CHAPTER 8

Black, White, and Read All Over: Mines, Mountains, and the *Paysage Moralisé* of the British Press, 1900-1920[1]

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In R. H. Benson's *The Coward* (1912), Valentine 'Val' Medd and party undertake a training expedition on the Gorner Glacier, near the significant mountaineering centre of Zermatt, Switzerland:

> The view from the top is superb. […] There they stand, that eternal ring of giants, one white blaze in the sunlight, backed by a sky darkening in the zenith almost to blackness […]. The vast glacier sleeps below, beneath the slopes of tumbled snow-fields […] – tumbled as if monstrous children had been at play amongst them. Yet, so vast are the distances that a large party crossing the glacier at the nearer end would look no more than a snippet of black thread against the white.[2]

The narrative voice is conventional in its use of superlatives, and in observing the geological endurance of the Pennine Alps, their extension through time. Conventional, too, in its establishment of scale beyond easy human measure, or the mountains' substantial claim upon space. There is menace among them, not only via a playground of 'giants' and 'monst[ers],' but also in the description of the glacier as 'sleep[ing],' with the implication that it may yet awake.[3] Beyond this rehearsal of established forms, the passage is notable for its deployment of black/white contrast, used to record the albedo effect ('white blaze') of the snows, to

[1] My title refers to a longstanding piece of worn-out wordplay in which the answer to 'what's black, white, and *red* all over?' might be 'a sunburnt penguin' or, playing on the red/read homophone, 'a newspaper.'
[2] R. H. Benson, *The Coward* (London: Hutchinson, 1912), 75.
[3] For Alps-as-'playground,' see Leslie Stephen, *The Playground of Europe* (London: Longmans, Green, 1871).

register the ominous 'darkening' of the sky before which they seem to stand, and to reiterate the implausibility of human passage, and the scalar contrast of body and mountain, in a 'snippet of black thread.' That thread forms an apparent fine fault upon the landscape (or upon the telescopic lens of the Alpine observer, perhaps), as well as indicating a practice of the time: to rope together glacier walkers and guides in the interests of safety. Black/white imagery will, logically, consistently occur in the presentation of Alpine landscapes, the combination of snow and sun in the 'season' (late Spring to early Autumn) sharpening the dark presence of rock ribs, snow contours' shadows, and ropelines of climbers at play. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, such views were appealing to a British press still often working in black ink on white paper, and yet – driven at first by the commercial impetus to supply ever-more inventive advertising copy – well placed in technological terms to reproduce dramatic mountain vistas, and their sister images of polar exploration, for an 'armchair' audience at home.[4] Neither did this traffic in the greyscale operate in one direction alone, since newspapers not only supplied vicarious mountain experience, but might frame the way in which Alpine views were registered if one left one's armchair and travelled to mountain regions in person.[5] In fact, Benson's Val meets mountains, first, through a combination of the pictorial and sporting press and his own vivid imagination. The passage quoted therefore anticipates a second attempt upon the snows; one in which his self-conceptualisation as a climber, collaged from newspaper sources, butts up against the reality of a terrifying mountaineering feat.

This chapter interpolates three strands of change in the years 1900-1920. First, the technological development of the press and its assuagement of the visual appetites of its readership. Second, the expeditionary history of polar and mountain environments in what

[4] 'Press': not only newspapers (of all political persuasions and audiences) but also the pictorial Press, often producing weekly publications with a focus upon general interest stories, broadly informative articles conveying general knowledge topical or otherwise, and striking photographic and artistic images.
[5] 'Greyscale': gradations in shade, from pitch black to bright white, excluding additional colour. Black objects, not reflecting light in the visible spectrum, are considered 'achromatic.'

was, at least with regard to Antarctica, considered a 'heroic age' of exploration, and in which renowned names such as Scott, Amundsen, Shackleton, and Rasmussen were active.[6] We can make the case for mining's inclusion amongst such exploratory activity in the period, encouraged by press and literary sources which read mines, mountains, and poles as three zones of verticality. Third, those sources, whether modernist or otherwise (since genre fiction and 'middlebrow' work took as much interest in mountains as any geologically attuned member of the avant-garde), within which a triangulation between the press, expeditionary environments, and literary innovation may be traced. From the hellish depths or 'underworlds' of mining, to the 'Ultima Thule' of the polar north or Alpine heights, entanglements between exploration, newsprint, and literature can be seen to sketch out a kind of spatialised moral economy or, borrowing a phrase from Erwin Panofsky, a *paysage moralisé*, reaching its apex (or pole, or summit) in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920).[7] Among many intersecting printed texts, we can identify three forms of ascent-narrative to formulate a study of the act of rising: the social climbing of Denry Machin in Arnold Bennett's *The Card* of 1911; the maintenance of the family name and associated expectations of 'manly' conduct in *The Coward*; and the assertion of a fundamental belonging to mountain environments in *Women in Love*. In what follows, I attend to the greyscale – the distribution of achromaticism – to see how the triangulation of press, landscape, and literary texts operated across two decades.

Ultima Thule

[6] See Hester Blum, *The News at the Ends of the Earth: The Print Culture of Polar Exploration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), xi-xiv.

[7] In his *Studies in Iconology…*, Panofsky proposes a now largely discredited means of reading Renaissance painting: 'This "paysage moralisé," as we might call it, is frequent in religious pictures […] and […] in the representations of subjects like "Hercules at the Crossroads" where the antithesis of Virtue and Pleasure is symbolized by the contrast between an easy road winding through beautiful country and a steep, stony path leading up to a forbidding rock'. See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1972 [1939]), 64.

