with Cornish particularism in the face of the homogenizing force of a new tourist culture threatening to inflict change upon an otherwise preserved landscape" (114). The story explicitly plays with these stereotypes, using the crime short story's anecdotal format as a site for the contestation of Britishness, marginality, and belonging. As an instrumental part of its crime plot (and also a massive red herring), "Ingots of Gold" alludes to the depiction of Cornish males as primitive, wild, and criminal delinquents. Newman, the privileged villain, naturally hams up this stereotype of the Cornish in his description to West of local Cornish men. Newman claims that smuggling and stealing from shipwrecks is inherent to them and forms part of their lifestyle and culture (Christie, "Ingots" 42–43). Newman's condescending description of the Cornish suggests that Kelvin is a surviving specimen of a primitive earlier species, reiterating cultural stereotypes. As West reflects on Kelvin's brooding dark demeanor, "bloodshot eyes," and suspicious behavior, Christie plays on popular stereotypes of otherness and cultural difference ("Ingots" 43). Kelvin's dark Celtic coloring and body language aligns the Cornish with criminality, highlighting his difference from the English and the wealthy elite. This discursive and colonial Othering of Cornwall is also noted by Ruth Heholt and Tanya Krzywinska who remind us that, in "the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Cornwall was known as 'West Barbary,' referencing the west coast of Africa, the Barbarian coast" (n.p.). As we shall see, both "Ingots of Gold" and "The Blood-Stained Pavement" foreground these tropes in their portrayal of Cornish crime scenes. West further reports Kelvin expressing clear antipathy toward foreigners coming to Cornwall. The suspicion of outsiders and foreigners articulated through Kelvin's remark further serves to suggest that the Cornish Gothic, hostile and inward-looking backward people—"survivals" (Christie, "Ingots" 43). "Ingots of Gold" provides an alternative perspective of this portrayal through its ending, which shows how the unscrupulous English exploit Cornwall and the Cornish. Christie's story thus exposes the toxic masculinity of upper-class males treating Cornwall and the colonies as their adventure playground to exploit. Although West does not participate in any criminal activities, his friendship with Newman suggests his complicity in perpetuating structures of class inequality and male privilege.

Alongside its plot of exposing the stereotype of the primitive, wild, and criminal Cornish man, Christie's "Ingots of Gold" alludes to the hidden narratives of Cornish history—namely, the region's history of Spanish conflict and, more specifically, the Spanish armada's attack on Mousehole, Newlyn, and Penzance in 1595 (Trower 201). Trower explains how "[i]ncidents such as these contributed to the image of Cornwall as wild and lawless, combined with perceptions of the Cornish themselves as 'foreign,' and as involved in smuggling and wrecking" (203). The Spanish attack formed part of the power struggle for supremacy among the British, French, and Spanish that involved warfare and piracy. These conflicts reflected intense rivalries and contests in Atlantic Europe to colonize and exploit the Americas (Quinn). However, as historians have shown, warfare and violent conflict were not just inflicted on Cornwall by forces external to Britain. The Cornish had experienced confrontation with the English government earlier in the 1500s, during the Prayer Book Rebellion, which resulted in the brutal suppression of Cornwall by the English, overseeing the colonization of Cornish culture, language, and land (J. Mills, "Genocide"). This history of English exploitation of Cornwall, through land ownership and resource extraction, is echoed in Christie's story and its attention to the English upper-class privileged elite representative, Newman, and his control of Pol House. Newman, of course, turns out to be an unscrupulous

and ruthless villain who gladly sees an innocent man imprisoned while he prospers from the fruits of his crimes.

