RE-VITALISING THE LITTLE PEOPLE: ARTHUR MACHEN'S TALES OF THE REMNANT RACES

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In the latter decades of the nineteenth century a renewed interest in Celtic history and heritage was arguably at the forefront of British consciousness, the cultural movement referred to as the Celtic Revival taking place not only within the popular imagination but also in literary and intellectual circles. It is something of a commonplace that the Revival was a political and social movement as well as a literary one, which aimed to promote Celtic nationalism and interest in the unique aspects of Celtic imagination and history as contrasted with typically English or Saxon qualities of rationalism and materialism. The Irish contribution to the Celtic Revival movement of the *fin de siècle* is frequently stressed, critical attention centring upon Ireland as a hotbed of nationalistic and political upheaval, the figure of Yeats and the role of the Irish Literary Theatre. However to a lesser extent Fiona Macleod's poetic contribution to the Scottish arm of the movement is often recognised.[1] The literary texts produced by the Revival tended to be mystical and aesthetic in their tone, focusing on the "heroic" and transcendent aspects of Celtic mythology. Ever popular in the Celtic imagination, fairies or the "little people" were frequently depicted, though usually portrayed as "good," "ethereal" or vaguely mischievous. This paper will examine a set of stories concerned with fairy mythology that do not conform to this portrayal. Written by Arthur Machen, a Welsh author whose contribution to the Celtic Revival has seldom been acknowledged, these stories explore the dark side of fairy lore, incorporating late Victorian ethnological theories of fairy origins.

A survey of the critical literature dealing with the Celtic Revival and the ways in which mythology was adopted by Revivalist authors reveals two striking omissions: firstly any real recognition of a Welsh contribution to the movement, and secondly an understanding of the ethnological studies of mythology also undertaken during this period. To begin with the first of these, Holbrook Jackson writes, "the

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[1] For more detailed information on the role of Irish nationalism and socio-political factors in the Celtic Revival see Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson, "A Literature for Ireland," *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (Dover: Croom Helm, 1986) 116-63; Austin Clarke, *The Celtic Twilight and the Nineties* (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1969); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); and Lloyd R. Morris, *The Celtic Dawn: A Survey of The Renascence in Ireland 1889-1916* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1970).

movement in Wales was far less definite. [. . .] Literary activity was confined to a renewed interest in national myth and tradition, an interest aroused by the magnificent collection of legends made by Lady Charlotte Guest in *The Mabinogion*. But there was no distinctive modern art or literary production" (183). Though it is true to say that manifestations of the Celtic Revival were far less pronounced from the Welsh quarter, it is not the case that there were *no* distinctive literary productions by Welsh writers interested in the myths and sacred landscapes of their homeland. Arthur Machen, though largely forgotten in modern literary and academic circles, wrote a series of tales concerned with the "little people" mythology, the "Tylwyth Teg" of his native Wales, that not only provided an interesting and under-represented Welsh contribution to the Celtic Revival, but also engaged with the ethnological theories of his time.

In Victorian Britain archaeology and ethnology were little more than fledgling disciplines, generally the domain of enthusiastic collectors and hobbyists. Coinciding with the increased interest in all things Celtic, anthropologists and archaeologists began to investigate the "scientific basis" of fairy mythology. The primary ethnological theory formulated to explain the origins of fairy mythology was the "Pygmy Theory" expounded by David MacRitchie in his 1890 work *The Testimony of Tradition*. In it he proposes that the Celtic belief in fairies has grown out of a "folk memory of an actual Pygmy race [. . .] a very early, probably Mongolian race, which inhabited the British Islands [. . .] When the Celtic nations appeared, these Pygmies were driven into mountain fastnesses and into the most inaccessible places, where a few of them may have survived until comparatively historical times" (MacRitchie in Evans Wentz xxii). MacRitchie was not alone in this belief. Following the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 the euhemeristic school of folklore flourished, postulating that folkloric material had its roots in actual events in pre-history.[2] Although unproven, the Pygmy Theory, the most popular of the euhemeristic theories, sparked debate among scholars of Celtic mythology and literature that is surprisingly not taken up by Revivalist authors or critics.