In 1912, year of *The Coward*, several opportunities arose for the press to use the greyscale in the presentation of human exploratory ambition of various stripes. It saw the first of seven 'Thule' expeditions undertaken by Knud Rasmussen, exploring and surveying in Northern and Eastern Greenland, and collecting Inuit stories and lore. It witnessed the first major national coal board strike, which 'kept the collieries of the country […] idle for five weeks' and 'interfered' with 'the customary life of the community'.[8] In addition, *RMS Titanic* was sunk, linking the glaciers of that first story to the plunge to the depths of the second. All three events were recorded substantially in the British press, either reported upon directly, or prompting supplementary articles about the behaviour and flotation of glaciers, the traditions of mining communities, or the calculations necessary to know one is at the North Pole.[9] All three called for the dramatic deployment of the greyscale. Effective pictorial presentation of these events at the approximate mid-point of our period of interest were made possible by changes in the use of available printing techniques in the century's first decade. Wareham Smith, former Advertisement Director of Associated Newspapers under Alfred Harmsworth (later Baron Northcliffe), wrote in his 1932 memoir *Spilt Ink* – which records his rise from clerk in the 1890s to forced retirement in 1921 – that his petitioning of Harmsworth to permit 'display' (enlarged and typographically distinct) type and illustration throughout such publications as the *Daily Mail* was 'virtually a fight for the birth of modern press advertising'.[10] It is in 'about 1900' that the boss invites ideas for the multiplication of advertising revenue (32), although this apparent appetite for innovation comes with morally-inflected spatial restrictions. At first, Harmsworth agrees to display type 'only under the fold,' that is, restricted to the lower half of the page, meaning that when folded a *Daily Mail* would remain looking much like the undifferentiated text of a copy of its contemporary *The*

[8] 'The Last Coal Strike: A Retrospect of 1912', *The Times*, 16 October 1920, 12.
[9] See *The Sphere*, 8 June 1912, 218; 2 March 1912, 256-7; 16 March 1912, 5.
[10] Wareham Smith, *Spilt Ink* (London: Ernest Benn, 1932). By Smith's retirement in 1921, Associated Newspapers owned the *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, *Weekly Dispatch*, and *Overseas Daily Mail*.

Times (32). Eventually, under Smith's guidance, typographical innovation and more generous illustration were to creep up the page, ink spilling up into the northern reaches. Smith's title of *Spilt Ink* plays on this question of the dispersal of black, recalling its contrasting 'spilt milk'; that which is not worth crying over, and cannot be undone; a mess; matter in the wrong place. Spilling ink becomes explicit within Harmsworth's concerns when Smith recalls his description of advertising display type as 'overwhelming' and 'bludgeoning', and summarises his complaints as: 'the illustrations were too black, or the block didn't print well, or a bit of it showed through on the next page and gave a society woman a moustache' (35). Too much black into the white, and an affront to propriety occurs.[11] Eventually allowed free rein, Smith (although no doubt generous in his assessment of his own significance) played his part in shifting the output of Associated Newspapers toward the more liberal application of ink. However, the newspapers of Harmsworth's portfolio always had a reputation for attracting the eye. C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, lamented in 1900 that 'we lose a good bit of the sales that would come naturally to us […] [to] the *Daily Mail* […] because of its general flashiness'.[12] With Smith's commercially-focused assistance, and in response to the environment of competition that Scott indicates, contemporary newspapers became bolder in their use of illustration and layout at the very time that exploration and extraction began to suggest themselves as subjects which would show off new printing approaches to best effect. Stephen Koss identifies Queen Victoria's death (1901), the retirement of Prime Minister Lord Salisbury (1902), and Harmsworth's achievement of a barony (1903) as having a 'cumulative effect' on the press, which 'was to create a distinctly new atmosphere' in which political and journalistic discourses combined to undertake 'an

[11] For Harmsworth the black block and its misprinting is seen to have social consequences. The period had another black block of note: Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* of 1915. In turn recalling Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi* (1617), Malevich's painting raises the questions of whether black is properly considered a colour, whether in viewing it we see light or its absence, and the extent to which colour should be considered a property of the eye.

[12] Quoted in Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (London: Fontana, 1990), 391.

intensive reappraisal of national values and institutions, domestic conditions and international priorities'.[13] If Carl Peters' *England and the English* suggested that in 1904 a railway journey would provide the revelation that 'almost every passenger has his face buried in the paper', he could reasonably be expected to be burying his face in a visually innovative publication at work on such reappraisals, and may well have been applying eyeball to Alp.[14]

In his account of attempts to reach the North Pole in 1907-1909, Frederick A. Cook records his trajectory from 'abject poverty' to an explorer's career. In 1891 he had 'open[ed] a paper' and seen that Peary was preparing an expedition to the Arctic, and 'it was as if a door to a prison cell had opened. I felt the first, indomitable, commanding call of the Northland'. His ambition, he records, 'surged up tumultuously within me'.[15] In this account, the Arctic is both press-assisted provocation to and stage for achievement, as well as offering an answering shape to the urge to rise from poverty: to ascend. According to Virginia Woolf, it is 'on or about December 1910' that a comparable rising, or disruption of the social order, might occur, and in relation to another cook. While the Victorian cook had 'lived like a leviathan in the lower depths', her contemporary counterpart is quite willing to emerge from below stairs, 'now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat'.[16] That claim appears in the oft-cited 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' and, for all that Woolf is skeptical of Arnold Bennett's precise manner of proceeding, it is in fact his novel *The Card* (1911) that provides the clearest example of the ways that Alpinism and newspaper discourses might be used to abet and to echo an extended attempt at social climbing. Recalling the events of the thirteen years prior to narration, the novel records the rise of Edward Henry 'Denry' Machin,