Christie's descriptions of car travel in Cornwall, particularly the vertical climb up the cliffs or the precipitous drive down to coastal villages, serve to construct a landscape of extremes. Such extremes form the symbolic and geographical backdrop for crime as well as uncanny physical and emotional transgression. "Ingots of Gold" features striking depictions of the untamed Cornish landscape that allude to its Gothic qualities through representations of its excesses. Even the weather is intense, featuring raging storms that leave West sleep-deprived and unsettled. The location of Newman's property, Pol House, plays into precisely this construction of Cornwall as wild and other. West recalls the approach to Pol House via a steep and twisting road along cliffs, leading to the house that overlooked the sea and dated back hundreds of years (Christie, "Ingots" 42). In "Ingots of Gold," this ambience of polarity produces morbid fantasies and Gothic dread in West as he watches a man digging a hole outside and for a moment has the macabre thought that it must be a grave (Christie 45). West's uncanny fantasies reflect Windsor's argument that, "[w]hen the uncanny is characterized in terms of an elision of the categories of waking and dreaming, reality and imagination, what this characterization describes is not merely having uncertainty about what is real, but rather having uncertainty about what is real caused by an apparent impossibility." (59). West experiences a moment of terror the morning after the storm as he sees a man digging a trench in the ground outside his window, assuming that the man is digging a grave, possibly for him. The rising sense of foreboding that afflicts West, which he links to the weather and to Kelvin—a man whom he perceives to be "sinister" and "uncivilized"(43)—echoes Windsor's description of the uncanny: "an uncertain threat to one's grasp of reality caused by something that is incongruous relative to what is believed possible" (65). West realizes that the man is a gardener preparing to plant some roses, rather than a creepy gravedigger, his morbid fantasies and sense of foreboding generated by the association of Cornwall with superstition and the inexplicable also discussed by Passey. Christie uses this reference as part of her crime plot, thereby illustrating how nineteenth-century ideas about Cornwall and the Cornish landscape persist into the twentieth century and are revived and reimagined through the prism of crime.

Miss Marple works out how the crime was committed, principally because of her astute awareness of social class and its function in Cornish contexts and her intuitive insight into the functioning of male privilege. Miss Marple realizes that the gardener whom West saw was not really a gardener, because a real gardener, she points out in the story's closing lines, would not be working on Whit Monday. Miss Marple's shrewd observation conclusively establishes that Newman's evident unfamiliarity with class-based rituals and codes of conduct has given him away, revealing him as the criminal. Through this witty anecdotal closure to the story, Christie thus challenges the conventional portrayal of the Cornish people as wild and criminal. Instead, using the motif of dark tourism, "Ingots of Gold" reveals how the region's resources and people are exploited through heritage crime conducted by the English upper-class privileged elite using the region as their private adventure playground. The ambivalence of Christie's critique of masculinity and class shows in the split between the story's two male characters and in West's naïveté versus Newman's villainy. "Ingots of Gold" is multi-layered—the plot concerns itself with West's adventure but the story's hidden narrative interrogates Cornwall as a historical and present-day crime scene.

Patriarchal Violence as Seeping Trauma: "The Blood-Stained Pavement"

In "The Blood-Stained Pavement," Christie uses a gendered angle to investigate Cornish crime scenes but this time from a woman's perspective. This story examines a key gender-political crime narrative, the marriage thriller plot, but from the point of view of an outsider, the painter Joyce Lemprière, Miss Marple's niece. The story focuses on the impact of tourism on Cornwall as part of a crime narrative that examines the inequality of patriarchal marriage, a subject also treated in other Christie short stories (Beyer, *Murder* 89; Beyer, "Words" 32). "The Blood-Stained Pavement" uses a woman artist narrator to explore how wealthy English men exploit Cornwall as a site for committing and concealing misogynistic violence against women. In contrast, women tourists treat the landscape in more respectful ways, depicting the natural scenery in paintings and using the region as a retreat from male-dominated society. Lemprière is a fascinating narrator whose perspective brings the focus on to observation and representation, highlighting the tension between rationality and intuition, and calling attention to the politics of representation (Christie, "Tuesday Night" 4). The woman artist's eyes become a trope for perceiving the world differently (see Beyer, *Murder* 88), in Lemprière's case, the uncanny. The clue in the story—the bloodstains on the pavement that have dripped from a swimsuit hung out to dry—alludes to paint and color, key dimensions of Lemprière's art. For Lemprière, the painting she produces while unknowingly witnessing the aftermath of murder is inextricably associated with the uncanny. Afterward, she is unable to look at the painting because it has become a symbolic representation of her distress, a subconscious memory seepage of the violent oppression inherent in heterosexual marriage and the precarious and vulnerable position of women within it. "The Blood-Stained Pavement" depicts Cornwall as a crime scene where women are victimized, a place where women are vulnerable and their physical safety is precarious, due to how men exploit nature to conceal misogynistic murder and fraud. Lemprière tells the other guests her story, recounting events that had happened some five years prior that have continued to trouble her since. She describes how the memory still haunts her due to the inexplicable gap that she perceives between factual reality and the signifiers of physical trauma embodied by the landscape (Christie, "Blood-Stained" 54). Lemprière was staying at a local inn in the small fishing village of Rathole, a fictional coastal village whose name puns on the Cornish village Mousehole. One day, she was painting a picture of the front part of the inn that included some swimsuits drying on a balcony. The swimsuits belonged to a tourist couple she had observed, Denis and Margery Dacre, and Carol, a female friend of Denis who unexpectedly turned up to join them. Intrigued by the couple, Lemprière reflects on the troubling stereotypes of femininity embodied by the two women: whereas Margery is shy and plainly clad, her husband's vampish friend Carol is brazenly dressed to kill. The three swim in a cove along the coast; however, Margery goes missing and is subsequently found drowned. Later, when Lemprière inspects her painting, she discovers to her horror that she has painted bloodstains on the pavement as a subconscious response to the uncanny. Christie's use of the Gothic uncanny in "The Blood-Stained Pavement" serves as a powerful allusion to the dread for women at the heart of patriarchal marriage, articulated by Margaret Atwood as "my husband is trying to kill me" (Hite 150), establishing the link between the landscape and its eerie ambience, and the marriage thriller. The bloodstains

