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‘Goblinlike, Fantastic’: Little People and Deep Time at the Fin De Siècle

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Birkbeck, University of London

I, Emily Fergus, confirm that all the work contained within this thesis is entirely my own.

Abstract

This thesis offers a new reading of how little people were presented in both fiction and non-fiction in the latter half of the nineteenth century. After the 'discovery' of African pygmies in the 1860s, little people became a powerful way of imaginatively connecting to an inconceivably distant past, and the place of humans within it. Little people in fin de siècle narratives have been commonly interpreted as atavistic, stunted warnings of biological reversion. I suggest that there are other readings available: by deploying two nineteenth-century anthropological theories – E. B. Tylor's doctrine of 'survivals', and euhemerism, a model proposing that the mythology surrounding fairies was based on the existence of real 'little people' – they can also be read as positive symbols of the tenacity of the human spirit, and as offering access to a sacred, spiritual, or magic, world.

Although this is primarily a literary thesis, focusing on particular 'weird' texts by Arthur Machen, Grant Allen, John Buchan and Walter De La Mare among others, the subject matter requires considerable interdisciplinarity, particularly in the histories of anthropology and folklore studies. The new sciences of ethnology and anthropology had enabled the study of prehistory but, as the chronology and timescale of human existence became apparent, it also became increasingly opaque and incomprehensible. Dwarfs, in both reality and fantasy, held a series of peculiarly potent positions in the public consciousness throughout the nineteenth century (as 'natural wonders' or horrors, as living fairies or as illustrative of racial degeneration) but towards the fin de siècle they began to be seen more commonly as representative of an early, 'savage' stage of human development.

This thesis argues that attention to these points allows more nuanced and diverse interpretations of the way evolutionary theories influenced late-Victorian Gothic and weird fiction, contributing to recent work that has sought to question and amend the dominant focus on degeneration tropes.

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Introduction

On 6 December 1881, *Punch* published their almanack for the following year. It contained a cartoon called 'Man is But a Worm' by Linley Sambourne that showed the grave and elderly Charles Darwin, who was to die in April, surrounded by creatures illustrating evolution (Fig. 1). The procession starts at the bottom left corner, with the titular worm crawling from the broken remnants of the word 'CHAOS', and progresses in an anti-clockwise direction around his head. The creatures depicted move towards the tailless ape via the reptilian and the long-tailed monkey, until the evolutionary spiral culminates with a dapper gentleman with oiled hair and a boutonnière doffing his top hat to the scientist. The figure of interest to my argument appears just below Darwin's beard and walks between the last obviously simian hominid and the first unmistakably human hominin. It is, clearly, a goblin, a fantastical creature with prehensile fingers and webbed feet, a dwarfish, hairy, pot-bellied body with ungulate haunches, a short-nosed, long-upper-lipped face, jagged teeth and an expression of knowing malevolence. It is an odd and seemingly inexplicable inclusion in what is otherwise an understandable, if inaccurate, depiction of evolutionary progression. This thesis asks why the goblin might be there, and offers an answer in the shape of the theory of fairy-euhemerism that developed towards the end of the century.

I examine the renaissance of the anthropological theory of euhemerism towards the end of the nineteenth century, its establishment as a widespread and widely accepted hypothesis, and its considerable cultural and literary influence. 'Euhemerism' derives from the Sicilian author and philosopher Euhemerus (c. 316 BCE) who maintained that the Hellenic deities were nothing more than deified men: thus euhemerism regards myths as traditional accounts of real incidents in human history (*O.E.D.* 1989). Euhemerism's impact on fin de siècle writings is under-examined and largely forgotten, although it is making something of a return as a geological model under the name of 'geomythology', a term coined by Dorothy Vitaliano in 1968. Geomythology theorises that natural events form the basis of

mythical episodes: the biblical Flood, for example, based on a real deluge, or the destruction of Sodom on an earthquake or volcanic eruption. Euhemerism hypothesises that beings now commonly held to be mythical, such as gods, or fairies, had their origin in real people, proposing that, for example, revered ancestors are deified as gods, and belief in fairies is based on the actual existence of an ancient race of small people. This fairy-euhemerism, the literature it inspired, and the way it affected little people and their place in society and culture is the subject of this thesis.



Fig. 1 (Sambourne 1881: 11)

The fairy-euhemerism that emerged in the last two decades of the nineteenth century re-enchanted the apparently wholly material and biologically inevitable evolutionary process by suggesting that fairies, goblins, or ‘Little People’ were the biological forebears of modern humans. The fin de siècle was a period of dramatic cultural ambivalence, as the booming scholarship on the period that has appeared during the last three decades attests. It was an era of transition, ‘the hinge years’, as Alex Owen called the period (2004: 7); it was also ‘a crucial moment in the formation or transformation’ of a number of debates (Ledger 2000: xiv) as well as a time for ‘working-out... of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection’ (Williams 1971: 165). Euhemerism is one of the key ways in which some late-century Victorians described and understood the contested realms of science and the supernatural, and is a model of integration for those two combative spheres. Rather than the relentless march of scientific modernity laying waste superstitious beliefs about ‘Little People’, euhemerism reveals those little people as real, if ancient. So, rather than superstitious beliefs acting as a thin, increasingly worn, gloss on a mechanistic, material world, euhemerism says that the spiritual world exists as a provable reality, beneath a thin veneer of rational modernity. Euhemerism thus fulfils H. P. Lovecraft’s 1927 criterion as a subject for ‘weird fiction’, that it consists of more than ‘secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains’, and must convey

a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain – a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

(1945: 15)¹

The ‘fixed laws of Nature’ that had hitherto demonstrated that fairies were fictional were challenged by euhemerism’s thesis that not only are fairies real,

¹ I do not intend in this thesis to dwell on ‘weird fiction’ as a genre, tone or mode: this has been much-discussed recently by Vandermeer (2012), Luckhurst (2017) and Machin (2018) among others. However, I agree with Luckhurst that ‘weird’ is best defined, in the words of Veronica Hollinger as ‘an inflection or tone, a *mode* rather than a *genre*’ (Hollinger 2014: 140, qtd Luckhurst 2017).

they are our ancestors. Furthermore, some anthropologists suggested that they may yet exist. The revitalization of the concept of euhemerism during the latter half of the nineteenth century both influenced and was stimulated by activity in a number of academic and cultural fields, including the disciplines of anthropology, evolutionary science and the study of human prehistory. During the 1880s and 1890s it was also highly influential on a number of popular authors, such as Grant Allen, John Buchan and Arthur Machen, whose fin de siècle writings have tended to be designated as representative of gothic or decadent writing, and primarily to embody anxieties about degeneration. Identifying and tracking their engagement with euhemerism shows their fictions in a different light, demonstrating the malleability of euhemerist ideas across a spectrum of fictional genres and modes, a quality largely missed in recent scholarship. To understand why euhemerism established such a hold on the fin de siècle imagination, I will briefly consider here the knotty and contested intellectual environment into which it was launched.