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[13] Ibid., 409.
[14] Carl Peters, *England and the English* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1904), 19.
[15] Frederick A. Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole: Being the Record of the Expedition that First Reached the Boreal Centre 1907-1909* (New York, NY: Polar Publishing, 1911), 27.
[16] Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1923), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III, 1919-1924*, ed. Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 420-38. W. T. Stead constructed a newspaper hierarchy based on reputational standing and political influence, which placed establishment newspapers *The Times* and the *Westminster Gazette* at the summit, and descended through four categories. See W. T. Stead, *Review of Reviews* (December 1904), 604-5. The mountain/hierarchy does not include the *Daily Herald*, but Stephen Koss remarks upon its wide circulation at that time (Koss, *Rise and Fall*, 441).

son of a seamstress and washerwoman, to become a Mayor of the Five Towns. While Bennett traces a variety of Denry's attempts to better his social standing, his self-evaluation is there before him: 'his opinion of himself, having once risen, remained at "set fair". It was inconceivable that he should work in clay with his hands'.[17] The chthonic associations of clay-based craft practices are chosen to indicate Denry's likely employment in the Potteries, had he not cheated his way into a scholarship at the Endowed School. He is destined, then, for 'higher' things, including membership of the Sport Club at Hillport, which is 'set on a lofty eminence' and is 'really a bit above him' (32). Bennett's exploration of a fundamentally talentless con artist's social ascension is refracted through discourses of Alpinism and the press throughout the novel, and with consistent recourse to the greyscale. When Denry's efforts include direct involvement in newspaper production and in Alpine holidays, each given a chapter, the book's coordinates become clear.

Bennett has newspapers function as a record of Denry's success and a monitor of wider social achievement in the Five Towns, and also as themselves an indicator of class or social status (as the borrowed *Daily Herald* was for Woolf's cook). The Sports Club, for all its 'lofty' position, indicates its mercantile membership via a 'reading-room' supplied with only '*The Potter's World*, *The British Australasian*, *The Iron Trades Review*, [and] the *Signal*, again demanding of Denry in vast letters whether his skin was troublesome' (36). The *Signal*'s commercial orientation and consequent readiness with the ink is supplemented with the clichés of journalese: 'in the columns of the *Signal* burglars never get into a residence; without exception they invariably effect an entrance' (120-1). Denry sees that a cheap daily newspaper might prove a rival to the *Signal* and, while its standards of journalism and typographical display will be shoddier, it may be the leg-up he needs in financial and social terms (we note that Harmsworth scrapes a barony out of leadership of the *Daily Mail* at just

[17] Arnold Bennett, *The Card* (London: Penguin, 2016), 2.

the time depicted). While the *Signal* newsboys threaten to 'play marbles' with the eyeballs of those selling the rival *Daily* (173), Denry holds fast in 'The Great Newspaper War' (168), and deigns to report on manoeuvres within the newspaper itself, giving 'shocking details', while the *Signal* keeps a dignified silence on the page (175). Denry's attempts collapse; his newspaper, despite 'quite an encouraging show of advertisements, printed on real paper with real ink', failing to quite 'go' (177). The *Signal* resumes its monopoly, and gains the nickname 'The Old Lady', in honour not only of its long standing, but its relatively decorous conduct (186).

Just as Harmsworth's 'old lady' equivalent – the 'society woman' – was to be given a moustache by an accident of over-zealous inking, so newspaper proprietor Denry is anxious about the absence of a bulwark between proper white and the smear of inky black, and at several points his concerns about potential social failure are registered via use of the greyscale. Having tricked his way toward an invitation to the Mayor and Mayoress's dance, he is concerned about getting boot blacking on his white dress shirt (9), considers that white kid gloves 'constitute a democracy' that will save him from pariah status (10), and fears his mother's 'seamy fingers', the term indicating both grubbiness or sordidness and the 'seams' of her sewing trade (9). Arriving at the Mayor's event, 'he dreamt of magnificence and boot-brushes kept sticking out of this dream like black mud out of snow. […] Then he went downstairs again, idly; gorgeously feigning that he spent six evenings a week in ascending and descending monumental staircases, appropriately clad. He was determined to be as sublime as anyone' (11). Dress and appearance in the black/white of evening dress here segue into the ink smears of low-grade news with which he will become involved, and (via 'snow', 'sublime', 'ascending', and the later claim that 'the supper was the summit of Denry's triumph' (18)), with the Alpine realms to which he is soon to travel. Bennett's novel offers a new perspective on Harmsworth's spatial control of page layout as described by Smith,

suggesting a kind of un-besmirched newspaper sublime, perilously vulnerable to inky interruptions, and brought into the ken of the average clerk via the vector of the perishable page that carried its own socially calibrated 'signal'.

Harmsworth's finicking moral investment in the preservation of undifferentiated type and of white space finds a more substantially philosophical correlate in exploratory discourse's blank on the map, and the wide expanse of unsullied ice and snow that the early twentieth-century Arctic seemed to offer. Rasmussen's Thule expeditions were named for a trading post he had established, alongside Peter Freuchen, in 1910, which became a base for subsequent Greenlandic exploration. Thule was chosen in reference to 'Ultima Thule', a place and concept with origins in both the cartography and literature of Roman and Greek, indicating the furthest point in mapping practices, and by implication, that which is at the known limits of the world. By 1912, the expedition deployed the name to denote an as yet unmapped/unwritten place, but it retains a sense of the mythic or folkloric appropriate to its ancient origins. In his *The People of the Polar North: A Record* (1908), Rasmussen recalls that as a child he 'used often to hear an old Greenlandic woman tell how, far away North, at the *end of the world*, there lived a people who dressed in bearskins and ate raw flesh.' Their realms were 'always shut in by ice', and 'whoever wished to go there, must travel with the South wind, right up to the Lord of the wild northern gales'.[18] In 1910, pictorial weekly *The Graphic*'s article 'The Conquest of the Pole, and the People who Live There' (that comma doing some work to limit conquest to the land) remarked that 'Till April, 1909 [when Robert Peary planted the American flag] the most interesting thing about the North Pole was that no one had ever seen it'. While the space for imagination might therefore have closed with a

[18] Knud Rasmussen, *The People of the Polar North: A Record* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1908), xix. My emphasis. An obituary for Rasmussen recalls his interest in the 'Eskimo [*sic*]' and their 'ethnographic problems,' and notes he could speak fluent English and there was 'nothing to show' that he did not belong in a London club, indicating that 'Ultima Thule' might have one further meaning in the early twentieth century: a place, for good or ill, beyond the social mores of European society. ('Obituary: Knud Rasmussen', *The Times*, 22 December 1933, n.p.)

