Volume 4, Issue 2, December 2025

Foreshadowing: Narrative Gravity in the Autumnal Chronotope of Short Stories by Aumonier and Jacobs

Bimalendra Rai*

Article Type: Research Article

Independent Research Scholar

Received: 05 September 2025; Revised: 21 October 2025; Accepted: 25 November 2025

*Corresponding email: nrbimrai831@gmail.com ISSN: 2976-1204 (Print), 2976 – 131X (Online)

Abstract

*This study re-examines how setting operates as an active narrative force by analyzing Stacy Aumonier's "*The Perfect Murder*" and W. W. Jacobs's "*The Interruption.*" While existing narratological frameworks have theorized Bakhtin's chronotope and anticipation as separate components, they have not sufficiently explained how environmental conditions produce anticipatory pressure within the storyworld. Using qualitative close reading and an interdisciplinary synthesis of Bakhtin's chronotope, phenomenological accounts of mood and atmosphere, and temporal theories from Genette and Brooks, the study argues that the late-autumn environments in both stories function as fused narrative chronotopic fields rather than descriptive backdrops. The analysis identifies a shared "harvest-before-death" chronotope in which November atmospheres externalize psychological instability and render outcomes feel inevitable by constraining character agency. Building on these findings, the article advances narrative gravity as a theoretical model that pulls the storyworld towards its endings long before events unfold.*

Keywords: Atmosphere, chronotope, foreshadowing, harvest-before-death, mood, narrative gravity

DOI: https://doi.org/10.32674/vrsz4331

Introduction

Literature and science operate as complementary fractal geometries: disciplines whose structures echo one another across scales. As Mandelbrot and Blumen note, fractals are "shapes whose roughness and fragmentation neither tend to vanish, nor fluctuate up and down, but remain essentially unchanged as one zoom in continually and examination is refined" (4). In this sense, the intellectual geometry of one field recurrently reappears in the other. Their reciprocal patterning is what enables the interdisciplinary turn increasingly central to contemporary doctoral research, law and digital humanities, medical science and psychology, policy and human behavior. Literature, in particular, has long participated in such cross-disciplinary resonances; the only question is how far back this genealogy stretches.

Unlike physics, whose conceptual evolution from Newton's absolutes to Einstein's unified spacetime can be historically traced, the literary genealogy of time and space is diffuse, embedded implicitly in artistic representation long before scientific formalization. Epic trajectories in Homer traverse mythical geographies shaped by cyclical temporality; Joyce's *Ulysses* compresses epic scale into the confines of a single day. Philosophical traditions likewise sought to articulate this nexus: Descartes laid the conceptual foundations of analytic geometry in La Géométrie (1637) by uniting algebra and geometry, an approach that later evolved into the Cartesian coordinate system with x-axis, y-axis, and eventually z-axis, which are foundational to modern mathematics and physics. Newton's subsequent work, operating within this axial spatial framework, articulated the laws of motion while simultaneously positing absolute space and absolute time as fixed containers of universal motion. Einstein's Special Relativity (1905) and General Relativity (1915) challenged classical assumptions of absolute space and time, positing instead a four-dimensional spacetime manifold in which spatial dimensions (x, y, z) and time (t) are interdependent, and gravity emerges as curvature generated by mass–energy. What Newton conceived as static, Einstein revealed as dynamic and relational, transforming the ontology of the universe itself.

A comparable conceptual shift occurs in literary studies with Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope, which theorizes the fusion of temporal and spatial markers into a single representational whole (Steinby 105). As Bakhtin states, "in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (84). In narrative, this fusion organizes ethical, affective, and thematic logic. Building on this, I argue that the chronotope (spacetime/setting) functions analogously to spacetime in physics: horizon corresponds to the spatial dimensions —the stylistic and syntactic field shaped by the narrator—while affect parallels time (t), generating mood, tone, and narrative weight. Within this fused fabric, foreshadowing operates as mass-energy, the element that creates a curvature in a chronotope and produces narrative gravity. Just as curvature in spacetime generates gravity that predicts trajectories, foreshadowing the mass-energy, curves chronotope into geodesics—traceable pathways through which events move toward anticipated outcomes. The sun, mass-energy, itself has no gravity apart from the curvature it induces in the spacetime; likewise, narrative events gain force (narrative gravity) not independently but through the curvature produced by foreshadowing.

This bridge between physics and literature produces what Longinus called the sublime, an elevation of mind that clarifies not only intertextual relations between ideas but also the experiential texture of ordinary life. If Einstein demonstrated that mass-energy in the spacetime inheres gravity, narrative art reveals that foreshadowing in the chronotope inheres narrative gravity, the anticipatory force that pulls the plot toward its eventual form. The scientific world shows that mass-energy cannot be separated from the spacetime; it either exists within the spacetime or cannot exist anywhere besides. By the same analogy, and acknowledging that not all literary works employ foreshadowing, the chronotope can exist without foreshadowing, but foreshadowing cannot exist apart from a chronotope.