The long and complex debate that had been in progress since the Enlightenment (and, really, long before that) about the competing merits of religious faith and scientific materialism crystallized during the nineteenth century. The confrontation between T. H. Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce in Oxford in 1860 after the publication in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the polemic of John Tyndall's 'Belfast Address' (1874), and books with titles such as *The Warfare of Science* (Andrew White, 1873) and *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (John Draper, 1874) for which Tyndall wrote the introduction (Chadwick 1975: 161), all suggest a well-defined ideological conflict between these two 'mightiest antagonists', science and religion (Lewes 1874: Vol. 1: 2). That there was – and still is – a conflict is not in doubt, but the argument was, as is now generally agreed, more nuanced than these bellicose idioms would suggest. While the extent and intensity, as well as the complications, of the struggle between the two factions have been debated from the beginning, the idea of a simple dichotomy has been comprehensively debunked over the last thirty or so years.² The debate around science and religion is often (perhaps reductively)

² See, for example, Martin Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils* (1972); James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies* (1979); Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle* (1987); Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* (2002); Gowan Dawson, *Darwin,*

characterised as a war between evolution and creation, and although the publication of *Origin of Species* in 1859 is often used as a benchmark, there was, of course, no strict divide in pre- and post-*Origin* thinking. The weight of intellectual debate around science and its relationship to religion is loaded towards the last two decades of the century, perhaps, as James Moore has suggested, because the ‘intellectual climate which fostered religious accommodations’ became widespread only then (1979: 8). So much was at stake that many Victorian scientists tried hard to integrate religious feeling with what they saw as scientific facts and, indeed, held more ambiguous and uncertain views about religion, understanding that humans have a deep psychological need for spiritual belief. Huxley, for example, despite his later claim that ‘extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of science as strangled snakes about that of Hercules’ (1893: 52), coined the term ‘agnosticism’, and wrote an anonymous article in 1864 in which he admitted that ‘[r]eligion has her unshakeable throne in the deeps of man’s nature’ (qtd. Lightman 2001: 345). In 1870 he attempted partly to evade the issue, and partly to placate the church by claiming that it was not the job of the scientific community to issue judgments on faith, and asked why scientists should ‘trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important they may be, we do know nothing, and can know nothing?’ (1870: 159).

Many who might be seen to be on the other side of the argument, so-called ‘Broad Churchmen’, tried to reconcile Darwinism with their own theological beliefs, mostly by means of trying to fit natural selection into the template of acceptable progressive change. Others chose to acknowledge only parts of evolutionary theory, whether Darwinian or Lamarckian. Frederick Temple (1821-1902), ordained as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1896, argued that ‘[t]he fact is that the doctrine of evolution does not affect the substance of Paley’s argument at all’ (1884: 113).³ ‘To conclude,’ he says, ‘the doctrine of Evolution leaves the argument for an intelligent Creator and Governor of the world stronger than it was before. There is still as much as ever the proof of an intelligent purpose

Literature and Victorian Respectability (2007) and Sebastian Lecourt, *Cultivating Belief: Victorian Anthropology, Liberal Aesthetics, and the Secular Imagination* (2018).

³ William Paley (1743-1805) was an exponent of Natural Theology, and most famous for conceiving the ‘Watchmaker Analogy’.

pervading all creation' (122). In a similar vein, the Anglican clergyman George Henslow (1835-1925), a botanist, found evidence of Divine Will in the responsive power of protoplasm. He wrote that 'given but a single speck of living protoplasm, together with its nucleus, nothing more is wanted, from which the whole of the animal kingdom, including man, and the vegetable also, past, present and future, has been, is being and will be evolved' (1904: 272). Thus, he argued, 'if omnipotence be regarded as an attribute of God; then we can see it practically conferred on protoplasm' (ibid.).

Thus from both sides of this ideological divide, strenuous attempts were made to overcome divisions and to integrate the spheres of science and spiritual belief. Many scientists as well as churchmen found creative ways to adapt their thinking to take account of the 'other side', such as the respected American neo-Lamarckian naturalist, Joseph Le Conte (1823-1901), who in 1891 defined the mutations that accelerate evolution as 'naught else than objectified modes of divine thought' (qtd. Moore 1979: 224-226). The 'liberal Catholic' biologist St George Mivart (1827-1900), ended up condemned by both his Church and the scientific community, accused by Thomas Huxley of 'running with the hare and hunting with the hounds', or at least attempting to (Gruber 2004; Huxley, qtd Desmond 1986: 140). Perhaps the most comprehensive of all attempts to reconcile science and theology was developed by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), in his 'System of Synthetic Philosophy'. On the surface, Spencer's System was simple: there exists a logical boundary between the 'Knowable' and the 'Unknowable', the first of which is the province of science, the second of religion. There is, he claimed, no personal, Creator-God, but an impersonal 'Ultimate Cause', imponderable and inaccessible, deaf to prayer and supplication. Spencer published ten volumes on his System between 1862 and 1897 (Harris 2004). As Sebastian Lecourt has noted, the nineteenth century was not so much a period of religious decline as a time during which 'religion's nature and role were being contested in new ways by an ever-wider range of writers' (2018: 27).