Western body's corporeal witnessing, the paper suggests that the lack of 'material attraction' at the Pole will ensure its renewed emptiness, 'so that we may picture this chilly solitude after its disturbance by the explorer lapsing once again into silence – like the brooding East'.[19] Such geographical transposition (from North to East) in a bid to register the expunging and replenishing of the Pole's unknowability was *The Graphic*'s habit, and in the following year the paper remarked that the 'Arctic Sphinx has dived for ever beneath the ice-floes of what [George Strong] Nares called the Palaeocrystic Sea'.[20] The attempt to conflate contemporary spaces and notions of mystery indicates the company kept by the North Pole at this time in a geography of the imagination, alongside the exotic East and the archaeological secrets of Egypt's sands. Arctic voyager George De Long, writing in 1880 about diary-keeping, remarked that 'I frequently think that instead of recording the idle words that express our progress from day to day I might better keep these pages unwritten, leaving a blank properly to represent the utter blank of this Arctic expedition'.[21] Therefore northern reaches and their Alpine counterparts, and the space beyond human knowledge for which they were made to stand, not only lent themselves to the press's black/white capacities, but early seemed to demand blank page equivalents as a prompt to proper contemplation of the Ultima Thule.[22] Yet Rasmussen's 1912 expedition, by bringing the latter term and concept into wider press usage, evacuated some of its existential meaning, albeit while maintaining some of the glamour of the snows: thus Harrods' advertisement for a sale of sables, the 'king of furs', was headlined 'The Ultima Thule of the Well-Dressed'.[23] While newspapers of the period might be focused on 'Bringing the Life of the Arctic to One's Door' (as a photographic study of two

[19] 'The Conquest of the Pole, and the People who Live There', *The Graphic,* 12 November 1910, 766.
[20] 'The Riddle of the North', *The Graphic*, 2 December 1911, 856.
[21] Ibid.
[22] An insistence upon the uninhabited status of the Arctic is an erasure or imposed blank since, as Rasmussen's account indicates, the Thule expedition's areas of exploration were accessed by nomadic peoples. As Hester Blum has said of late nineteenth-century explorers, 'They emphasized the North's frigid stillness, and in an ideological move analogous to that of early Europeans in the Americas, inaccurately described the Arctic as an uninhabited wasteland' (Blum, *The News*, 38).
[23] Advertisement: The Ultima Thule of the Well-Dressed, *The Times*, 28 October 1912, n.p.

polar bears at swim was headlined), the press also demonstrated an ability to corral the most evocative and ephemeral terminology into the wider vocabulary of journalese.[24] Even the icy Ultima Thule, the *non terrae plus ultra*, could be brought down to earth, or to ink.[25]

En route to Montreux for his honeymoon with bride Nellie in other snowy realms, Denry is informed by a 'fearfully haw-haw' military captain that the view of Mont Blanc available from Geneva is one about which women are 'queer', since it 'gets on their nerves'; a response to be contrasted with his own confidence in the snow as an enthusiastic skier (212). Bennett seems to have drawn such a notion from the work of Sir Leslie Stephen, whose review of Edward Whymper's *Scrambles Amongst the Alps…* (1871) records that 'I have heard a sensitive lady declare that she could not sleep in a room from the windows of which the Matterhorn was visible'.[26] The Comtesse Ruhl, visiting from Moscow, proves them right when she declares: 'As for me, I hate your mountains. I was born in the steppe where it is all level – level! […] Your mountains get on my nerves' (219). At first, the vistas available from Denry's Hotel Beau-Site are a disappointment, a series of frigid expanses over which trains crawl 'like flies climbing', and Nellie's 'So these are the Alps!' is only said for effect (213). When a guidebook and local enquiries reveal the scale of the panorama with which their eyes are struggling, 'Nellie gasped and was content', awe having been reinserted in this difficult shift from printed view to physical experience (213). Although Denry shows no gift for Alpinism – favouring a head-first approach to the luge to any climbing or skiing activities – he navigates the social world of competing Alpine hotels with ease, and becomes a

[24] 'Bringing the Life of the Arctic to One's Door', *The Sphere*, 28 December 1912, 15.
[25] The Arctic was also distinguished by an alternative temporality to the metropolitan centres in which newspapers were produced. Given that a day at the poles might last six months, and that the eternal snows suggested an interminable purchase upon the future, the frangible status of the newspaper depicting such locations – its disposability, perishability, and time-bound claim to whiteness – was further brought into relief.
[26] Leslie Stephen, 'Mr Whymper's "Scrambles Amongst the Alps"', *Macmillan's Magazine* XXIV (May to October 1871), 304-11. Female fright at a looming mountain visible from a hotel also crops up in Stephen's daughter Woolf's short story 'The Symbol,' written shortly before her death in 1941. Her account of the *table d'hote* has much in common with Bennett's and Benson's. See Virginia Woolf, 'The Symbol' (1941), in *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Vintage 2003), 282-4.