Machen himself professed his belief in euhemeristic theories in a number of essays and reviews, most notably in an essay entitled "A Midsummer Night's Dream" from the collection *Dog and Duck*, and in an earlier review essay for *Literature* "Folklore and Legends of the North." In the latter he comments "of recent years abundant proof has been given that a short, non-Aryan race once dwelt beneath ground, in hillocks, throughout Europe, their raths have been explored, the weird old tales of green hills all lighted up at night have received confirmation. Much in the old legends may be explained by a reference to this primitive race"

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[2] For a more detailed discussion of Victorian theories of fairy folklore both scientific and spiritualistic see Carole G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness*.

(272). This is the premise upon which he bases his fairy fiction, yet it is not the typical approach found within Celtic Revival literature.

One reason for the general omission of ethnological theories in Celtic Revival fairy fiction could be that the very notions of science and empiricism, the "proof" and "confirmation" of which Machen speaks, smack of "Englishness," of Saxon rationality and materialism as opposed to traditionally Celtic qualities of spirituality and imagination. In his famous series of lectures on Celtic literature published in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1866, Matthew Arnold outlines the distinctions between the Saxon (which he associates with the Teutonic) and the Celt, distinctions of temperament and spirit rather than of physicality. Arnold asserts that the Saxon temperament is "steady" and "honest" (81), the offshoot of this being "freedom from whim, flightiness, perverseness; patient fidelity to Nature, – in a word, *science*" (82). In contrast Arnold characterises the Celt as "sentimental," "quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly" (84) and "impressionable," claiming that "balance, measure, and patience are just what the Celt has never had" (86). Thus by the definitions popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century, science and investigation are the realm of the Saxon, with emotions and spiritual insight being the domain of the Celt.[3]

Thus to incorporate scientific ethnological principles into stories of Celtic mythology would arguably detract from the purpose of the revival of it: to assert the spiritual richness and beauty of Celtic culture. The notion of "fairies" being in reality the remnants of subjugated Mongolian pygmy races lacks a certain romance, not to mention the fact that this theory turns the Celts into the oppressors rather than the oppressed, a factor certainly detrimental to their nationalistic causes. Given this avoidance of scientific and ethnological theories on the part of Celtic Revivalists, Machen's use of them in his work becomes all the more interesting. In his cycle of stories dealing with the "little people" Machen differs from the typical representations of fairy mythology within recognised Celtic Revival literature in two significant ways, firstly by focussing on the negative aspects of fairy mythology, and secondly by employing typically Saxon or English qualities in his construction of this mythology. This paper will examine how these elements function within two of Machen's "little people" stories, "The Black Seal" (1895) and "The Shining Pyramid" (1895).[4]

Before commencing a detailed analysis of these aspects in Machen's work, some introduction is necessary given the relative obscurity of the author and the

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[3] This dichotomy between Saxon and Celt has been taken up by modern scholars, for example in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd's groundbreaking work *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

[4] Machen wrote four stories concerning the "little people" mythology. Although this paper is primarily concerned with "The Black Seal" and "The Shining Pyramid" Machen's other tales "The Red Hand" also written in 1895 and "The White People" (1906) are also interesting studies in this vein.

limited critical attention that in the past has been paid to his work. Arthur Machen is a particularly unusual writer whose work is difficult to place squarely in the context of either literary history or criticism. Although critics generally consider him a "macabre" storyteller, this genre only comprises a small section of his overall literary output, and then mostly at the beginning of his career. It is however, undoubtedly his most popular work, and that which has been remembered by posterity. Machen's two macabre or "horrific" novels *The Great God Pan* and *The Three Impostors*, both published in 1895, have received the bulk of critical attention, and are generally considered among the many other Victorian stories dealing with the paranormal, supernatural, esoteric or the occult. These texts are most commonly considered in literary criticism within the context of "gothic decadence" as manifested within the Victorian and Edwardian ghost and horror story.