This study investigates whether such a theoretical claim finds concrete illustration in literary narrative. Because stories almost always begin with a chronotope, is this opening gesture merely descriptive, or does it carry deeper structural implications? To answer this, the study examines two short stories whose seasonal atmospheres enact this curvature precisely: Stacy Aumonier's "*The Perfect Murder*" (set in November in Paris) and W. W. Jacobs's "*The Interruption*" (set in an autumnal Chidham). In both, the signs of late autumn, dimming light, falling leaves, waning warmth, form an emotional geometry, a field of gravity that draws the plot toward decline and closure. Despite differences in locale and authorship, the texts converge around a shared narrative structure, which I term the "harvest-before-death" chronotope. In this structure, ripeness, exhaustion, and moral reckoning intersect, creating a narrative gravity that bends events toward outcomes yet to be realized.

Literature Review

This review situates the study within current narratological and phenomenological debates on space, time, atmosphere, and story world construction. While setting has often been considered secondary in narrative theory, recent research highlights renewed interest in how spatial and temporal forms generate meaning, guide interpretation, and shape narrative anticipation. This section synthesizes research on the chronotope, narrative temporality, experiential approaches to fiction, atmospheric criticism, and the semiotics of space to establish the conceptual terrain for this study, while identifying a critical gap: although Bakhtin's chronotope draws on Einstein's spacetime, literary theory has yet to fully explore how foreshadowing generates anticipatory force, what this study terms narrative gravity.

Regarding chronotope in narrative theory, Bakhtin's foundational concept of the chronotope remains the most influential articulation of how space and time cohere into narrative form. Defining the chronotope as the fusion where "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (84), Bakhtin shifts attention from isolated settings to culturally embedded spatiotemporal matrices. In the recent work of Hans Färnlöf (2024), he shows the gap in Bakhtin's chronotope, as he claimed chronotope primarily meant for novel, not short stories, and while trying to fill this gap what he does is to work on Bakhtin's distinction between the horizontal: realistic, historically embedded narratives; and vertical: narratives grounded in timeless or transcendent values (117), taking them as separable entity, breaking what a chronotope essentially stands as, where these horizon and vertical dimensions (2-D world) rather seems misunderstood analogy from physics.

Later commentators, such as Steinby, extend this argument by emphasizing the chronotope as the "viewpoint of an acting subject" (105), noting that chronotopes shape characters' ethical possibilities and lived temporality. However, as Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu observe, narratology has tended to foreground the symbolic or representational dimensions of space rather than its dynamic temporal force, noting that classical narratologists, including Barthes, Genette, and Todorov, made space "absent or only implicit" (17). Even when novelistic chronotopes are categorized and typologized, scholarship often remains descriptive rather than structural, paying limited attention to how space–time formations bend narrative progression or generate anticipatory cues. Herman and Vervaeck attempt to bridge this gap by emphasizing that abstract themes become concrete only within chronotopic structures: "actions cannot be separated from the setting" (60). Yet their analysis primarily stresses how chronotopes anchor past events or provide retrospective frameworks; they offer less insight into how they orient readers toward the future of the narrative. Similarly, Ruth Ronen's and Gabriel Zoran's contributions, as synthesized by Herman and Vervaeck, identify spatial frames as stabilizing devices but bracket the question of how such frames acquire forward-driving pressure (60–61).

While spatial theorists underemphasize futurity, scholars of narrative time have long foregrounded anticipation. Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980) codifies temporal manipulation through order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice, establishing prolepsis as a structural mechanism that projects the narrative forward. Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot* (1984) extends this by proposing that narrative desire moves toward its own end, creating tension through what he terms the "anticipation of retrospection." Yet both theorists privilege syntactic time—sequence, pacing, proleptic markers, while leaving underexplored the role of space, atmosphere, and embodied setting in generating forward momentum. The result is a bifurcation in narratology: spatial theories emphasize world-building and representation; temporal theories emphasize sequence and plot. What remains insufficiently theorized is the interdependence of the two—the narrative spacetime in which the setting participates actively in temporal pull.

Contemporary cognitive narratology has foregrounded the reader's role in constructing and navigating storyworlds. David Herman defines storyworlds as "mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion" (qtd. in Mikić 14), stressing the reader's inferential and deictic engagement. Ryan et al. further conceptualize storyworlds as "coherent, unified, ontologically full" constructs (24), challenging narratology's earlier tendency to privilege time over space (16). Monika Fludernik (1996) reframes narrativity through "experientiality," the projection of consciousness rather than formal plot structures. As Pier summarizes, narrativization arises from readers' strategies of naturalizing unfamiliar textual elements (557–58). Conversely, Caracciolo emphasizes that narrative meaning and presence emerge through embodied, affective, and sensory engagement, arguing that experiential depth shapes interpretation (429–30). Across these models, storyworlds are treated as cognitive and affective constructs shaped by readers' interpretive work. However, these approaches still stop short of theorizing how environmental cues themselves generate

forward-directed pressure. They privilege comprehension over anticipation, modelling over momentum. The anticipatory function of setting, the way atmosphere and environment prestructure narrative outcomes, remains undertheorized.