on the pavement represent the double trauma of victimized women and colonized Cornwall seeping out over the painting and Lemprière's narrative. Unable to shake off the event and incapable even of looking at her creepy painting of the mysterious bloodstains again, Lemprière asks the Tuesday Night Club to assist her in solving the mystery of what really happened. Miss Marple serves as both the detective figure unmasking the serial wife-killer but also constitutes a bridge in the story between the rational and the intuitive (Panko 34).

Lemprière's conversation with a local Cornishman increases her visceral unease over the painting. The mysterious man whose appearance reminds her of a Spanish sea captain tells her about the Spanish invasion and how Cornish villagers were massacred during that event (Christie, "Blood-Stained" 58). Lemprière is informed that the local inn owner was stabbed to death on his own doorstep by a Spanish captain, leaving a bloodstain that would not wash off. ("Blood-Stained" 58) Once again, during her conversation with him, Lemprière registers a vivid uncanny sensation that manifests itself in physical discomfort as well as psychological distress ("Blood-Stained" 60). The story eventually provides a logical explanation for the bloodstains; however, the Cornishman's reference to Cornwall's violent history supports a superstitious reading of the phenomenon, referring to the stains as a harbinger of trauma and death ("Blood-Stained" 60). Referring to his reading of Freud's theory of the uncanny, Windsor explains that, "[w]hen something appears to take place in reality which confirms any such surmounted primitive belief, we experience, or at least or are apt to experience, the phenomenon as uncanny" (59). The Cornishman thus haunts Lemprière and the village as a reminder of past Cornish traumas and crime scenes. In Christie's portrayal of the English suppression and colonization of Cornwall, "The Blood-Stained Pavement" articulates her critique of the touristification of Cornwall and its landscape. The story moves from depicting a perilously steep drive down to the village to revealing how the beautiful coastline, with its alluring coves and waters, attracts not only tourists and swimmers but also death. Rathole is described as quintessentially Cornish but self-consciously so, as if it has something to hide: "a queer little Cornish fishing village, very picturesque—too picturesque perhaps" (Christie, "Blood-Stained" 54). The tourism that Cornwall attracts is portrayed as a "curse" ("Blood-Stained" 54), caused by the advent of certain motorized forms of transport such as the charabanc, which, along with the train, render Cornwall accessible to tourists and criminals alike regardless of the obstacles presented by its coastline: "No matter how narrow the lanes leading down to them no picturesque village is safe" ("Blood-Stained" 55). Charabancs are open coaches, defined as "large" and "old-fashioned" "with several rows of seats . . . used especially for taking people on trips or on holiday" (Collins Dictionary). The intrusion of these vehicles, along with cars and the people they carry into otherwise inaccessible Cornish seaside villages, are thus associated with the uncanny, since no Cornish place is "safe" from their vehicular access no matter how forbiddingly steep. Commenting on the connection between the uncanny and vertigo—the feeling alluded to by Christie in the description of the bus's steep drive—Delmar R. Reffett Jr. observes that "the uncanny is something akin to a feeling of vertigo, a loss of solid ground brought on by the subject's revelation that their seemingly stable, reliable world is indeed the result of the roiling forces of their own psyche" (34). Christie's powerful use of literary language sharply captures the dizzying, vertiginous sensation of shock and terror which forms a key response to the uncanny, also suggesting that Lemprière's vertigo is a specifically gendered response. The arrival of tourists in Cornwall invites the construction of the self-consciously quaint ambience in the

village that appeals to them. Yet, the intimidatingly vertiginous drive down to the village elicits the seepage of the uncanny into this story of past and present individual and collective trauma. The violence alluded to here is both gender-political and colonial, demonstrating a link between the two in terms of the enactment of patriarchal power.