Machen's supernatural fiction, including the texts examined here, is located within part of the late Victorian *fin de siècle* trend towards gothic decadence. For example in *The Literature of Terror* David Punter locates Machen's work firmly within the decadent school, stressing the author's preoccupation with transmutation and pseudo-Darwinian notions of de-evolution and degeneration. Kelly Hurley takes a similar view in *The Gothic Body*, citing the ways in which Machen's characters face both symbolic and literal dissolution and regression as a result of their contact with evil, as evidence of the Welshman's concern with the decadence and degeneration of the human subject. Other writers, such as Julia Briggs and Peter Penzoldt, share this view of Machen's fiction, highlighting the similarity of his work to other decadent supernatural texts of the 1880s and 1890s, most notably Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.[5] While the themes of decadence and most especially degeneration inarguably play an enormous role in Machen's early supernatural fiction this is not all there is to see in them; gothic degeneration only provides us with a portion of the picture.

Karl Marius Petersen, in his 1973 unpublished doctoral thesis entitled "Arthur Machen and the Celtic Renaissance in Wales," was the first to locate Machen within the context of the Celtic Revival movement. Contending that there are certain elements that define "the Celtic" in literature, and drawing upon the works of Ernest Renan, Matthew Arnold, W.B. Yeats and Grant Allen in this vein, he summarises these elements as "a spiritual affinity to the Celtic fatherland, a pervasive sense of the supernatural, the magical treatment of nature, escape into the world of dream" (Petersen abstract) and the use of Celtic folkloric themes and motifs, before going on to explore how these elements are manifested in Machen's work. Petersen argues that Machen's fiction can be located within the Celtic Revival but he fails to fully

[5] For further readings of Machen's works within the context of gothic decadence see Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1977); Peter Penzoldt, *The English Short Story of the Supernatural* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965).

realise how Machen's work is positioned in relation to other Revivalist writers addressing similar themes. Although a strong case can be made for the consideration of Machen's work within this context, it is necessary to recognise that the way in which he treats mythological themes is in fact atypical.

In both "The Black Seal" and "The Shining Pyramid" Machen uses the form of a detective narrative to investigate the possibility that the "little people" still exist in the Welsh hills. The beings his texts uncover are neither "good" nor "heroic." Instead Machen's "fairies" are evil, misshapen and cruel, they are the remnants proposed by the Pygmy Theory, alive and well in modern Britain. He uses the disciplines of ethnology and archaeology as well as rational, materialistic, arguably "Saxon" investigative processes to solve the mystery and uncover the "truth" about this "myth."

"The Black Seal" is often published in anthologies as a stand-alone tale although it was originally published as part of *The Three Impostors*, a novel with a complex narrative structure that includes a series of short stories narrated by key players in the meta-narrative. Two amateur sleuths, Phillipps and Dyson, try to uncover the secret surrounding a series of unusual events that take place in London's seedy underbelly. The somewhat convoluted narrative of this novel is not really necessary to the understanding of "The Black Seal," so will not be entered into in any depth, except to highlight the fact that the narrator is a young woman who purports to be telling the story of her life and her association with Professor Gregg, an ethnologist with whose work her listener Phillipps, himself something of an amateur ethnologist, is familiar. She claims to be a "rationalist" and a "sceptic" who has recently experienced events that have caused her to question this stance. Phillipps, who holds strongly to the same principles, doubts that anything could shake his faith in the rational and scientific. Thus the woman who identifies herself as Miss Lally offers to tell him the story of her experiences with Professor Gregg to see whether his "faith" will not be challenged as hers was.