Phenomenological and atmospheric theories provide tools for understanding how environments shape perception and emotion. Gumbrecht's *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung* (2012) advocates reading literature through the embodied presence of mood rather than hermeneutic meaning. He positions Stimmung as a form of spatially distributed affect, imbued with historical and experiential density. Jean-Michel Rabaté, too, draws on retrospection as Michèle Richman cites him: "modernity and modernism are perceived as haunted by ghosts of the past" (106). Gumbrecht's framework is enriched by Heideggerian notions of thrownness and world-attunement, and by Benjamin's sensitivity to historical aura, though critics caution that Stimmung risks bracketing political context. Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1994) complements this view by treating domestic and intimate spaces as "affective containers," sites where memory and imagination coalesce. These phenomenological insights illuminate how spaces bend consciousness, but Bachelard does not extend this logic into narrative structure or predictive force. Psychoanalytic accounts, especially Freud's Das Unheimliche (2003), explain how familiar spaces become uncanny when repressed content resurfaces, generating dread, estrangement, and cognitive dissonance. The uncanny demonstrates how atmosphere can externalize psychological pressure, although Freud does not specifically address narrative temporality or foreshadowing.

Lotman's spatial semiotics, as interpreted by Zylko, argues that space is "the very precondition of meaning" (398–99). The semiosphere's internal organization—centers, peripheries, boundaries—produces cultural meaning dynamically, not statically. This model is valuable for understanding how spaces encode cultural norms and symbolic value. Similarly, Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) reconceptualizes fictional space as a possible world bound by perspective, while Sheila Hones (2010) emphasizes that geographical significance emerges from narrative style, not just representational geography (474). Watson (1991) also insists on setting's influence on character values and actions (639).

Across narratology, phenomenology, cognitive theory, atmospheric studies, and spatial semiotics, scholars agree that: setting influences interpretation; space and time form cultural matrices; atmosphere shapes mood and embodiment; readers construct storyworlds through cognitive and sensory engagement; narrative progression is tied to temporality. But none of these traditions explain how setting itself creates the anticipatory momentum that moves a narrative toward its future events. In other words, no existing scholarship theorizes chronotope and foreshadowing as mass-energy in a field where curvature generates narrative gravity. Current research treats: Space as symbolic, cognitive, or representational, Time as sequential, syntactic, or structural, Atmosphere as affective or experiential, foreshadowing as rhetorical or plot-driven, where chronotope is discarded. What is missing is a model that integrates these into a single ontological field, chronotope as spacetime, foreshadowing as mass-energy, where the curvature operates.

While narratology, phenomenology, and cognitive theory agree that setting influences interpretation and that space-time forms cultural matrices, the anticipatory function of foreshadowing within the chronotope remains undertheorized. The concept of narrative gravity addresses this gap by conceptualizing the integration of chronotope and foreshadowing as analogous to mass-energy in a field: the curvature of the narrative's space-time generates a gravitational pull, creating predictable trajectories of decline or transformation. This is particularly evident in texts where atmospheric cues (e.g., late autumn) foreshadow narrative outcomes, demonstrating that chronotope is generative, not merely illustrative.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in close textual reading; a method suited to analyzing the experiential structures (i.e., mood, temporality, atmosphere, and anticipation) that cannot be captured through empirical measurement. Because the central question concerns how setting functions as a fused chronotope that produces anticipatory pressure, interpretive analysis is necessary: such phenomena emerge not as discrete variables but as interwoven textual forces embedded within narrative language. The approach follows hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions in narratology, emphasizing how readers encounter horizon, affect, and atmospheric cues as part of their unfolding experience of the storyworld.

The corpus consists of two short stories, Stacy Aumonier's "*The Perfect Murder*" and W. W. Jacobs's "The Interruption," selected for their compact narrative scale, explicit late-autumn atmospheres, and thematic preoccupation with guilt, secrecy, and psychological instability. Their brevity and concentrated seasonal framing allow atmospheric and temporal cues to become structurally legible, while their similar moral trajectories make them ideal for examining whether the setting itself can generate a forward-driving gravitational pull within the narrative. These stories, therefore, provide controlled environments in which the anticipatory function of setting can be closely traced and compared.

The analysis begins by immersing each story in its spatiotemporal coordinates, examining how weather, light, thresholds between interior and exterior spaces, and seasonal progression establish the chronotope through which the characters move. From there, attention turns to how these atmospheric details accumulate affective pressure, shaping the reader's horizon of expectation and conferring weight on particular narrative moments. Foreshadowing is treated not as a single stylistic device but as a chronotopic effect that arises when atmosphere, temporality, and spatial orientation converge. The interpretive process, therefore, moves from identifying environmental cues to observing how they channel anticipation, constrain character agency, and render particular futures imaginable or inevitable.

In examining these dynamics, the study draws conceptually on phenomenological accounts of atmosphere that illuminate how spatial environments shape mood and perception; on seasonal archetypes that help explain why autumnal decline bears cultural and narrative weight; and on psychoanalytic understandings of the uncanny, which clarify how familiar

spaces can acquire tension when the repressed returns through atmosphere and repetition. These perspectives operate as interpretive lenses rather than sub-methods, offering ways of understanding how atmospheric density, cultural temporality, and psychological pressure converge to form narrative curvature.