Nor was Darwin's theory of natural selection the only evolutionary model available. Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) was a German biologist, naturalist and professor, well known in England, and admired as an evolutionary theorist. A successful populariser of science, according to his biographer, Robert Richards,

'Haeckel would become the foremost champion of Darwinism not only in Germany, but throughout the world. Prior to the First World War, more people learned of evolutionary theory through his voluminous publications than through any other source' (2008: 2). His 'Law of Recapitulation' suggested that the development of an embryo, from fertilization to birth (ontogeny) goes through stages that mirror the development of the species, including those of its remote ancestors (phylogeny). Thus, he claimed, a human embryo transmutes *in utero*, first resembling a polyp, then a fish, salamander, tortoise, chick, hog and, finally, human (Wells 1999: 346). Essentially, the Law of Recapitulation suggests that the human foetus processes all evolution in its gestation: that it is a living demonstration of that process. It inspired more than one episode in the weird writings of Arthur Machen.

In Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) and in *The Novel of the White Powder* (1895), both Helen Vaughan and Francis Leicester are reduced to protoplasmic slime. Helen Vaughan's demise is swift:

The skin, and the flesh, and the muscles, and the bones, and the firm structure of the human body that I had thought to be unchangeable, and permanent as adamant, began to melt and dissolve. I knew that the body may be separated into its elements by external agencies, but I should have refused to believe what I saw. For here there was some internal force, of which I knew nothing, that caused dissolution and change. Here too was all the work by which man had been made repeated before my eyes. I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts from whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the outward form changed.

(Machen 2007: 46)

Helen's final structure, before s/he appears as a nameless 'form', is that of 'a substance as jelly', primeval and protoplasmic (ibid.). Although his final shape is equally amorphous, in 'The Novel of the White Powder' (1895) Francis Leicester's regression takes some weeks, and is initiated by his consumption of an unknown drug, the eponymous 'White Powder' (Machen 2007d: 196-213). Its first physical mark is a 'brand' that appears, about the size of a sixpence on Francis's right

hand. The mark is that ‘of a black fire’ (199-200) and slowly Francis is consumed until he is no more than ‘a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch’ (207).

These episodes, particularly the first, are pivotal for Machen scholars. Various deconstructed as an illustration of speedy degeneration (Eckersley 1992: 283), an ab-human formation (Hurley 1996: 12-14) or a headlong tumble into the bottomless chasm of deep history (Worth 2012: 216), it is easy to see strong connections with all three concepts, all foci of late Victorian anxiety. However, Susan Navarette, in her reading of *The Great God Pan*, suggests that the dissolution of Helen Vaughan ‘embodies a reverse ontogeny’, drawing a direct line of thinking from Haeckel to Machen (1998: 190). Furthermore, I suggest that the ‘slimy, wavering tentacle’ that emerges from the inert body of Jervase Cradock in ‘The Novel of the Black Seal’ (1895), a story I interrogate in Chapter Three, may be interpreted as a phylogenic stage that has, somehow, become disconnected to the ontogenic process. Haeckel’s theory suggests that the deep past, the pre- or ab-human genus of the species is not only surprisingly close – as Machen constantly suggests when his sinister, prehistoric little people crop up in contemporary settings – but actively within the body. Now defunct, Haeckel’s Law of Recapitulation dominated biological research for some fifty years and gave both scientific authority and substance to the uncomfortable idea that modern humanity carries, within each individual, a palimpsest of that individual’s evolutionary past. This was a critical concept in terms of the place little people came to occupy at the fin de siècle.

The 1860s also saw the general acceptance of the notion of ‘deep time’, which stretched Earth’s timeframe immeasurably beyond that of humans, thus compromising the idea that mankind had a special place on earth (Trautmann 1992: 380). *Principles of Geology*, published between 1830 and 1833 by Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875) had already built on previous scientific theories to destabilise Biblical time frames and theological certainties. Lyell evoked something of the sense of universal instability produced by the idea of deep time when he quoted the Scottish geologist James Hutton, who had written in 1785 that ‘In the economy of the world [...] I can find no traces of a beginning, no

prospect of an end' (qtd Lyell 1840: 93). Around the middle of the nineteenth century a handful of sensational discoveries stimulated cultural cognition in such a way that the notion of deep time became a matter for wide consideration and some anxiety. In 1858 the antiquary John Evans, together with the geologist Joseph Prestwich discovered man-made flint tools alongside the bones of extinct animals, such as woolly mammoth, rhinoceros and cave lion in Brixham Cavern (Prestwich 1860: 308-309). The implications of these findings were consolidated the following year when a stone artefact, an axe, was discovered in the same geological stratum as the bones of similarly extinct mammals in a gravel pit near Amiens, placing humans in an incontrovertibly pre-Adamite time frame (Shyrock etc. 2011: 24). In September 1859 these discoveries persuaded Lyell, who had visited the site at Amiens, to make an address to the British Association in Aberdeen in which he acceded to a greatly lengthened human history despite serious misgivings as to its effect on the dignity of humanity as a species (Gamble 2011: 47; Trautmann 1992: 383).

Virtually at the same time as the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, with its insistence on the passage of immense amounts of time required to effect evolutionary change, Hermann von Helmholtz, Rudolph Clausius and William Thompson (later Lord Kelvin) developed their two laws of thermodynamics. The first of these laws declared that the energy of the universe is constant, the second that entropy tends towards a maximum (Gold 2010: 6). Thus, in time, entropy will lead inevitably to the death of the sun, the cooling of the earth and the eventual extinction of all life (Ketagbian 2017: 254). Prehistory became, throughout the course of the nineteenth century, both a subject capable of study via the new sciences of ethnology and anthropology and, as the chronology and timescale of man's existence became apparent, a subject more and more opaque and incomprehensible. In the context of this terrifying temporal vortex, prehistory was unimaginable, both because, as notions of 'the past' became deeper and longer, the idea of a 'beginning' – of the earth, of the universe, of humanity – became less and less fixed or fixable. And because prehistory was pre-human and, like Africa from the perspective of its Western 'discoverers', unobserved and unremembered, it was also unwritten and therefore, in terms of historiography, inaccessible. These dramatic scientific discoveries were cause for existential

concern, especially as the limited nature of human knowledge about and understanding of the natural world, and humanity's place within it, became increasingly clear. Given these multiple blows to the concept of man as 'special', utterly distinct from animal, made by God shortly after earth's creation in order to rule, and thus to the idea of everlasting life, it can seem as if modernity in the form of advances in material science, was bent on extinguishing any kind of spiritual belief, but this was not the case.