Miss Lally, desperate and homeless, is taken in by Gregg to serve as his personal secretary, assisting him in his ethnological research. Revealing his desire to investigate a series of disappearances, Gregg shows Lally the material clues he has gathered: newspaper cuttings, strange symbols etched in limestone, and an ancient black stone inscribed with the same characters. To further his investigation the Professor moves the family to the site of the disappearances, Caermaen in the West of England, the former headquarters of a Roman Legion (a thinly disguised parallel of Machen's birthplace of Caerleon in Wales).

The reason for Gregg's secrecy is revealed when he confides in Lally that he has been put on guard by the ridicule he suffered from his fellow-scientists, their contempt for the fact he has no "hard evidence" for his theory, "nothing definite [. . .] nothing that can be set down in hard black and white, as dull and sure and irreproachable as any blue-book" (Machen 14). Machen emphasises the scientific criteria for the construction of "truth": material evidence, proof obtained through

empirical means, criteria that a modern audience would at once sympathise with and understand. The reader is assured that "in his ordinary work Professor Gregg moved step by step, testing every inch of the way, and never venturing on assertion without proof that was impregnable" (14). Lally fears her employer may be "cherishing a monomania, and barring out from this one subject all the scientific method of his other life" (15). Gregg locks himself away day after day with his research, seeking to make sense of his mystery and find a way to prove his as yet undisclosed theory.

It is worthwhile to note that neither of Machen's "detectives" are Celtic characters. By emphasising their rationality and scepticism Machen deliberately constructs them as Saxons, without an imaginative and spiritual Celt to act as a contrast. The "heroes" or protagonists of Celtic Revival texts are, as one would assume, typically Celts, in order to highlight their native qualities. That Machen fails to include a truly Celtic character in these stories serves to shift the emphasis away from the spiritual and intuitive towards a rational, Saxon, construction of "truth."

The next link in the chain of this investigation is discovered by Lally: a passage in an old volume by an ancient (fictional) geographer Solinus discussing a stone remarkably like that which Gregg has in his possession. It is here that the first inkling of the "little people" appears. Solinus writes of a group he discovered:

> This folk dwells in remote and secret places, and celebrates foul mysteries on savage hills. Nothing have they in common with men save the face, and the customs of humanity are wholly strange to them; and they hate the sun. They hiss rather than speak; their voices are harsh, and not to be heard without fear. They boast of a certain stone, which they call Sixtystone; for they say it displays sixty characters. And this stone has a secret unspeakable name; which is Ixaxar. (17)

Here the traditions of Celtic mythology become integrated into the story. Solinus's description is reminiscent of many tales of "bad fairies" or goblins reputed to live in caves among the hills. The representation of the "little people" as dark and sinister is certainly not new; in fact the "good fairy" is a relatively recent invention roughly contemporaneous with Shakespeare and Spenser. Many of the typical folkloric tales concerning the Tylwyth Teg involve kidnapping humans, stealing human babies to be replaced with "changelings" of their own, and wreaking revenge upon those who have wronged them.[6] Carole Silver in her fascinating study *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* contends that the abduction and changeling motifs "became a part of assumptions about evolution,

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[6] For discussions regarding the form and nature of Celtic fairy mythology see T. Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folklore and Folk-Custom* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1979); Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1969); and W.Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries.*

race, and class" (86) in Victorian ethnological theories. This is evident in Machen's portrayal of the fairies as racially and culturally "other" rather than simply supernatural beings.

The negative aspects of "fairy lore" such as malevolent abduction and changeling substitution seldom appear in Celtic Revival literature. Though Yeats wrote a number of poems that touch upon these traditional folkloric aspects they are highly romanticised and transformed into something much lighter. For instance the theme of fairies kidnapping children is evident in "The Stolen Child" (1889), yet we are led to believe that "fairyland" would be a much happier and more beautiful existence for the boy where he can "chase the frothy bubbles, / While the world is full of troubles" (lines 21-22), emphasised through the repeated line "the world's more full of weeping than you can understand." Similarly in "The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland" (1893) the fairies are described as "a gay, exulting, gentle race" (line 20), a haunting, dream-like presence in the hills. The poem that comes closest to a negative depiction of the fairies is Yeats's "The Host of the Air" (1899) where they take away a young man's bride, but never do Yeats's fairies, or those of other poets of the Celtic Revival, reach the level of malevolence and ugliness that is depicted in Machen's work.