Textual Analysis

The following textual analyses explore how Stacy Aumonier's "*The Perfect Murder*" and W. W. Jacobs's "*The Interruption*" use autumnal chronotopes to construct narrative inevitability. In both stories, spatial and temporal coordinates—November dusk in Paris and the fading autumnal light of rural England—function not as decorative scenery but as structural determinants that fuse horizon (anticipatory cues embedded in syntax, diction, and atmosphere) with affect (the emotional tonality of lateness, recession, and decline). These chronotopic fields generate what I term narrative gravity: the force by which foreshadowing accrues mass and bends narrative trajectories toward predetermined arcs of exposure, collapse, and death. Following Genette's argument that anticipatory markers are architectonic rather than ornamental, and echoing Brooks's contention that narrative momentum emerges through the tension between anticipation and retrospection, this analysis traces how each story's atmospheric conditions shape character psychology and plot movement. By foregrounding November dusk, autumn storms, and dim interior enclosures, both Aumonier and Jacobs stage their narratives within seasonal sensors that prefigure the ethical and emotional diminutions to come. The following sections, therefore, show how foreshadowing becomes spatialized, how atmosphere acts as pressure rather than backdrop, and how the late-season chronotope scripts the very curvature along which each narrative must fall.

Stacy Aumonier anchors "*The Perfect Murder*" in the unmistakably charged temporal setting of November, immediately establishing the chronotope as one of decline, lateness, and approaching winter. The opening line, "One evening in November two brothers were seated in a little café in the Rue de la Rouquette discussing murders" (Bond 1), sets not merely the time but the emotional weather of the narrative. November is a threshold month, culturally associated with the waning of vitality; evening intensifies this sense of lateness. Together, they create a warp in the fabric of chronotope, the atmospheric curvature that shapes everything that follows.

The horizon—the stylistic and syntactic cues that guide interpretive expectation—appears immediately in the reference to "the evening papers" (1), which becomes the medium through which Paul and Henri encounter the story of a clumsy murderer. Their discussion of how "perfectly" murder might be executed is not a casual conversation but an anticipatory event shaped by the November mood. Paul's confident assertion, "it must be the easiest things in the world to murder them" (2), foreshadows the trajectory of the plot: speculation slides toward action under the gravitational pressure of the season.

Their meetings always occur late: they "parted at midnight…to meet the following evening" (15). Time in the story is always evening or night; the chronotope never brightens. This rhythmic recurrence of lateness reflects Frye's association of autumn with tragedy, where energies diminish, and possibilities narrow (207). Aumonier's November thus becomes an atmospheric prefiguration of moral and psychological decline. Even the brothers' attempts at future thinking— "She may live to a hundred"—are answered by Henri's resigned, "We shall die of old age, first" (6). The modal verb "shall," as being observed, casts this not as speculation but obligation, tightening the projectile towards inevitability.

In this sense, atmosphere is not backdrop but pressure. Mood, temporality, and spatial details— "dim," "corner," "midnight"—operate as markers of the narrative's gravitational field. The café's "dim corner" (14) is not only a physical space but an affective container, shaping consciousness and narrowing the emotional lens through which the brothers imagine their lives. Their poverty, isolation, and middle-aged disappointments settle into this November environment, producing a chronotope in which foreshadowing is structurally embedded.

The November atmosphere deepens into the uncanny—Freud's *das Unheimliche*—as Aumonier turns everyday spaces into sites of psychic disturbance. Bachelard's insight that intimate spaces act as "affective containers" helps explain why the café corner becomes a locus where repressed desires gather. The corner, the newspaper, and the routine of meeting, all are familiar. Yet, under narrative gravity, the familiar becomes estranged: the homely becomes unhomely.

Freud's definition of the uncanny—what is "frightening…what arouses dread and horror" within the familiar (qtd. in Allison 276)—is fully operative here. Paul's speculations about murder arise not from an alien impulse but from within the comfortable rhythms of his life. When Aumonier writes that the murder was planned "in that dim corner of the café" (14), the uncanny force of space becomes explicit. The brothers' imagination is not inspired by novelty but by repetition; the place where they sit every day becomes the place where repressed aggression supersedes civility.

The uncanny intensifies as the familiar becomes threatening. The staggering of Paul: "Paul was acting…Hadn't he already been planning and scheming an act for which his brother would reap half the benefit? Nevertheless, he was staggered" (14), reveals that what terrifies him is not strangeness but recognition. The narration reveals that Paul's act is not an alien thought but the externalization of his own. Likewise, the moment where "Henri was frightened of the sound of his own voice" (18) encapsulates the unheimlich: the self becomes estranged from itself.

The soufflé, too, embodies uncanny familiarity. It is a dish their aunt "always had" (17); only the addition of glass powder is new. The murder plot thus hinges on the intimate turned lethal—the culinary equivalent of the uncanny. Ironically, Paul dies by the same scheduled food, and Henri "had perfectly murdered his brother" (23). The repressed desire to be rid of familial obligations resurfaces disastrously, as Henri had become "naturally envious" (8);

"jealousy and sullen rage" (10) when he found Paul had made a place in their aunt's home, which eventually led to their fight and did not speak for some time (9).