Perhaps as something of a reaction to the destabilising effects that these advances in material science had had on traditional religious belief structures, and in an attempt to retain spiritual connections outside accepted Christian orthodoxy, heterodox forms of spirituality began to develop. Spiritualism and mesmerism had been acknowledged for some time, but the Society for Psychical Research was formed in order to bring scientific rigour to the investigation of supernatural claims, interest in which had waxed and waned across the century only in 1882. Helena Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, moved from New York to London in 1885, reviving interest in Eastern religions and philosophies. An interest in paganism developed, with paintings of pagan gods, maenads and priestesses by John Collier, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederick Leighton and Laurence Alma Tadema abounding throughout the 1880s and 1890s (Davenport-Hines 2011).⁴ Paganism was a popular theme in the literature of the fin de siècle as well, from Tess's near-sacrifice at Stonehenge (1891), William Sharp's publication of the *Pagan Review* in 1892 (although it only ran to a single issue), and Machen's novella 'The Great God Pan' (1894), although, as Nicholas Freeman points out, its popularity was less a manifestation of a new belief in pagan religion than an expression of generalised dissatisfaction in contemporary religious and sexual restrictions (Freeman 2005: 23). New routes of access to spiritual and supernatural experience were sought, interest in the occult peaked, and the first temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (of which Machen was, briefly, a member) was established in London in 1888. James George Frazer's 'key to all

⁴ For example, see *Maenads* by Collier (1886), Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* (1877) and his 1882 version of *Proserpine* (the last of the eight he painted), Leighton's *The Vestal* (1882), and Alma Tadema's *Roses of Heliogabalus* (1882) and *A Dedication to Bacchus* (1883) amongst many others.

mythologies', *The Golden Bough* was first published in two volumes in 1890. The 1880s and 1890s also saw a proliferation of literary manifestations of this attraction to exotic and esoteric modes of spirituality and ancient systems of belief, giving rise to the genre now known as Late-Victorian Gothic. Novels such as Henry Rider Haggard's *She* (1886), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) were published to popular, if not always critical, acclaim.

The growth of, and close connection between, the sciences of anthropology and folklore that occurred during the latter half of the nineteenth century, which I examine in Chapter Two, went some way to providing some kind of access to and understanding of the lacuna of the deep past. Little people straddled both sciences and, in both reality and fantasy, held a series of peculiarly potent and alluring positions in the public consciousness throughout the nineteenth century. At the fin de siècle they emerged from the spheres of the sideshow exhibit, medical anomaly and fairy tale, and began to be seen as representative of an early, 'savage' stage of human development. As such, they embodied a very specific set of concerns, and were thought by some to be capable of providing access to what Gillian Beer has called humanity's remote and unreclaimable origins (1989: 12).

Little people appear often in fiction throughout the century, from Scott's *The Black Dwarf* (1816) to Hume's *The Dwarf's Chamber* (1896). They are prevalent in children's literature, of course, but also as hyper-sexualised and threatening figures – Dickens' Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, for example (1840) and Rossetti's little goblin men from 'Goblin Market' (1862). Towards the end of the century, they assume different roles: after the discovery of 'pygmies' in Africa during the 1860s and 1870s, they become representative of 'primitive' humanity, living 'savage survivals'. Africa itself was often figured as primordial, a 'dark continent' with no history, although there were attempts to place the continent and its people within both evolutionary time, and the recently-established lacuna of geological 'deep time' (Murray 2015: 113). It is easy to see how qualities attributed to these pygmy peoples – both factual, such as shortness of stature and their use of 'primitive' weaponry, such as arrows and spears for their ancient methods of hunting, as well as qualities produced by the prejudices of the writer or

by societal biases, such as savagery or childishness – can be conscripted to support the anxious model of degeneration. However, this thesis argues that the appearance in the public consciousness of the idea of ‘deep time’, together with the redevelopment of the anthropological theory of euhemerism which followed, were equally important influences on the way little people were depicted. They became a particularly powerful way of linking to and thinking about the new concept of an unimaginably distant past, and man’s place within it. Fictional representations of these prehistoric little people – effectively British pygmies – were imbued not only with ‘savage’ characteristics, but with access to ancient and mystical power.

However, it would appear that scholars have barely noted the particular and complex role that human stature – or lack of it – plays in the discourse around the issue of deep time, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century. ‘Stunted’, ‘low’, ‘little’, ‘squat’, dwarfs, pygmies or ‘little people’ are, almost invariably, epithets used to describe figures representing prehistoric humanity, in both fact and fiction. Some scholars – notably Aaron Worth in 2012 – have connected the ‘little people’ in the stories of Arthur Machen with notions of deep time and the linked fin-de-siècle anxiety about biological, as opposed to cultural, degeneration, but he does not take note of the importance of the development of anthropological theories, particularly the revival of euhemerism, on Machen’s work or on the way prehistoric humanity is imagined in a more general sense. Carole Silver, in the ‘Little Goblin Men’ chapter of her comprehensive 1999 study of the place and meaning of fairies in Victorian culture, *Strange and Secret Peoples*, explored the complexities of meaning that seem to be embodied in the figure of the dwarf in perhaps the most detailed and imaginative way. However, her focus on the racialization of dwarfs, both real and imaginary, towards the end of the century allowed her to discount other ways in which little people were presented. This thesis aims to reconnect the little people in the work of Machen, Allen and Buchan, amongst others, with the renaissance of euhemerism during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and particularly with the work of the Scottish folklorist, David MacRitchie (1851-1925) whose ideas were crucial to the development of this particular type of weird fiction, and who has largely been forgotten.