Like "Ingots of Gold," this Christie story also refers to the trauma of the Spanish invasion and its haunting of the Cornish. Lemprière explains that, according to popular anecdote, the old inn in Rathole, The Polharwith Arms, was the only building not to be destroyed by the Spanish armada (Christie, "Blood-Stained" 55). The two stories' ever-present reminders of Cornwall's beleaguered history serve as demonstrations of a Cornish crime scene encompassing collective as well as personal transgressions through history. At the end of the story, Christie adeptly returns the reader's focus to the gender-political dimension of the story. As Miss Marple considers at the end of "The Blood-Stained Pavement," Denis Dacre turns out to be a serial wife murderer and the brazen seductress Carol his real wife. After Miss Marple explains how they conducted repeated elaborate insurance fraud that involved murdering Denis's wives at the Cornwall coast, pretending the killings were the result of drowning, her closing remarks serve as a chilling reminder of the capacity of Gothic dread and the uncanny to seep into even the coziest of crime stories. She reminds her companions that the world is corrupt, and underneath their deceptively idyllic surface, villages harbor much evil (Christie, "Blood-Stained" 65). Far from simply concerning itself with a domestic murder, Christie's story suggests that beneath the idyllic surface of the Cornish landscape, an unnerving sense of Gothic dread is produced by what Robert Macfarlane terms "uncanny forces, part-buried sufferings and contested ownerships" (n.p.). The "part-buried sufferings" in "The Blood-Stained Pavement" relate to both violence against women and the region's violent history of Spanish invasion and English suppression. Like "Ingots of Gold," the story applies a deceptively light touch; however, Christie's Cornish crime scenes acknowledge Cornwall's traumatic past, its plunderings and silences, creating an explicit parallel between Dacre's misogynistic serial wife killings and a Cornish landscape haunted by past and present transgressions against its people and natural resources. Cornwall is represented here as a site for patriarchal violation and murder, with Christie urging the reader to see beneath the idyllic facade to uncover the murderous dynamics beneath. The bloodstains and the uncanny seep through the story's fabric as signifiers of male violation for both Lemprière and Miss Marple, literal and symbolic red flags cautioning women of patriarchally constructed relationships.

Conclusion: Hidden Narratives in Christie's Cornwall

This article has examined how Christie's crime short stories explore the duality between popular cultural constructions of Cornwall and the violent complex reality of that region, echoed in her preoccupation with gender and class inequality and criminality. New transportation methods such as the automobile, train, and charabanc referenced in "Ingots of Gold" and "The Blood-Stained Pavement" enable criminals, tourists, and artists alike to access the formerly remote parts of Cornwall. Cornwall in the twenty-first century is as popular a tourist destination as ever, and the area's culture and literature, as well as the links to past piracy and smuggling, continue to be hyped in promotional material for tourists. On

the website *Classic Cottages*, readers are told about the literature, including crime fiction, famously associated with the area. The website states that Dylan Thomas honeymooned in Mousehole and mentions Daphne du Maurier; however, there is no mention of Christie, even though "Ingots of Gold" and "The Blood-Stained Pavement" were published ten years before du Maurier's 1938 novel *Rebecca*. Lizzie Heather observes that "[n]o Cornish history lesson would be done justice without attention being turned to smugglers. Whether they were liberators, criminals, pirates, or local heroes, they covered the Cornish coastline with their illicit trade and made history through their dealings" (n.p.). Heather also suggests how contemporary visitors and tourists to Cornwall may want to use the coastal walking paths to trace smugglers' routes. The allusion to criminality and the role played by the landscape in directly enabling smugglers and pirates promotes the enduring association of Cornwall with crime, murder, theft, and lawbreaking.

"Ingots of Gold" and "The Blood-Stained Pavement" both use the crime fiction genre as a prism through which to investigate gender, regional, ethnic, and class-based criminality. By employing different narrators, the two stories interrogate the difference made by the storytelling perspective to the presentation and ambience of a narrative—in other words, the story changes, depending on who is telling it. The contrasting narrators in "Ingots of Gold" and "The Blood-Stained Pavement"—both relatives of Miss Marple—are used precisely to draw attention to this gender-based difference through their contrasting use of language, priorities, and perception. The stories furthermore foreground those contexts in which their narrators are most precariously positioned and thus most likely to be affected by the Gothic uncanny of Cornwall. Christie's Cornish crime scene is a landscape of violent extremes, a setting so complex that it constitutes another character or agent in these stories—a character with a dark alter ego and an equally dark history. These hidden narratives are convoluted respectively within a colonial adventure plot ("Ingots of Gold") and a marriage thriller plot ("The Blood-Stained Pavement") that exploit Cornwall and its coastline for sinister and opportunist financial gain achieved through white male English privilege. Christie's exploration of Cornish crime scenes perpetuates but also challenges stereotypes of Cornwall through the timely intervention of canny Miss Marple who uses her intuition to skillfully navigate the uncanny and criminal plotting, serving as the bridge between the supernatural, the uncanny, and detection—a genre-blending characteristic of 1920s fiction, according to Betz (35). Christie thus interrogates romanticized representations of Cornwall, using the crime short story's episodic format to delve into the region's hidden narratives and dark history of invasion, oppression, and exploitation.