As the narration goes, Paul's imitations— "There's a pretty lady! Oh, my sweet! Another…a pretty lady!" (12)—it gains retrospective significance. What appears as childish imitation becomes a sublimation of his repressed desire for release from poverty, failure, and familial dependency. The story ends with the same refrain— "There's a pretty lady! Oh, my…a pretty lady!" (23), the difference now, spoken by their aunt (23), turning the familiar phrase uncanny through narrative circularity.

Furthermore, Aumonier structures the narrative according to what the paper terms "narrative gravity", the curvature that bends the story toward a predicted trajectory, the anticipated closure. The phrase "November rain" is one such marker (13). Rain is unusual for the season, and its appearance signals the disruption of ordinary patterns. This meteorological anomaly coincides with Henri's furtive declaration of the murder plan, which occurs after he "furtively" looks around the café and clutches his brother's arm (13). The adverb "furtively" functions as a marker of horizon, conveying both secrecy and nervous visibility. Defined as "attempting to avoid notice or attention," it operates as a double negative: in seeking to evade attention, the character paradoxically draws it.

This narrative curvature becomes increasingly evident in the story's syntax. Henri's fragmented, dashed speech— "Do you remember—it has…to me—suddenly—one night…this—it…ago—we…café—do you…night of that murder…about—don't you remember?" (13)—exposes the pressure of inevitable collapse. The disintegration of syntax mirrors the disintegration of psychological coherence.

Foreshadowing thus emerges not through isolated hints but through the arc in the chronotope. The November setting, the late hour, the rain, the dimness, and the uncanny familiarity of the café all align to produce the path that leads to both their uncle Robert's death in February (3), a winter month, and Paul's own death a year later in the same season. The seasonal logic reinforces Frye's claim that tragedy, the mythos of autumn, concerns individuals whose fates tighten into solitude (207). The brothers do not belong to a broader social group; their tragedy is concentrated, intimate, and inward.

Narrative gravity works by making every action feel pre-shaped by atmospheric conditions. Paul's imprisonment (3), the brothers' poverty, their habitual late-night meetings, their longing for escape all these elements form the mass that curves the trajectory of the story. Their downfall does not appear sudden but anticipated, even demanded, by the chronotope itself.

Like Aumonier's, Jacobs opens "*The Interruption*" in the fading luminosity of an autumn evening: "The last of the funeral guests had gone, and Spencer Goddard…went to the open window and, looking into the [fading light of the autumn] day, took a deep breath" (68). The autumnal chronotope operates as the story's first anticipatory marker. In this waning light, the atmosphere becomes inseparable from Goddard's psychological condition; the season

mirrors his internal recession. As in Aumonier's November, this temporality is not decorative but structural: autumn introduces a horizon of diminishing control, foreshadowing exposure, guilt, and eventual collapse.

The horizon—the stylistic and syntactic cues through which Jacobs shapes reader expectation—emerges immediately. Goddard's sadness is a performance, not an emotion: "his face [assumed] the appearance of gravity and sadness" (68). The verb "assumed" signals artifice, establishing deception as the affective register of the narrative. When he receives his wife's photograph, he notes "with [satisfaction] that his hand was [absolutely steady]" (69). This steadiness is less composure than self-surveillance, an attempt to gauge how well he sustains the illusion of grief. These stylistic markers form the horizon within which autumn's decline becomes legible as moral decline.

Language emphasizes this horizon carefully. Goddard anticipates that Hannah wants "–to tell me something," and "by great [effort] refrained from looking at her" (69). The effort does not arise from dignity, but from fear of the truth she might utter. Jacobs thus binds the narrative atmosphere to the psychology of concealment; Goddard's self-control thins as the light thins. This twilight horizon—grammatical, emotional, and seasonal—makes the foreshadowing of disaster an embedded structural principle, not a late surprise. Autumn's fading illumination becomes both temporal setting and ethical commentary: the closer the story moves toward night, the more Goddard's façade destabilizes.

Furthermore, Jacobs uses subtle linguistic inflections to tighten the atmospheric tension. When Hannah remarks, "few husbands…would have done what you did" (70), the word "few" rather than "all" exposes the cracks in Goddard's performance. Her diction introduces ambiguity, signaling that she knows more than she admits. Goddard responds by stiffening, commanding abruptly, "That will do, Hannah" (70). The horizon narrows: autumn's fading light becomes a symbolic contraction of moral, emotional, and narrative space. The domestic world—food, household routines, even silence—begins to tilt ominously. The atmosphere is thus the first field where narrative gravity becomes perceptible: the season and the stylistic cues together foreshadow the collapse that will inevitably follow.