favourite of the Countess.[27] *The Card* therefore links a fundamental interest in social hierarchy with both newspapers and Alpine adventures, and shares with its contemporary polar texts an interest in the impossibility of psychological purchase upon the snow white blank, with some sense that social betterment might rely on just such spaces. While social climbing as a kind of ascent is familiar, and need not be a point made in relation to Alpinism itself, Bennett does, in effect, make literal the metaphor, in having Denry curry his ambitions in an Alpine context. Further, Bennett makes much of the relative status or hierarchy of the press, whether one is consumer or proprietor. Amongst these verticalities, he allows us to see that in the early twentieth century, the literary imagination created purposeful smudges, as of black ink into white, between them. Denry, after a life spent attempting to be *the* card of the Five Towns, succeeds as 'the very ace' – if of spades, then at last the head of the pack, and a figure rendered in black and white (105).[28]

Alpine Ascensions

In August 1912, *The Sphere* published a double-page, photography-dominated article entitled 'What to Do in the Alps – The Question', in which the central image depicts a lone, male, tweeded walker in a commanding physical attitude before a dramatic vista of white snow and black rock, under the sub-header 'The Party of One – It's Folly'.[29] Focusing on safety issues, although with text for the most part restricted to photo captions, the article cautions against solo travel ('A slip is made and he becomes a mere falling body uncontrolled'), and proffers

[27] This hierarchy of possible approaches to the mountain appeared in H. G. Wells's 'Little Mother Up the Morderberg' of the previous year, in which avalanche-surfing as a means of mountain descent is viewed with skepticism by the closed circle of gentleman mountaineers. *H. G. Wells' Short Stories*, ed. Tim Heald (London: Folio Society, 1990), 201-10.

[28] That third story of 1912 is present in *The Card* too, or at least the relevant vessel (the disaster being yet to come), since Denry's acquaintances the Cotterills are set to travel on 'The White Star Liner, *Titubic*,' the structure and social stratification of which is described in detail (Bennett, *The Card,* 203). It was Benson who had a brush with the *Titanic* itself, *en route* from an American lecture tour: 'At a certain moment the *Olympic's* course was deflected. She raced over […] in answer to a cry from the *Titanic*, which was foundering'. See C. C. Martindale, *The Life of Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1916), 171).

[29] 'What to Do in the Alps – The Question' *The Sphere* (24 August 1912), 188-9.

brief notes regarding rope skills. While purportedly a guide for budding mountaineers, it is conspicuously a vehicle for mountain views to be conveyed to an armchair audience; clear not only in the scant nature of its information, but in its morbid interest in 'Tragic Accidents of the Season'. It dwells on the death of 'Professor H. O. [Humphrey Owen] Jones of Clare College Cambridge, and his wife Muriel Jones', two gifted chemists who perished on their honeymoon while attempting a climb on the Aiguille Rouge de Pentérel. In an account of their death (and that of their guide) mined for sensation, the anonymous author notes that: 'For a few minutes the three climbers were held, but the rope broke and they were hurled hundreds of feet to the glacier.' Their bodies, mere black specks, remain visible on the bright white ice below. While tragedies spice the reading of the armchair mountaineer, the accompanying 'advice' does little to assist any practicing climber in avoiding a similar fate. The dour tenor of such articles meant that those who might reach an active climbing practice *via* an interest piqued by pictorial peaks would do so with a looming sense of inevitable danger, which those with a romantic bent might seek to incorporate into their personal mythology.

Another Cambridge man depicts just this transition from page to wide white stage in his novel *The Coward*. R. H. 'Hugh' Benson, who had gone up to Trinity College in 1890, drew upon autobiographical elements in his depiction of the life and death of Val Medd, troubled younger son of an ancient English family.[30] Val's competitive relationship with his older brother owes something to Benson's place amongst four siblings, including brothers A. C. and E. F., both fellow scholars and authors. It is A. C. that provides the most significant link to Cambridge climbing circles, since in 1904 he was made a Fellow of Magdalene College, where he tutored the young George Mallory, who was to become the most renowned British climber of the Everest era. R. H., having taken up the priesthood, was assigned to Cambridge

[30] Benson's apostasy dominates his reputation, the more so since his conversion to Catholicism was made against the wishes of his father Edward White Benson, then Archbishop of Canterbury.

that same year. Mallory appears to have his own proxy in the novel, since the experienced climber Tom Meredith, member of London's Alpine Club, shares Mallory's striking facial structure and 'keen blue eyes' , as well as his animalistic climbing flow: '[he] now resembled an enormous spider going up a wall'.[31] As with any reader of *The Sphere* who later ventured forth to the Alps, Benson had learned of the mountains and their dangers in written form in the first instance, since his mother, writing from Zermatt in the August of 1889, had shared the news that 'One man, who is getting better, rolled down the Matterhorn about 1200 feet, and bounded over two glaciers in his roll […] calculating whether or not he would fall into the glacier'.[32] Although he survived, his plunge turns up in *The Coward* when Val's eventual sweetheart Gertie Marjoribanks recalls that she had an uncle killed in Switzerland after a fall of 2,000 feet. Asked whether his body was located, she reports, blanching, that 'They found – er – what there was to find.'[33] Benson himself was not discouraged by such reports of rapid descents and bodies arrayed against the snows, and was said to be 'agile, quick, sure-footed, and entirely intrepid'.[34] Despite these abilities, whilst an undergraduate he got into trouble on the Piz Palu of the Bernina range, suffering a suspected heart attack, and could not be roused even with brandy. By all appearances dead, he in fact remained conscious, and although the 'snowy peaks suggested the Great White Throne' (of the Book of Revelation), was disappointed to experience no vision of the afterlife or heavenly ascension, and was later to attribute this absence to a temporary waning of religious faith.[35] *The Coward* is, then, a book in which Benson's own experiences as a climber warned by the (epistolary) page who finds danger in active Alpine practice, is interweaved with his knowledge of Mallory and of fraternal relationships, to produce a study of Val who – living in relation to both the