MacRitchie published *Testimony of Tradition* in 1890, based on a series of articles he had written for the *Archaeological Review*. MacRitchie's book played a vital role in re-establishing euhemerism as a credible and popular theory of fairy origins, satisfying both the requirements of material science and the desire for the numinous registered by many writers at the century's end. Recognised since the eighteenth century, euhemerism began its nineteenth century iteration in 1803, when Dr James Cririe described it in his book, *Scottish Scenery* (1803: 347-8). It surfaced again in the 1820s in Edgar Taylor's translation of the Grimm brothers' *Kinder und Haus-Marchen* (1823), in the 1830s under the auspices of Sir Walter Scott, who believed the 'duergar, or dwarfs... [to be] originally nothing else than the diminutive natives of the Lappish, Lettish, and Finnish nations' (1830: 120), in John Francis Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, published in four volumes between 1860 and 1862, and in Charles Kingsley's 'True Fairy Tale', 'Madam How and Lady Why', published in *Good Words for the Young* during 1869 and 1870. But it was during and after the 1880s that it took its firmest grip on both the anthropological and literary imaginations. In 1881 Grant Allen published his euhemerist polemic 'Who Were the Fairies?' in the *Cornhill* magazine, followed by two more articles on the same theme ('Ogbury Barrows' in 1885 and 'Cauld Iron' in 1892), and in the same year Dr Karl Blind published 'Scottish, Shetlandic, and Germanic Water-Tales' in the *Contemporary Review*, proposing the hypothesis that mer-people have their origins in Finnish seal-skin boats and the people who sailed them, quoted extensively in *Testimony of Tradition* (MacRitchie 1890: 1-5).

MacRitchie had first come to public attention in 1884 when he published, anonymously, his overblown and ill-received two-volume hypothesis that the original inhabitants of the British Isles were dark-skinned, *Ancient and Modern Britons*.⁵ During 1889 and 1890 MacRitchie published a series of articles in the *Archaeological Review*, later brought together as *Testimony of Tradition*, arranging

⁵ The *Saturday Review* called *Ancient and Modern Britons* 'this large and useless book' (1884: 118), while the *Athenaeum* credited MacRitchie with 'having invented the most absurd of the many paradoxes which have been put forward with regard to the ethnology of Britain' (1884: 138). However, on 7 February 2018 UCL posted that a full reading of the DNA retrieved from 'Cheddar Man', the 10,000-year-old skeleton found near the Cheddar Gorge had revealed that he had 'dark to black skin pigmentation' ('Face of First Brit Revealed' 2018).

and consolidating the work of these and other earlier authorities, and in 1893 *Fians, Fairies and Picts*, by the same author, was published, in essence a 're-statement and partly an amplification' of *Testimony* (MacRitchie 1893b: v). Euhemerism retained its hold on the imaginations of both folklorists and the general population, and it proved to be a hypothesis of remarkable robustness, remaining the most popular explanation of fairy origins until the 1930s. Never quite mainstream, euhemerism was never entirely disproved or dismissed. It thus strikes an unusual balance between the 'emergent' and 'residual', while never quite 'dominant', in terms of Raymond Williams' dynamic cultural concept (1977: 121-7).

Scientific research is necessarily situated at the limits of knowledge. It requires both daring speculation and rigorous testing, unfettered imagination and fastidious caution. It can lead to either 'thriving new territories, or delusive dream countries' (Beer 2017: v) and the scientist will not know which they have achieved until the experiment – which may take years – has been concluded. The limits of what might constitute science were themselves uncertain in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, where this thesis is situated, a landscape where 'disciplines, systems, boundaries, fields, and the constraints of gatekeeping lie alongside overlaps, leakages, struggles, analogies, and fault lines' (Beer 2017: vii). The hypothesis of fairy-euhemerism was situated absolutely at these limits. At the end of the nineteenth century as well as subsequently, 'pseudoscience' has been used as a generic and always pejorative term for many explorations at the margins of what Roger Luckhurst calls 'proper and improper knowledge' (2002: 2). Coined at the end of the eighteenth century – the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives a date of first usage of 1796, referring to 'the fantastical pseudo-science of alchemy' (1915) – 'pseudoscience' implies, as well as the foolishness of those taken in (signalled by that use of 'fantastical') a deliberate attempt at imposture, a connotation given more weight after Karl Popper's declaration that 'falsifiability', rather than verification, should be seen as the ultimate criterion of demarcation between 'real' science and pseudoscience (1992: 18). Now, the lines of demarcation seem much less clear in relation to both scientific and cultural fields. Michael Shermer, in an article for the *Scientific American*, quotes Massimo Pigliucci, the title of whose book, *Nonsense on Stilts: How to Tell Science from Bunk*

(2010) is intended to signal his realist credentials, as acknowledging that ‘the boundaries separating science, nonscience, and pseudoscience are much fuzzier and more permeable than Popper (or, for that matter, most scientists) would have us believe’ (2011: 92).

The term ‘pseudoscience’, when used in this context, also indicates a presentist, Whiggish historicity, implying that all previous pursuers of knowledge, when that pursuit came to nothing or was proved inaccurate, were irrational, foolish, or credulous. However, many – indeed most – were serious and intelligent men and women of standing, determined to make their inquiries in a spirit of scientific rigour. Luckhurst notes that one of the chief attractions of analysing ‘marginal sciences’ has been to ‘question the assumptions behind demarcations of science and non-science’ (2002: 2). He specifies psychical research, but euhemerism might certainly be included among those areas wherein enquirers ‘capitalized on the fissures of scientific naturalism, exploiting uncertainty and transition in knowledges and institutions of cultural authority’ (ibid.). Like telepathy, the theory of indigenous pygmy races in Britain is positioned in the gaps between established fact and theorized possibility, ‘just where confident demarcations between truth and error, science and pseudo-science, could not at that time be determined’ (Luckhurst 2002: 2). ‘Pseudoscience’ is not a helpful term when trying to assess such material. Instead, I approach my subject assuming that its fin de siècle followers were cognitively unimpaired and reasonably rational, and that the theory that fairy tales of ‘Little People’ were based on the ancient existence of a vanished race of dwarfs who were displaced by the arrival of the taller, Celtic or Aryan races was at least *possible* within the scientific and cultural context of the time. To write about indigenous pygmy theory with these contexts to the fore is also always fraught with the issues of race that run through it. Here too though, it is important to keep in mind what Luckhurst calls the subject’s ‘historicized rationality’ (2002: 3) which is necessary in order to see and hear past the subject’s sometimes distasteful expressions and help embed its debates firmly in its late Victorian social, cultural and scientific contexts.