Keywords: Christie, Agatha; Cornwall; dark tourism; heritage crime; the crime short story; the uncanny

Works Cited

Betz, Phyllis M. "Displaced Controversies." *Reading the Cozy Mystery: Critical Essays on an Underappreciated Subgenre*, edited by Betz, McFarland, 2021, pp. 94–112.

Beyer, Charlotte. *Murder in a Few Words: Gender, Genre and Location in the Crime Short Story*. McFarland, 2020.

_____. "'No Picturesque Village Is Safe': Agatha Christie's Cornish Crime Scene." The Golden Age of Crime: A Reappraisal, 20–21 June 2022, Bournemouth U, Poole, UK.

______. "'What are Words?' Symbolism and Romance in Agatha Christie's Short Stories 'Within a Wall,' 'The House of Dreams' and 'The Lonely God.'" *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2020, pp. 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1386/fict_00012_1.

Charabanc. Collins Dictionary. Accessed 24 June 2022. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/charabanc.

Christie, Agatha. "The Blood-Stained Pavement." 1928. Christie, *Thirteen* n. pag.

______. "Ingots of Gold." 1928. Christie, *Thirteen* n. pag.

______. *The Thirteen Problems*. Vol. 1. Penguin, 2000. Kindle ed.

______. "The Tuesday Night Club." Christie, *Thirteen* n. pag.

Clarke, Clare. *Late-Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230390546.

Collett, Richard. "Dark Tourism in Cornwall." *Travel Tramp*, 17 Apr. 2021. Accessed 24 June 2022. https://www.travel-tramp.com/dark-tourism-in-cornwall/.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*, edited by David Sandner, Greenwood, 2004, pp. 75–101.

Halford, Megan. "'If You Enjoyed This Book, Join the Crime Club': Armchair Detection and Reader Participation in Agatha Christie's The Thirteen Problems." *The Albatross*, vol. 4, 2014, pp. 7–16.

Heather, Lizzie. "Cornish Smugglers' Trails." Classic Cottages, 2021. Accessed 24 June 2022. https://www.classic.co.uk/nas/stories-characters/cornish-smugglers-stories-1372.html.

Heholt, Ruth, and Tanya Krzywinska. *Gothic Kernow: Cornwall as Strange Fiction*. Anthem Press, 2022. Kindle ed.

Hite, Molly. *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*. Cornell UP, 1992.

Kennedy, Neil, and Nigel Kingcome. "Disneyfication of Cornwall—Developing a Poldark Heritage Complex." *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1998, pp. 45–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527259808722218.

Macfarlane, Robert. 2015. "The Eeriness of the English Countryside." *Guardian*, 10 Apr. Accessed 24 June 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/10/eeriness-english-countrysiderobert-macfarlane.

March-Russell, Paul. "The Abcanny Politics of Landscape in Lucy Wood's Diving Belles." *Short Fiction in Theory & Practice*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2017, pp. 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1386/fict.7.1.53_1.

Mills, Jon. "Genocide and Ethnocide: The Suppression of the Cornish Language." *Interfaces in language*, edited by John Partridge, Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2010, pp. 189–206.

Mills, Rebecca. "'I Always Did Hate Watering-places': Tourism and Carnival in Agatha Christie's and Dorothy L. Sayers's Seaside Novels." *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2019, pp. 83–93.

Passey, Joan. "Corpses, Coasts, and Carriages: Gothic Cornwall, 1840–1913." PhD thesis, U of Exeter, 2020.

Quinn, David B. *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500–1625*. A&C Black, 1990.

Reffett, Delmar R. Jr. "Waking Sleep: The Uncanny in Modernist Literary Aesthetics." PhD diss., U of Kentucky, 2020.

Trower, Shelley. "On the Cliff Edge of England: Tourism and Imperial Gothic in Cornwall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2012, pp. 199–214. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150311000313.

Windsor, Mark. "What is the Uncanny?" *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2019, pp. 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayy028.