If autumn establishes the fading horizon, the uncanny—Freud's *das Unheimliche*—generates the atmospheric pressure that drives the narrative inward. As Freud defines it, the uncanny concerns what is "frightening…what arouses dread and horror" within the familiar (qtd. in Allison 276). In Jacobs's story, dread is born not from the unknown but from the known: the home, the cook, the food, the routines of everyday domesticity. Hannah, the cook, embodies the uncanny return of the repressed. She is not a stranger; she is a long-known domestic presence whose sudden shift in behavior destabilizes Goddard's sense of mastery. Her remark about food— "Careful what I eat and drink, I mean" (74)—is both literal and accusatory. It signals her knowledge of his crime. She leverages familiarity as a threat: the housemaid becomes a power figure, reversing the hierarchy of the household. The uncanny arises precisely because the threat comes from within the domestic sphere that should guarantee safety.

Jacobs amplifies this uncanny dynamic through spatial phenomenology that echoes Bachelard's concept of affective containers. Domestic architecture, ordinarily a reservoir of intimacy, becomes claustrophobic. Goddard's home transforms into a prison: he lives "with a man in prison. Gone was a sense of freedom…Hannah, the jailer, guarding each one" (72). Home, which ought to be *Heimlich*, becomes its opposite. Rooms contract around him and suffocate like a space no bigger than a coffin, a prophetic spatial metaphor for his fate.

The uncanny is not an episode; it is a spatial condition. Even ordinary domestic moments take on terror: "Better still, a worried and commonplace Hannah. Worried over two eggs" (71). The triviality of eggs, a symbol of routine nourishment, becomes a scene of psychological danger. Silence too is uncanny: "The silence was oppressive. The house seemed to be listening, waiting" (81). The home becomes an agent, a witness, and finally an accomplice. Freud's framework reveals why this is so: repression seeks return. Goddard's crime is not past; it saturates every corner of the house.

Subsequently, Jacobs orchestrates the narrative so that its atmospheric and uncanny components culminate in the plot towards inevitable collapse. This curve intensifies through meteorological cues. Rain, night, and storm are not incidental weather, but atmospheric agents aligned with Frye's mythos of autumn—the tragic mode in which energies decline, and individual destinies converge toward doom. The "icy rain" and "heavy squalls" beating "against the window" (82) accelerate Goddard's unraveling.

The storm externalizes what has been internally brewing: guilt, paranoia, and fear. The atmosphere begins to press in. When Hannah leaves to fetch the doctor, the house becomes a claustrophobic echo chamber for Goddard's conscience. Silence is no longer neutral; it becomes the resonance chamber of repressed memory. He hears an uncanny "ghost of a sound…from his wife's room" (82). This is the apex of narrative gravity: the repressed crime returns in acoustic form. What he hears is not supernatural but psychological—the emergence of what he tried to bury. This auditory hallucination is the final geodesic in the arc that autumn, domestic space, and uncanny atmosphere have prepared. Goddard's demise is what he has planted and what later sprouted. The narrative curvature leads him not into chaos but into the exact trajectory foreshadowed from the first autumnal description.

Frye's argument that tragedy concentrates on the fate of a single individual (207) is manifest here. Goddard's tragedy is solitary, shaped not by external antagonists but by atmospheric, psychological, and spatial conditions that converge against him. The chronotope—autumn evening, silence, and rain—anchors the inevitability of his end. Hannah's power, the house's oppressive stillness, the storm's violence, and the faint sound from the wife's room are all gravitational pulls.

Thus, Jacobs's story demonstrates how narrative gravity operates as the cumulative force of affect (mood, domestic atmosphere, and seasonal decline) and horizon (linguistic cues, stylistic shifts, and psychological signals). The autumnal chronotope bends the narrative toward its prefigured conclusion, making Goddard's collapse feel not accidental but structurally carved into the spacetime of the story.

Taken together, the analyses of Aumonier and Jacobs demonstrate that their narratives do not simply occur in autumnal settings but are structured by them. The chronotope holds the trajectory in which characters think, move, and ultimately unravel. In both stories, November and late autumn encode culturally legible signs of depletion and moral exhaustion, allowing the atmosphere to function as a predictive mechanism rather than a passive backdrop. The uncanny intensifies this curvature: familiar spaces turn inward, domestic or urban enclosures become hostile, and the repressed returns with atmospheric force. By the time each plot reaches its crisis—Paul's unintended death and Goddard's psychological disintegration and unplanned demise—the trajectory feels less like contingency than the inevitable endpoint of a world already bent toward collapse. Frye's tragic seasonal logic and Bachelard's phenomenology of intimate spaces help illuminate this process, but the stories themselves offer the clearest evidence: in both cases, the autumnal chronotope generates the very conditions of downfall. The narrative arc thus emerges not from sudden revelation but from the steady accumulation of atmospheric cues, uncanny reversals, and syntactic fractures that make foreshadowing a structural, gravitational principle. These stories reveal how late-season temporality becomes a mode of narrative determination, one in which characters are drawn, step by step, into the very endings their environments have already foretold.