The way Machen introduces the folkloric matter into this text is also unusual. He presents it not as a "tall tale" repeated verbally by a local storyteller, as was common with the collections of folk tales compiled during the Celtic Revival, but recorded in a written geographical study that readers are more likely to associate with ethnological study than mythology. Machen gives the information more "authority" since it comes from a written source, and presents the description in such a way that the supernatural or magical elements of the traditional folk material are removed. The "little people" are presented as a "primitive" culture, distant from modern European notions of "humanity," a perfect study for an ethnologist like Gregg.

Of course the Professor realises that the "black seal" he possesses is very likely the Ixaxar mentioned, but remains cautious, reminding Lally "It never does to be too sure, you know, in these matters. Coincidence killed the professor" (18). Machen engages the rational faculties of his readers by continually doubting his own evidence, seeming to be on the side of scientific rigour and empiricism. To highlight the importance of empirical observation Gregg begins to study Jervase Cradock, a local, mentally challenged youth, believing he had been fathered by one of the mysterious race from the hills. Jervase is prone to fits, and when in the throes of a seizure, speaks in a strange sibilant language that recalls to the reader Solinus's description. The youth frightens Lally. Indeed she begins to have doubts as to the wisdom of pursuing the investigation, fearing there may be more at work in the mystery than simple ethnological research:

> I was of sceptical habit; but though I understood little or nothing, I began to dread, vainly proposing to myself the iterated dogmas of science that all life is material, and that in the system of things there is no undiscovered land, even beyond the remotest stars, where the supernatural can find a footing. Yet there struck in on this the thought that matter is as really awful and unknown as spirit, that science itself but dallies on the threshold, scarcely gaining more than a glimpse of the wonders of the inner place. (21)

This passage forms something of a summary of Machen's own views regarding the nature of the material world. The notion that the visible world hides a more complex, spiritual reality is identified by Petersen as one of the typically Celtic traits in Machen's work, and we see here how this quality can be applied in a narrative sense. Lally starts to realise that the physical clues collected by Gregg are the keys to a deeper understanding of the world, that the empirical, ethnological research may uncover something that was once believed to be solely the domain of mythology, in other words that they may have discovered irrefutable proof of the euhemeristic theories of the existence of fairies. The catch is that the pre-historic race is not extinct.

The idea that there is something dark and menacing that lies beyond the borders of the known and understood world is not new to Machen. Both *The Great God Pan* and *The Inmost Light* published earlier in 1895 explored this theme, and as Petersen proposes it is "through the Welsh folklore Machen probes the question of whether the spiritual force underlying reality might not be evil" (Petersen abstract). This is a theme alien to typical Celtic Revival texts, which primarily aim to show the good, wholesome aspects of the Celtic world in order to inspire nationalism and racial pride.

Frightened by this new addition to the family circle Lally seeks from Gregg some clue as to his theory, only to be told that his "lips are shut by an old and firm resolve till they can open to utter no ingenious hypothesis or vague surmise, but irrefragable fact, as certain as a demonstration in mathematics" (23). Discussing Jervase's strange language the local pastor asserts the words have no meaning in Welsh, asserting jokingly "if it belongs to any language, I should say it must be that of the fairies – the Tylwydd Teg, as we call them" (24). The irony of the Pastor's statement lies in the fact that although this is the first explicit mention of the "fairies," through the hints provided by the Solinus passage and the descriptions of Jervase's conception the true nature of Gregg's investigation has been implicit in the tale for some time.