Bearing this in mind, and using little people as the focal point of my thesis, I will show how euhemerism, in its fin de siècle iteration, re-enchanted human

evolution. Max Weber first used the word '*Entzauberung*', or 'disenchantment with the world' in 1917, but since Owen Chadwick warned that we should beware of the term (1975: 258), scholars have argued that the encroachment of modernity, increasing secularization, the decline of religion, and the corresponding growth of scientific materialism did not inevitably indicate the end of the universe as a place of mystery and wonder.⁶ This thesis makes a contribution to that argument, showing that late-nineteenth-century euhemerism adds a distinctive element to modern resistance to the idea of disenchantment at the fin de siècle. Fairy-euhemerism was established during a period of growth for a number of disparate scientific disciplines, specifically contested evolutionary theories, comparative anthropology and folklore studies. At the same time there was a flowering of interest in the availability of heterodox, occult and esoteric spiritual experience, indicating that a desire for these encounters still existed. Euhemerism, by positioning fairies, or 'little people', as human ancestors, embeds magic in biological evolutionary science. And little people, dwarfs, exist both in the material world and in the world of the fairy tale, and so are naturally poised to bridge the two.

My first chapter investigates the roles ascribed to little people across the century and analyses how they engaged contemporary concerns, first as curiosities for public display, or as anomalous subjects of medical scrutiny, then as totems of human evolution and, finally, as wondrous 'discoveries' made on exploratory ventures into Africa. Their biological status was therefore both contested and unstable, locating them first within the sphere of medical science, then within the paradigm of evolutionary taxonomy. Finally, with the discovery of pygmy tribes in Western Equatorial Africa, they were established as a people hitherto believed to exist only in classical myth and found to be real, confirming the status of little people as cognitively binary, existing in both the worlds of reality and fantasy. My second chapter concentrates on euhemerism as a concept. I interrogate the work of Edward Burnett Tylor, to show how the founder of cultural anthropology used folklore and fairy tales to illuminate his work on

⁶ Contributors to this discourse include Chadwick himself (1975), Simon During (2002), Roger Luckhurst (2002), Alex Owen (2004), Joshua Landy and Michael Saler (2009) and Jason Josephson-Storm (2017).

human prehistory, effectively collapsing the boundary between science and fantasy to develop his theory of 'savage survivals'. I argue that euhemerism, through the work of Scottish anthropologist David MacRitchie, positioned Tylor's survivals in a positive light, in contrast to the degenerationist model of the internalised savage extrapolated by scholars such as Stephen Arata (1995), Robert Mighall (1999) and Nicholas Ruddick (2007). MacRitchie applied euhemerist principles to the prehistory of Scotland and the Shetland Isles, positing the ancient Pictish people as the dwarfish forerunners of fairy mythology. MacRitchie's work, alongside that of the Canadian lawyer and anthropologist, Robert Grant Haliburton, who claimed that light-skinned 'Turanian' dwarf tribes still lived in the foothills of the Pyrenees, heavily influenced the work of both Grant Allen and Arthur Machen.

As I have stated, this thesis is primarily literary, and throughout I discuss fin de siècle authors who found the new iteration of euhemerism persuasive. My final chapter concentrates on the fictional portrayal of little people during this period.⁷ I evaluate how euhemerism and euhemerist ideas influenced the way in which little people featured in late nineteenth-century fiction, focusing on the work of Oscar Wilde, Grant Allen, John Buchan, Walter De La Mare and, in particular, Arthur Machen. Wilde's story is an adult fable, his dwarf a tragic hero destroyed by an impossible infatuation; Allen uses a tribe of anachronistic little people to illustrate and fictionalise his quasi-scientific journalism; Buchan casts them as embodiments of vaguely uncanny threat in an adventure yarn, while De La Mare's ghastly 'A:B:O' is utilised to represent a terrifying warning against (perhaps) sexual incontinence, hubristic complacency and overenthusiastic amateur archaeology. I give more weight to Machen because, while all these authors used little people in radically different modes, he connects them with a new and spiritually hopeful way of seeing the world, and in doing so accesses the 'inflationary weird'. This term, coined by Carl Freedman, applies to most modes of

⁷ I have not included the works of William Morris in this thesis. Although three of his novels, *The House of the Wolfings* (1889), *The Roots of the Mountain* (1889) and *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894) all feature short, squat 'Dusky Men', they are not 'survivals' in any sense, but 'Huns'. Their culture reflects Victorian capitalism and thus forms part of Morris's 'socialist myth' saga (Silver 1982: 135-6), intended to reflect political rather than biological evolution.

weird fiction and denotes the suggestion that reality is ‘richer, larger, stranger, more complex, more surprising – and, indeed, “weirder” – than common sense would suppose’ (Freedman 2013: 14). James Machin has recently suggested that some writers, Buchan and Machen among them, tend to use this ‘numinous (or perichoretic, or inflationary) weird to achieve a register distinct from [...] horror’ (2018: 5). Machen’s little people can be terrifying, but they are always revelatory, and are linked to Machen’s notion of ecstasy as ‘a withdrawal from the common life’ (Machen 2003d: 62).

Machen’s concept of ecstasy, a notion with which he was much engaged, diverges from Mircea Eliade’s view of shamanic ecstasy as the abandonment of the body and journey skywards (Eliade 1970: 200, 265). It has more in common with Jules Evans’ definition, a stepping outside of the self, ‘ego-loss’ or ‘ego-transcendence’ (which might be framed as an abandonment of the body) but Evans goes on to assert that ‘[i]n an enchanted world-view, ecstasy is a connection to the spirit-world’ (2017: xii-xv).⁸ It is this ability to connect with the immaterial, the numinous, that Machen’s little people tales most closely represent. Machen employed little people to verify and substantiate his belief that the material and immaterial spheres are indivisible, and that enchantment is to be found in the day-to-day world. This thesis demonstrates the acceptance, popularity and flexibility of the euhemerist hypothesis at the fin de siècle, and aims to account for and demonstrate its influence on some of the authors of early weird fiction.