Comparative Synthesis: The Harvest-Before-Death Chronotope

Cultural Temporalities and the Autumnal Sensorium

In both narratives, the autumnal chronotope functions not as atmospheric embellishment but as a culturally encoded temporal field that shapes the conditions of decline. Within French cultural memory, November is a period explicitly associated with mourning—La Toussaint (1st November) and Le Jour des Morts (2nd November)—and literary traditions reinforce its connotations of lateness, remembrance, and elegiac introspection. Aumonier's November café, the brothers' precarious finances, and their conspiratorial conversations align with this cultural chronotope: November is the moment when accounts are settled, debts moral and economic are reckoned with, and mortality becomes calculable.

In the English literary tradition, autumn oscillates between Keatsian equilibrium and the Gothic's latent instability. Jacobs draws on the latter. His evocation of the "fading light of the autumn day" and the encroaching storm situates "The Interruption" within a seasonal logic of entropy, where domestic security becomes porous and psychological order gives way to agitation. Thus, while Aumonier's November systematizes remembrance and moral tallying, Jacobs's autumn anticipates disorder and exposure. In both cases, the chronotope is structurally anticipatory: it cues readers, from the outset, that the narrative is already positioned on a downward seasonal slope.

Romantic Genealogy and Temporal Consciousness

Keats's *To Autumn* provides a foundational template for understanding this doubleness of temporal affect. The poem's "soft-dying day" captures the paradoxical union of ripeness and decay, a tension that Lott describes as an acknowledgment "of the power of time over it" (81).

This romantic sensibility resurfaces in both stories. Their atmospheres initially appear stable—Parisian cafés, domestic interiors—yet quietly register the onset of temporal decline. The fading light, November dusk, and imminent storm replicate Keats's recognition that plenitude contains its own recession. In this sense, the chronotope becomes a mode of temporal consciousness, signaling that the narrative has already entered its late phase and that the arc toward termination is underway.

Seasonal Logic and the Harvest-Before-Death Arc

Both texts enact an autumnal "*harvest-before-death*" pattern in which aggregation, calculation, and reckoning precede subtraction and demise. This pattern resonates with Frye's cyclic archetype linking human fortune to the seasonal cycle (qtd. in Johnsen 299), and with Johnsen's analogy: "A young warrior (romance) becomes the king who must be sacrificed (tragedy), disappear (irony), and ultimately be reborn…" (299).

In "*The Perfect Murder*", the brothers' plotting constitutes a form of autumnal accounting: inheritances, debts, and mortality are rendered quantifiable. In "*The Interruption*", the funeral tableau, the "fading light," and the storm enable a parallel process of reckoning; what remains is counted before it is foreclosed. Both stories trace a seasonal geodesic: autumn initiates decline, and winter—literal or symbolic—consummates it. Paul's death along the same seasonal axis and Goddard's collapse under wintry squalls exemplify how seasonal progression scripts narrative inevitability.

Atmosphere, Uncanny Pressure, and the Externalization of Decline

Autumn's cultural and literary associations also intensify the atmospheric pressures permeating each narrative. Freud's *Das Unheimliche* illuminates why November nights and autumn storms feel charged with latent disturbance: the uncanny emerges when the familiar becomes estranged. In Aumonier, a November storm transforms a Paris boulevard into an uncanny tableau, saturating the ordinary with conspiratorial tension. In Jacobs, the storm "beat[ing] in heavy squalls" externalizes Goddard's repressed guilt; the household becomes besieged in tandem with his conscience.

Bachelard's phenomenology further clarifies how atmospheric detail exerts force. Space is never neutral; gusts, window frames, and twilight modulate interior states. Jacobs's "fading light" becomes the lived horizon of Goddard's weakening resolve, while Aumonier's "fitful gusts" mirror Henri's vacillating agency. Weather, therefore, operates not as a scenic accessory but as a gravitational element: it bears upon the characters, intensifies instability, and bends their trajectories toward collapse. In both stories, autumnal atmosphere becomes a field of narrative gravity, externalizing psychological turbulence and shaping the unavoidable arc toward death.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analyses of Stacy Aumonier's "*The Perfect Murder*" and W. W. Jacobs's "*The Interruption*" demonstrate that chronotope holds foreshadowing that operates not as a secondary backdrop but as a dynamic spacetime field whose curvature determines plot trajectories, affective intensities, moral possibilities, and the reader's anticipatory orientation. In both texts, the late-autumn chronotope fuses spatial and temporal cues into an anticipatory system. Within this fused field, foreshadowing emerges not as a discrete rhetorical device but as the curvature produced when horizon and affect interact. This study terms this curvature narrative gravity: the structural pull toward future events that are not merely predicted but are already inscribed in the atmospheric and cultural density of the chronotope.

The findings reveal that existing narratological traditions provide crucial but partial accounts. Genette's theory of prolepsis elucidates syntactic forms of anticipation, while Brooks's "anticipation of retrospection" clarifies how readers generate meaning by projecting endings backward. Yet both approaches privilege temporal sequence and leave atmospheric conditions under-theorized. Conversely, Bakhtin's chronotope articulates the deep interdependence of space and time but does not fully explain how chronotopic structures actively orient narratives toward their future outcomes, demanding literary intervention in this physics world along with mass-energy as foreshadowing. Phenomenological thinkers such as Bachelard and Gumbrecht illuminate the affective thickness of spatial experience but do not address how such spatial affect acquires directional force. Spatial semioticians, including Lotman, Zylko, Ryan, and Hones, foreground cultural inscriptions within environments yet remain largely silent on the anticipatory function of atmosphere.