That same night Jervase has another fit, the study where the Professor attends to him exhibiting strange signs the next morning, principally a strange smell and unaccountable slimy marks. "I went a long time ago to the Zoo in London [. . .] and

we went into the snake-house to see the snakes, and it was just the same sort of smell" (28) is how one of the maids describes the odd odour, the marks "all sticky and slimy, as if a snail had crawled over it" (28). These explicit connections between Jervase and animals highlight the themes of evolution and de-evolution within the story. Jervase is racially "other" and as such is portrayed as less evolved or as occupying a lower rung on the ladder that mediates between human and animal. The fairies, racially different and perhaps an offshoot from the understood tree of human evolution, have evolved differently or at least at a different rate, and are therefore positioned as possessing a closer relationship with animals than more evolved humans.

Following these puzzling events the Professor takes off to the hills in an effort to secure his "proof," promising to return in two days time. Gregg of course never returns. The tale is concluded with a reproduction of the letter Gregg wrote prior to his disappearance that serves as a kind of denouement of the mystery. It explains Gregg's belief in euhemeristic theories of folkloric origins, how he became "convinced that much of the folk-lore of the world is but an exaggerated account of events that really happened" and how he was "especially drawn to consider the stories of the fairies, the good folk of the Celtic races" (32). Understanding that the traditional stories are much darker and more sinister than modern perceptions of fairies as "prankish" or "mischievous," that in fact folklore often mentions vanishing people, "thin and wizened creatures," and the attendance of witches' Sabbaths, Gregg came to believe that the "fairies" of folklore actually existed, the odd powers attributed to them being "in reality survivals from the depths of being [. . .] the theory of reversion might explain many things which seem wholly inexplicable [. . .] a race which had fallen out of the grand march of evolution might have retained, as a survival, certain powers which would be to us wholly miraculous" (33-34). Here Machen evokes quite clearly contemporary ethnological theories of fairy mythology, explaining their very real presence as due to "survivals" of an ancient race living unmolested, hidden in caves for centuries. Thus the events of the tale are a vindication of both euhemeristic and evolutionary theories.

Gregg's letter also explains how the symbols on the black seal and the rock-face in Monmouthshire detail "how man can be reduced to the slime from which he came, and be forced to put on the flesh of the reptile and the snake" (40), presumably one of the "powers" retained by this race which is an offshoot from humanity. Since the fairies are considered less evolved it is naturally assumed that the distinction between human and animal is less defined for them than for modern Europeans. This reference to "slime" and "snakes" goes towards explaining the odd phenomena surrounding Jervase. A true scientist, Gregg needed the final proof of meeting the "little people" face to face, a desire that ultimately claims his life. The material trappings of his existence, his watch, purse and ring, are all that remain of the scientist, their wrapping bearing the characters of the mysterious race, the "physical" proof of the responsible parties.

Machen comes closest to traditional folkloric aspects when describing the "powers" of the fairies. Though he attempts to explain these as characteristics modern humans have evolved beyond and forgotten, the explanation fails to be truly convincing. The incorporation of snake-like attributes and shape-shifting is difficult to accept without resorting to a "mystical" or "supernatural" explanation that Machen is trying hard to avoid. However he is successful in incorporating the ethnological Pygmy Theory into his version of the "little people" mythology, taking the folklore of his homeland and updating it for a modern audience. By drawing upon popular theories of de-evolution, regression and euhemeristic theories of the origins of folklore Machen situates his fiction within the discourses of contemporary ethnology, providing his readers with a scientific basis from which to approach his tales.

Unlike other writers of the Celtic Revival, in "The Black Seal" Machen depicts the "fairies" as malevolent and "ugly," remnants of a forgotten race rather than beautiful ethereal creatures. Machen continues this theme in a companion piece published later the same year entitled "The Shining Pyramid." This tale features Dyson, Philipps's partner from *The Three Impostors*, a literary man with an interest in logic and detective methods, who is teamed with a new friend and partner in investigation, Vaughan. To create continuity between the texts it is necessary to assume that Dyson has not encountered modern manifestations of the "little people" in his previous investigations, even though this story seems to be placed chronologically after the events of *The Three Impostors* and "The Red Hand," another of Machen's "little people" stories published the same year which also features Dyson. Dyson displays no knowledge of the events he witnessed previously, and as such the events of "The Shining Pyramid" come as a surprise to all involved.