A note on nomenclature

In America, the preferred term for persons of restricted growth is ‘little people’, or ‘LP’. In England the term ‘restricted growth’ is more frequently used (Adelson 2005a: 216). The relevant national societies reflect these choices, being the ‘Little People of America’ and the ‘Restricted Growth Association’ in the UK (LPA Online;

⁸ Machen wrote many narratives featuring ecstatic experiences, including his prose-poem ‘The Holy Things’, written in 1897 (1924) and his ‘Grail’ stories, *The Great Return* (1915) and *The Secret Glory* (1922). *Hieroglyphics* (1902) addresses ecstasy in literature. See Freeman 2010.

RGA website). While the relevant UK Government website warns against using 'dwarf', classifying it alongside 'midget' as a 'victim word', the RGA use it on their website, and there is a UK Dwarf Sports Association (Department for Work and Pensions, Office for Disability Issues; Dwarf Sports Association UK). The RGA in the UK publishes 'awareness cards' for its restricted-growth members to carry on which is printed:

Preferred terminology for someone with dwarfism is "short stature", "having dwarfism", "little person", or "dwarf". The term "midget" is antiquated, and can be perceived by some as a rude slang word.

(RGA website)

There are, however, problems with all these labels, perhaps simply because that is what they are. In Europe and New Zealand the term 'dwarf' is disliked by some because of its fairy-tale or fantastic associations, but in America the term seems to be universally used and widely accepted as an accurate medical description (Adelson 2005a : 216-7). Equally, in America the expression 'little people' is disliked by some, despite the title of the national society, for the same reasons as 'dwarf' – because it suggests fairies. 'Midget', however, is universally shunned as 'the "m" word' (Adelson 2005a: 217). I use the terms 'dwarf' and 'little people' in this thesis to describe both the real and the fantastic, only using 'midget' if directly quoting from an outside source.

Chapter 1

Little People in the Nineteenth Century: the ‘Sicilian Fairy’, the ‘Aztec Twins’ and ‘Stanley’s Pygmies’

In this chapter I argue that during the latter part of the nineteenth century the role dwarfs played in the cultural and scientific spheres changed as evolutionary concerns and anxieties began to be projected onto the bodies of little people. This projection particularly affected the areas of taxonomy and scientific research while, by the end of the century, the ancient and volatile place of little people on the borders of the natural and supernatural worlds was both complicated and entrenched. Dwarfs had always been regarded as liminal creatures in terms of species: kept as ‘pets’ by royal households throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Richardson 2002: 22), they were frequently exhibited throughout the nineteenth in circuses and shows alongside ‘freaks’ described in cross-species terminology such as the ‘Lobster-Claw Lady’ or the ‘Leopard boy’ (Durbach 2010: 8). It is generally agreed that it was in the course of the nineteenth century that little people, alongside other anomalous bodies, became not only monstrous spectacles for the popular gaze but the subjects of scientific interest.⁹

The meaning of little people as cultural symbols of evolutionary biological classification was constantly remodelled, and characteristics ascribed to them modified throughout the nineteenth century. Originally published as *Captain Lobe: A Story of the Salvation Army* (1889), Margaret Harkness’s *In Darkest London* (1891) exemplifies many of the modes relating to the roles little people played in the cultural contexts of the nineteenth century. ‘Midget’, a sideshow dwarf who is a minor character in the text, is presented as a ‘performer’ of the monstrosity of anomalous size, as a ‘missing link’, as non-human and almost-human, and as an object of both horror and pity. ‘Do you think I’ve got a soul, or do you think as there’s no soul in midgets?’ he asks of Captain Lobe of the

⁹ See Durbach 2010: 22; Sweet 2001: 144; Thomson 1996: 2.

Salvation Army, one of his only visitors as he lies, sick, in a props cupboard behind the stage on which he will perform as 'Napoleon' (2009: 14). Whether or not dwarfs could be categorized as quite human, formulated as possession of a soul in Harkness's text, was a question much discussed. However, by 1889 the humanity of dwarfs was less of an issue than their evolutionary position – Harkness's 'Midget' also believes himself to be "the missing link" (ibid. 15). The text's change of title is in itself significant: the new edition, published in 1891, was re-titled *In Darkest London* to echo William Booth's *In Darkest England* (1890), which in turn echoed Stanley's *In Darkest Africa* (1890), the book which 'made the Pygmies front page news' (Silver 1999: 129). Stanley's 'discoveries', alongside the travel narratives of Paul Du Chaillu and Georg Schweinfurth, changed the perceived status of little people as a 'race' from Homeric myth to African reality.

As I have indicated, during the first half of the nineteenth century the debate focused on whether or not little people were entirely human, while in the second half of the century the argument shifted to consider where exactly on the evolutionary scale they might be properly placed. The vastly increased geological and evolutionary timescales discovered in the 1850s and '60s changed understanding of man's chronological place in the world. Dwarfs, or pygmies (there is little distinction between the two throughout the nineteenth century) became part of an ontological shift in understanding, an attempt to comprehend that vastness by transforming the familiar biblical account into a human-focused evolutionary narrative driven by *time* rather than species.

Throughout these shifts in meaning, however, little people never entirely lost their footing in the supernatural world. By the end of the century, dwarfs form a connection to an unfathomably ancient and unreadable human prehistory, to the relatively new theory of evolution, and to the occluded, perhaps lost, world of myth and fairy tale. Both familiar and unfamiliar, the bodies of little people, especially when viewed in the light of the temporal reconfigurations of deep history, fulfil Freud's synopsis of the uncanny as 'that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar', in this case two things: human prehistory and folklore (1919: 1-2). Because they are impossible to categorise, taxonomically or rationally, little people are seen also as abject figures, models of 'what disturbs identity, system order... the in-between, the ambiguous,

the composite' (Kristeva 1982: 4). Dwarfs thus come to embody the 'general anxiety about the nature of human identity' that powered late Victorian gothic fiction (Hurley 1996: 5).