[31] Benson, *The Coward*, 53, 65.
[32] Martindale, *Robert Hugh Benson*, 64-5.
[33] Benson, *The Coward*, 28.
[34] Martindale, *Robert Hugh Benson*, 84.
[35] R. H. Benson, *Confessions of a Convert* (London: Longmans, Green, 1913), 26. That peak's peril is exploited in *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* (1929), in which a newlywed woman is lost in an avalanche, reminding us that the snows can be hellish as well as heavenly. The wrenching honeymoon storyline recalls the loss of the Joneses.

'valentine' and 'valour' indicated by his name – evinces a romanticised notion of climbing heroism drawn from newspaper sources, subsequently contradicted by the harsh reality of the nerve required 'on the hill'. A. C.'s association of heredity and national stability appears in his words for 'Land of Hope and Glory', written for the coronation of Edward VII, and including the lines 'The blood a hero sire hath spent / Still nerves a hero son'. R. H.'s novel is a study of nerve versus 'funking', of masculinity, of fraternal rivalry, but most importantly of the kind of blood necessary to continue the Medd family name; blood which must prove itself on the mountainside.

Although Val 'had not an idea about climbing beyond what the smoking-room library told him' (indicating the reading material deemed suitable for contemporary gentlemen) he responds enthusiastically to his father's suggestion of a trip to Switzerland, where – in a resonant phrase – he hopes he 'might get level with [his brother] Austin'.[36] After 'funking' attempts at riding with hounds and asserting himself on the football pitch, climbing suggests itself as an arena within which his bravery might be staged, offering both location and metaphor for besting his brother in the family hierarchy. Lately thrown from a horse, Val lies beneath the beech trees of his family's Medhurst estate, and imagines the heights of Switzerland, scene of his impending triumph:

> Austin, a tiny figure, gazing up at him, pallid and apprehensive, as he rose swiftly in the air over the lip of an inconceivable precipice; Austin, with shaking hands, being pulled up by a rope, while he, Valentine, stood, detached and unperturbed, watching him from on high; Austin, collapsed and inert with terror, while he himself straddled, a second Napoleon, gazing out for succour from an inaccessible ledge. (32)

[36] Benson, *The Coward*, 28.

Ascending both Alp and fraternal league, Val conjures a heroic stance that, while he associates it with Napoleon, also recalls *The Sphere*'s lone climber (itself recalling Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (*c.*1818)). He goes on to speculate about his return to civilisation, where his 'conquest of a hitherto unclimbed peak' will be recognised when he strides into the dining room of an Alpine hotel, 'with his paraphernalia jingling about him' (32). Benson is attentive in his depiction of a young man's fascination with the elaborate staging of his heroic achievements, and a fondness for the facilitating kit. After consulting such publications as '*Badminton*' (*The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*; we later learn that Medhurst also takes *The Graphic* (369)) for a total of three hours, Val's mind rings with technical language, and 'he talked already familiarly of "arêtes" and "chimneys" and "couloirs"' (34). Romance, tragedy, and religion add spiritual resonances to such technicalities, as Val imagines his death from Alpine cold, having saved Gertie's life (48); constructs 'day-dream after day-dream of Gertie and the mountains' (76); and uses attendance at Church and its 'slight dreaminess' to continue his fantasies, finding that 'by the end of the *Psalms* […] [he] was already half-way up the Matterhorn' (70).[37] Come the time of his actual departure for Switzerland, Val is so thick amongst these dream-Alps that he consciously stages an image, intended for consumption by Gertie, which almost exactly echoes *The Sphere*'s photograph: 'He stood in his tweed suit, bare-headed, on the steps by the carriage, in something of an attitude […]. Val's left leg was advanced a little; his right hand was on his hip, grasping his hat; his left hand held a walking-stick. He was aware that the morning sunlight fell on him' (50). Just as the newspaper's evocative shot was at once to be a provocation (to imagined ascension) and a caution (against the lone attempt), Val

[37] The *Psalms* include an oblique reference to climbing, in the line '*ascensiones in corde suo disposuit*' or 'He has set ascents in His heart', read by the Rt. Rev. Henry Luke Paget in the memorial service for Mallory and Sandy Irvine, following their loss upon Everest in 1924. See Henry Luke Paget, 'Address', *The Geographical Journal*, 64.6, (December 1924), 462-5.

is to find a mis-match between his 'Napoleonic' pose and his capacities for mountainside assertion.

In Switzerland, under Tom's guidance, Val and Austin stay in a hotel near the Riffel Alp, whose contrasts of snow and shadow 'emphasise[d] to the subconscious attention the huge scale of the silence and the space and the vastness' (55).[38] Eventually, all three decide to attempt the Matterhorn, 'a monster who has, all to himself, a little cemetery outside Zermatt'; the ebullient Tom attempts to bring the mountain down to size by referring to it as 'the chap' (55). Val, having learnt of 'Mr. Whymper's adventures on it' (likely a reference to *Scrambles…*, which recounted the so-called 'Matterhorn disaster' of 1865, in which four of seven climbers lost their lives), is determined to turn reading into reality: 'It was upon the Matterhorn, then, that his heart was chiefly set; it stood for him as a symbol of all he meant to do in life generally' (56). With an expedition party of seven ominously recalling the famous disaster, Val ventures forth until 'they faced the Matterhorn, or rather they stood beneath it, tiny negligible specks of life in the midst of a white and glaring death' (103). Val, inevitably, 'funks,' unable to make the jump between two sections of ice on a traverse, and reduced, ultimately, to wailing (113). Immediate companions and, subsequently, family members attempt to assuage his sense of failure, and from three sources an apocryphal story arises about a recipient of the Victoria Cross who was once turned green and queasy when confronted with the prospect of a mountain fall. Val's own failure of nerve is attributed to a physical ability undermined by a low supply of moral power (119), although Austin – elder son with his mind on matters of heredity – muses that 'somehow or another an unfortunate strain had got into his blood' (145). To underscore his use of Alpine landscapes in this fraternal competition, Benson has the brothers play the card game 'Montana', while the narrator states that 'it was a kind of symbol between them' (179). With Mallory and himself