The narrative once again rests upon the solution of a mystery. Vaughan, whose home lies among the ancient woods and hills in the West, tells Dyson of two recent strange occurrences in his neighbourhood, speaking firstly of the disappearance of a local girl, Annie Trevor, under unusual circumstances. She was last seen crossing the hills on foot to visit her aunt, the superstitious townsfolk suggesting she had been "taken by the fairies." In addition to this mystery, Vaughan has noticed some strange things happening on his own property: each day a number of ancient flints are found on a path that runs along the boundary between his property and the woods. The flints are found arranged in a new pattern each morning, resembling rows of people on the first day, a large bowl on the second, a pyramid on the third, and a half-moon had been found that very morning. Dyson agrees to spend some time at Vaughan's home to see if he can shed some light on the phenomena.

Though on the day after Dyson's arrival the flints fail to appear, he discovers a new curiosity: a red Asiatic eye freshly painted on the wall alongside the path. At first the local children are suspected, as the eye is painted rather low down on the wall, but Dyson, with his characteristic rational analysis, points out that the children

in this village would hardly draw an Asian-shaped eye, that in fact they probably wouldn't know what one looks like. This mention of Asiatic features is a reference to what was believed to be the Mongolian characteristics of the ancient Pygmy race. Though this is evident to us reading in the context of late Victorian ethnological theories, it is doubtful whether Machen's original audience would have made the connection between the shape of the eye and modern "scientific" theories of fairy mythology, unless already familiar with MacRitchie's ethnological treatise. This "clue" so early in the text is just one of the ways in which Machen slowly builds up to the revelation of the "little people" at the story's climax.

The following day a second eye appears beside the first, and as surveillance proves no children had been near, Dyson deduces that the same, as yet unknown agency is responsible for both the flints and the eyes. Interestingly then, Dyson hypothesises that the person responsible is someone short who has exceptional night vision, since the markings are always placed in the dead of night. Through his logical, rational nature Dyson is portrayed as pre-eminently Saxon. His powers of observation and logic, along with the existence of material, physical clues, are the tools he uses to understand the world around him. Though said to be a literary man, Dyson is never portrayed as artistic, spiritual or creative. The closest he comes to exhibiting a "Celtic trait" is in his intuitive understanding of the real nature of situations, though it seems this is more the result of exceptional powers of observation than any ephemeral "intuition." As is the case in "The Black Seal" Machen sets up the key figure in the tale as a rational, empirical man, a "Saxon" rather than a "Celt."

The days pass and additional eyes appear on the wall each day. A theory crystallises in Dyson's mind, and he sets off for the hills to see if he can "prove" his conjecture. Ever the empiricist, Dyson must "see" in order to "believe." In a conversation reminiscent of Lally and Professor Gregg, Dyson refuses to explain to Vaughan where he is headed or why, explaining, "I will not bother you with any suppositions. We shall in all probability have something much stronger than suppositions before long" (197). Vaughan must wait until Dyson has obtained some "hard evidence" before he will hazard his ideas. Unlike Professor Gregg, Dyson returns from his ramble with some of the proof he needs, however it is not until there are fourteen eyes upon the wall that Vaughan is mysteriously told that events will come to a head that evening. The two men travel to a place Dyson had noted earlier, a natural amphitheatre among the hills. Hiding themselves, the men eventually witness a horrible ceremony: the "little people," grotesque and obscene, putting Annie Trevor to death on a pyre. The nature of the "fairies" is clearly revealed in Machen's description of the scene in the hollow:

> It did, in truth, stir and seethe like an infernal cauldron. The whole of the sides and bottom tossed and writhed with vague and restless forms that [. . .] seemed to speak to one another in those tones of

> horrible sibilance, like the hissing of snakes [. . .] it was as if the sweet turf and the cleanly earth had suddenly become quickened with some foul writhing growth. [. . .] [Vaughan] saw faintly that there were things like faces and human limbs, and yet he felt his inmost soul chill with the sure belief that no fellow soul or human thing stirred in all that tossing and hissing host. (201)

In the above passage we see once again the comparison between the malevolent "little people" and snakes, as well as a sense of defilement and soullessness emanating from the throng. Once again in Machen's fiction the boundary between man and beast is blurred, suggesting the "otherness" of the fairies and their lower position on the evolutionary ladder.