The readings undertaken here show that these traditions converge, yet none alone accounts for how setting exerts predictive force. It is within this gap that narrative gravity emerges as an original contribution: environmental affect and spatial-temporal coordination exert directional pressure, delineating what futures are imaginable, foreclosed, or inevitable within the storyworld.

Aumonier's narrative exemplifies this structural curvature with particular clarity. November becomes a cultural and atmospheric mass that warps the fictional world toward conspiracy, moral erosion, and eventual death. The November dusk, the dim café corner, the repetition of nightly rituals, and the uncanny mimicry circulating between characters do not merely "set mood"; they function as gravitational vectors. The November storm preceding the murder plot is not incidental weather but the moment at which the chronotope tightens, and the future becomes legible within the texture of the world. The brothers' moral descent, the inversion of domestic familiarity into fatal intimacy, and Paul's unintended death are all geodesics shaped by the November chronotope long before they occur.

Jacobs's story unfolds along an analogous curvature, shaped by the domestic interior rather than the urban exterior. The fading autumn light, the oppressive stillness of the house, and the intensifying storm form an atmospheric field in which the uncanny transforms familiar spaces into sites of peril. Silence thickens, rooms constrict, and Hannah becomes the pivotal

figure around whom Goddard's guilt and paranoia orbit. Here, autumn is not a symbolic backdrop but structural pressure: it presses inward on the protagonist's psyche, contorting the narrative toward exposure and collapse. The faint auditory disturbance from the wife's room at the climax is not supernatural intervention but the culmination of the gravitational field generated by guilt, seasonality, and domestic confinement.

The comparative synthesis reveals a shared architecture: a harvest-before-death chronotope in which autumn functions as the cultural and atmospheric medium through which reckoning, contraction, and moral descent unfold. Aumonier draws on France's November of remembrance and mourning, while Jacobs mobilizes England's Gothic-inflected autumn of instability and "fading light." Despite these cultural distinctions, both stories enact autumnal spacetime as the matrix that strips away illusions, erodes psychological defenses, and guides the narrative along predetermined arcs. Decline is neither accidental nor retrospective; it is embedded in the atmospheric fabric from the first paragraphs.

These findings affirm the central claim of the study: chronotope is inseparable from the interplay of horizon and affect. Foreshadowing resides within this fused fabric where the curvature generates narrative gravity. The late-autumn chronotope provides precisely such density; its cultural scripts of lateness, memory, and decay supply the gravitational conditions that make narrative futures not only imaginable but structurally inevitable. The scientific analogy that animates this study further clarifies this principle. In physical spacetime, mass-energy does not merely possess gravity; gravity is the curvature caused by it. Similarly, narratives do not contain foreshadowing as a detachable technique; foreshadowing is mass-energy that is inseparable from the chronotope that exerts pull due to the curvature it creates, where the resultant is narrative gravity, the trajectory of a projectile. The chronotope is always present, whether introduced at the beginning or emerging later, whether material or psychological. Foreshadowing, however, is only intermittently employed, and when it is present, it cannot operate independently of the chronotope that contains and shapes it.

Future research may extend this model by tracing the finer fractal components of the chronotope—particularly the micro-structures of horizon (stylistic patterning and temporal syntax) and affect (embodied atmospheres and sensory density). The scientific analogy suggests that, just as the axes x, y, and z of physical space and the 't' of time can be mapped, horizon and affect may likewise be diagrammed to reveal how local atmospheric cues scale into global narrative trajectories. Such work would deepen our understanding of how narratives anticipate their own endings and how readers, attuned to chronotopic curvature, sense the gravitational pull of storyworlds long before their conclusions materialize.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the successful completion of this research article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

There was no external source of funding for the research.

ORCID iD

Bimalendra Rai : https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0767-2669

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Bio

Bimalendra Rai is an English teacher and an IPC Facilitator. He is committed to advancing critical inquiry in literature and the humanities. His scholarly interests center on trauma studies, existential philosophy, and deconstruction, with a particular focus on how literature registers trauma as a philosophical dimension. Alongside his academic pursuits, Rai is also a poet, an author of an anthology, exploring intersections of art, memory, and subjectivity through creative expression.
Email: nrbimrai831@gmail.com

Cite as: Rai, Bimalendra. "Foreshadowing: Narrative Gravity in the Autumnal Chronotope of Short Stories by Aumonier and Jacobs."*Interdisciplinary Journal of Innovation in Nepalese Academia,* vol. 4, no. 2, Dec. 2025, pp. 219-236. https://doi.org/10.32674/vrsz4331

Note: The author used AI-based tools, including Grammarly for grammar checking and language refinement, and paraphrasing tools such as QuillBot to improve clarity and readability. These tools were used solely for linguistic enhancement. No generative AI tools were used to create original content, develop ideas, or conduct any part of the study. The author retains full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the manuscript.