[38] In Summer 1894, Benson himself had secured his father's permission for an Alpine climbing trip, 'fixing on the Riffel Alp.' Mrs Bellamy Storer, who hosted Benson on this trip, recalls that 'he wished to outdo what his brother had done eighteen years before' (Martindale, *Robert Hugh Benson*, 172).

as precursors to Val, Benson explores both the visions and dangers that a press-influenced engagement with Alpine landscapes may bring about, and investigates the potential of the mountain itself less as the site of heavenly ascension that might be expected of a religious author, and more as playground for and symbol of sibling rivalry, the maintenance of the bloodline, and the attempt to hold one's nerve. Newsprint, for all its intimations of danger and attempts to render scale, has here been hindrance rather than help in its romanticised promulgation of the heroic mountaineer.

Underworlds

If the press of 1912 deployed its blanks to at once reiterate and domesticate the Arctic/Alpine snows, it was also called upon by labour disputes to render the blackness of the coalmining industry. While class distinctions separate miner and mountaineer in the depictions considered here, both are figures of fascination due to their otherworldliness; their deviation from the horizontal plane. The press's role in tracing the national coal board strike and illuminating working lives situates mines as another crucial element in the black/white, ink/blank establishment of an economy of space on the page. Beyond the rejection of horizontality, an oblique link may be made between these two landscapes (snows; mines) via the experience of cold. A halt to mining activity for a total of 33 working days left the British people anxious about heating their homes, in addition to wider worries about employment, industry, and rail travel. H. G. Wells, writing to *The Times*, explicitly claimed to be 'sit[ting] over my dwindling fire full of the apprehension of discomforts to come'; called the deadlock of the strike over the establishment of a minimum wage 'amazingly discreditable to the English governing class'; and noted that the resulting 'extreme suspicion' of the miners was 'quite unprecedented in British labour quarrels'.[39] While *The Times* published such letters

[39] H. G. Wells, 'Letter to the Editor: Mr. H. G. Wells's Advice', *The Times*, 7 March 1912, n.p. The strike was broken by a Government-formulated Minimum Wages Act. B. R. Mitchell notes that 'although it failed to give

offering comments upon the specifics of the dispute, the pictorial press made hay with the opportunity to offer, in two senses, 'striking' images – exploring the darker end of the greyscale to convey the difficulties of working conditions, as well as using layout innovations to equate geology and newsprint, and emphasise the depths at which such work occurred. Shortly before Wells's intervention, *The Sphere* published 'The Crisis in the Coal Trade: Sons of Pluto at Work in the Underworld', including illustrations by Fortunino Matania who 'last week plunged into the bowels' of a mine, making sketches in the 'Stygian gloom'.[40] While limited reference to the terms of the strike appears in the caption 'How the eight hours of the miners' working day is spent', the article is more remarkable for its insistence upon the hellish 'underworld' of the mine's situation – a terminology already established in an earlier edition addressing 'The Crisis in the Carboniferous Underworlds'.[41] The latter reinforced its attention to the depths by using the page itself to register the structure of a mine, situating the surface works at the header, running a black shaft down centre-page, suspending therein a cage of miners on the descent below the fold, and showing the mine itself running along the base of the page, with a pit pony caught in the process of hauling towards the shaft. A similarly diagrammatic approach was used in the following month's 'Dangers of the Highly-strung Mine: The Need of Ventilation and Pumping', which stuck to the deep greys for all but a sliver of sky at the top of the page, and aimed to show the operation of an 'upcast' and 'downcast' shaft in the management of gases.[42] Through a combination of reportage and

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the union either the specific district minima it had asked for, or even the general minimum figure of 5s […] the Act did end the strike. The union leaders […] called it off'. See B. R. Mitchell, *Economic Development of the British Coal Industry 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 190.

[40] 'The Crisis in the Coal Trade: Sons of Pluto at Work in the Underworld', *The Sphere*, 2 March 1912, 256-7.

[41] 'The Crisis in the Carboniferous Underworlds', *The Sphere*, 24 February 1912, 220. The mine/hell equation was a reasonable one, with Tancred's report to the Royal Commission of 1871 noting that 'the cramped posture […] and sometimes the sulpherous [*sic*] exhalations, together with the bodily exertion cannot fail to be very exhausting. He is subject to severe accidents […] from masses of coal falling upon him in flames' (quoted in B. R. Mitchell, *Economic Development*, 100).

[42] 'Dangers to the Highly-strung Mine: The Need of Ventilation and Pumping', *The Sphere*, 23 March 1912, 317. While it might be assumed that the Press would maintain a *cordon sanitaire* between the visually compelling environments of predominating white and black, Great War reporting united environments of struggle at either end of the greyscale. *The Graphic* offered 'The Warrior's Weather: Contrasts from Flanders Mud to Arctic Ice,' in which images of frozen rigging are mixed with the repurposing of timber in the swamp

imaginative general interest articles which themselves explored spatial possibilities, the press played its part in pegging out an underworld to answer the Arctic's and Alpine summit's Ultima Thule, laying the groundwork for literary texts that both responded directly to these same regions of verticality, and explicitly recorded their reliance upon newsprint sources in the establishment of their own black/white schemata.