Thus these beings are truly "other" but not in the ephemeral, spiritual way in which the fairies are usually depicted. Machen's fairies are the flip side of the coin, a host of beings that are savage and brutal, perhaps even "evil" rather than merely "mischievous" or "playful." In the capture of Annie Trevor we see a repeat of the fairy kidnap theme, but are given no understanding that she is going to a marvellous or joyous "fairyland." Annie remains very much in this world until her death, taken to the hidden dens of the foul fairies until her ritual sacrifice.

As is Machen's tendency, immediately following the story's climax the details of preceding events are finally revealed in a post-climactic denouement scene, in this case Dyson explaining his detective methodology, and elaborating upon his "theory." We learn that the images formed by the flints correspond to actual "things" – the bowl referred to the amphitheatre, the pyramid to the pyre and the half-moon to the time when the event would take place. The eyes on the wall were a means of marking the days. Dyson's realisation of these facts came after reflecting on possible connections between the cases of Annie Trevor and the phenomena on Vaughan's property, and remembering the local fairy superstitions. Unfortunately the pyramid symbol was not solved until witnessing the ceremony, by which time it was too late to intervene.

"The Shining Pyramid" is a modern retelling of the folklore of fairy kidnappings with a brutal and terrifying twist. As is the case with "The Black Seal" the key characters display all the stereotypically "Saxon" qualities of rationality and materialism, and the result is not the typical "heroic" and "transcendent" tale of Celtic Revival literature but a sharp and at times grotesque exploration of modern ethnological theories and the possibilities of de-evolution. Questions are raised as to the boundaries between man and beast and the possibilities of parallel evolution. Though Machen utilises the traditional abduction motif the ways in which he explores this theme are firmly grounded in late nineteenth century science.

Why does Machen differ so radically from his contemporaries of the Celtic Revival? The key to this question lies not so much in Machen's personal beliefs, as there is no evidence available that he believed in fairies, pygmy races or otherwise,

but in his Welshness. Machen was not a cultural nationalist. The Welsh were not involved in nationalistic debates to the same extent as the Irish or Scottish, and therefore their aims within the Celtic Revival can be construed as different to those of their brethren. As Jackson stated, the Welsh contribution to the Revival consisted predominantly in a renewed interest in native folklore, in a recognition of their mythological heritage. Machen, who also wrote a number of stories and novels dealing with the mythology of the Grail and the Celtic Church, was concerned with reawakening the old stories for a new, modern generation. To do this he uses the tools of the Saxon rather than the Celt: rationalism, materialism, logic and scepticism, as these were the predominant ideologies of the modern age. His aim was not to glorify the Celt but to keep the mythology alive, and to this end he made use of current ethnological theories to reconstruct a new, scientifically grounded mythology for a modern age.

Machen is not a typical member of the Celtic Revival. Though he makes use of traditional fairy folklore, his "little people" bear little resemblance to those of Yeats and his contemporaries. They are ugly, malevolent and inspire dread in their observers. Impure and defiled, these "fairies" are constructed out of nineteenth century ethnological theories rather than the ethereal Celtic imagination. Nevertheless they do engage the reader's imagination, and, through his suggestions that they may be lurking just out of sight, Machen awakens the fear and dread of the fairies common in ancient Celtic folklore. Machen's tales of the "little people" succeed in making traditional folklore real and current for a modern, sceptical audience, and in doing so he ensured that his beloved Welsh mythology would survive the *fin de siècle*.

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