Paysage Moralisé

In the first two decades of the century, then, the vertical axis – from mineshaft to peak or pole – was linked to innovative press layouts, and to the pages of literary writing, in a triangulation of forces in which each element took a marked interest in the moral or philosophical implications of achromaticism, incorporating, exceeding, and at times reversing conventional associations between black Hadean depths and the heavenly white heights. By 1920 when, after a convoluted publishing history, Lawrence finally saw *Women in Love* in print, his presentation of mining and of Alpinism resonated not only with his personal knowledge of both pursuits, but with this preceding period of greyscale exploitation.[43] Lawrence shares *The Sphere*'s sense of mining as a hellish industry, with Gudrun Brangwen describing the mines of Beldover as 'like a country in an underworld', and even the colliers' wives are said to have 'watchful, underworld faces'.[44] When Gudrun notes that 'the colliers bring it above-ground with them, shovel it up' (9), 'it' seems to have shifted from coal itself to an atmosphere or attitude arising from the depths. Later, a 'faint glamour of blackness' is noted (10), and again this gestures toward both 'Coal-Dust' (which gives Lawrence's ninth chapter its name) and atmosphere, with glamour – via associations with witchcraft – being linked to spell-casting. When the novel shifts to the Alps, Gerald Crich perceives the

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conditions of Flanders, and a fallen horse is depicted abandoned on the road to Passchendaele, captioned 'One Whose Work is Finished' (*Graphic*, 26 January 1918: 102-3).

[43] For a summary of Lawrence's ambitious Alpine holidays, see Catherine Brown, 'Lawrence's Alpine Theology', *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies* 3.2 (2013)., 56-84.

[44] D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9, 11.

'glamorous whiteness of the dusk' in the region, in which the effect of low light's refraction from snow creates a spell by which Gudrun is held, 'as at a shrine' (416). The afore-mentioned Cook, having harkened to the 'call of the Northland,' later reflected that 'the spell was upon me then. […] [But] the glamor is all gone now'.[45] Whether emanating from underworld or Ultima Thule, such fascination might fade or pall. Restricting himself to 'surface work' in mining terms, Lawrence traces what becomes of coal-dust and its spells when it rises above ground and mingles with the middle classes. By contrast, he is at pains to describe complete immersion in Alpine environments, offering the literary equivalent to the pictorial press's double-page spread, with that same habit of intimating imminent loss, and an echoing use of the white blank to indicate extension toward the infinite. For Lawrence, it is not only the case that the Alps expand the language, or stretch it toward an Ultima Thule of its own, but that they might stand in for just such a linguistic collapse. In this way, the snows are a visual parallel to aposiopesis or the breaking off of language; both body and linguistic eptitude might fall down a crevasse. At Hohenhausen, the party find themselves 'in the heart of the mountains. From high above, on either side, swept down the white fold of snow […] all strangely radiant and changeless and silent' (413); an experience which leads Ursula to declare their location 'a different world' (414). While the other three members of the central romantic quartet of the novel know themselves to be strangely abstracted by this shift to the snows, Lawrence indicates that Gerald, associated throughout the book with ice, snow, and northerliness, is in his element. His 'strange, guarded look' (12) is topped by hair which is 'fair almost to whiteness' (207), and which 'glisten[s] like cold sunshine refracted through crystals of ice' (13); he has a 'northern kind of beauty' (283). Peculiarly erect in bearing and therefore elevated from his surroundings, topped with snow, and feeling of the north, unbroached (or unascended), Gerald is, in effect, a perambulatory Alp. His ultimate act of

[45] Cook, *My Attainment*, 28.

suicide-by-summit, framed in the language of a mountaineering accident ('he slipped and fell down, and as he fell something broke in his soul' (492)), is in a further sense his return to the 'navel of the world' (416), to his birthplace as an Alp amongst others. Birkin, long before the mountain trip is mooted, asks 'Was he a messenger, an omen of the universal dissolution into whiteness and snow?' (264).

Dissolution into polar and Alpine whites and their printed (or, rather, un-inked) correlates joined the blacks of mines, shadows, and dwarfed climbing figures, dead or alive, to operate as a spatialised moral economy or *paysage moralisé* on the early twentieth-century page. Or rather, it was the rendering in greyscale of landscape depths and heights, light and shade, that consistently indicated the path to a schematic use of black/white when depicting such landscapes in literary contexts. The greyscale affects the press presentation of exploration, and 'colours' the way that it is represented in literary works by those who, by dint of their own or their families' interest in mountaineering and/or by their own 'armchair mountaineer' use of newsprint, were mountain- or pole-attuned. In the modernist period, we might more customarily read newspapers as a formal impetus for collage, juxtaposition or montage practices; as a perishable inimical to high art contexts ('sufficient for the day is the newspaper thereof');[46] or as a means of parsing matters of class (as Woolf indicates, above). The presentation of exploration cultures in the pages of the press 1900-1920 encourages a supplement to such interpretations, proffering the greyscale as a way to make landscapes *mean*. As the increasingly experimental press worked hard to depict new experiences (reaching Ultima Thule; undertaking a national strike; seeing a liner sunk) and in turn used such depictions to drive experimentation, so literary texts responded to the newspaper's achromatically-calibrated journeys – up an Alp, the social scale, or the family hierarchy. Supplementing other accounts of the intersection of exploration and modernity, and of

[46] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922), ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 133.

literature and exploration cultures, this chapter, in attending to the greyscale, has sought to assert that, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, black and white really were read all over.