Dwarfs were of considerable interest to the medical profession throughout the nineteenth century as they figured amongst the 'anomalies and curiosities' of medicine (Adelson 2005: 122). Indeed, Rosemarie Garland Thomson argues that science 'officially enunciated teratology as the study, classification, and manipulation of monstrous bodies' only in the nineteenth century, although they had been foci of interest and curiosity since antiquity (1996: 2). Although predominantly medical in the first decades of the century, scientific interest in the bodies of dwarfs broadened in the course of the latter half to acquire a more ethnological and anthropological bent. As spectacle, there was little differentiation between achondroplastic dwarfs, proportionate dwarfs and members of smaller-than-average peoples, such as the San couple exhibited as 'earthmen' in the 1840s (Wood 1868: 250-1). Scholars generally agree that dwarfs were subjected to increased racialization after the development of the 'science' of race, which in Britain was most associated with the writings of Charles Hamilton Smith and Robert Knox during the 1840s and 1850s (Brantlinger 2003: 37). The commonly held perception of dwarfs' 'otherness' – particularly when those on display were non-white – modelled them as illustrative foci of the effects of degeneration. This racialization was exacerbated by the discovery of pygmy peoples in the 1860s, 70s and 80s, which intensified the identification of little people as representative of 'primitive' man (Silver 1999: 128-134; Durbach 2010: 130-134). While these representations are no less mistaken or distasteful than earlier patterns, by the end of the century little people were at least considered undeniably human.

However, it was not until the re-birth of euhemerism during the last two decades of the nineteenth century that the idea of a prehistoric, British aboriginal dwarf race became popular. Little people throughout the century had been ascribed numerous gothic qualities: they were physically anomalous and thus uncanny; the reasons for their appearance were unknowable, their genesis therefore occluded; and they were both exhibited as grotesque spectacles, and hidden away from sight for the same reason. Their imagined position on the

borderline between reality and fantasy was already well established, and the creation of the new science of anthropology – and the rebirth of euhemerism in particular – attempted to rationalise that position. This muddied the already clouded waters of the science/fiction interface in a very particular way by intensifying the thrill of much late-century gothic fiction, for example, by implying the existence of a basis of fact – or at least of the possibility of fact – underlying the fantasy. As a result, while little people appeared to retain their natural/supernatural marginality throughout the nineteenth century, the rules that governed that position had changed. As well as real dwarfs being imagined as fantasy creatures – Caroline Crachami presented as the ‘Sicilian Fairy’, a case I examine later in this chapter, for example, or Charles Sherwood Stratton (1838-1883) who, like Harkness’s dwarf’s portrayal of ‘Napoleon’, performed under the name ‘General Tom Thumb’ – fairies could be imagined as real, albeit prehistoric, people. Euhemerism as an anthropological concept was widely accepted for many decades, and cemented the twin roles of little people as anachronistic examples of savage forebears and as intermediates between this world and the supernatural. Dwarfs’ multiple and complex qualities inspired many writers of fin de siècle gothic, adventure and weird fiction.

In this chapter I interrogate the substantial modifications in the position of little people that occurred throughout the nineteenth century in the areas of taxonomy and scientific interest by investigating examples of the presentation of little people to the public both before the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859, and afterwards. Although *Origin* was not directly influential, it loosely marks the point at which the theme of evolution and its impact on the scale of geological time became a concentrated scientific and cultural concept. The first period, marked by a shift between the identification of little people as not quite human and little people as examples of racial degeneration, I will illustrate by contrasting the presentation of Caroline Crachami, the ‘Sicilian Fairy’ who died in 1824 with that of Maximo and Bartola, the ‘Aztec Lilliputians’ who were exhibited from 1853 until the end of the century. I will then examine the impact made by the publication of the accounts of pygmy tribes discovered in Africa by the explorers Paul Du Chaillu in 1867 and Henry Morton Stanley in 1890, and provide a brief assessment of the effect of Du Chaillu’s suspected unreliability on the

carefully-policed borderline between scientific exploration and adventure fiction. I will also demonstrate how these factual accounts are constantly contaminated by fantastical elements, placing little people always in a liminal space between the real and the unreal worlds. Du Chaillu's and Stanley's writings began the process of categorising pygmies as examples of 'primitive man', embodiments of the anthropological concept of 'savage survivals', thus providing a living link to mankind's deepest past. These writings are notable not only for their content and subject matter, but for their literary style which contains many gothic elements, but which also communicates a sense of awe and admiration at the tenacity and longevity of these pygmy peoples. Finally, I will briefly introduce euhemerism, with its proposal of a prehistoric, indigenous, British dwarf race. A full account of the development of euhemerism and its grounding in the earlier hypothesis of 'savage survivals', will be the topic of my next chapter.

Before Darwin: the science of little people

By turns presented as a fairy, her birth attributed to animal interference, and her dead body snatched for dissection by the medical fraternity, Caroline Crachami exemplifies the complex combination of the three cultural contexts little people inhabited during the early nineteenth century.¹⁰ Only nine years old and fifty centimetres tall when she died in 1824, Crachami was known as both 'the Sicilian Dwarf' and 'the Sicilian Fairy' (Durbach 2010: 39). Her condition was commonly ascribed to her mother being bitten on the hand by a monkey in the third month of her pregnancy (Dobson 1955: 268), so her small size was at least in part ascribed to bestial intervention. When he first saw Caroline Crachami exhibited in April 1824, the anonymous author of the 'Sights of London' column in the *Literary Gazette* enthused that 'unless I had seen the Sicilian Dwarf with my own eyes, I could not have credited so extraordinary a variety in human nature' (253).

¹⁰ Copiously discussed by her contemporaries, Crachami has also been the subject of recent studies, focusing on the politics of embodiment (Youngquist 2003), freakshows and British culture (Durbach 2010) and the tension between the visual and the tactile in the sexualization of the female body (Stephens 2011).

Despite placing Crachami 'in human nature', the author proceeded to destabilise that placement:

To see rationality, sportiveness, intelligence, all the faculties of humanity, in a being so inconceivably below the standard at which we have ever witnessed them... we doubt the evidence of our own senses.

(*'Sights of London'* 1824: 253)

Her effect on the viewer is deeply unsettling. So astonishing is her appearance that he cannot quite believe what he is seeing: she challenges both logical expectations and rational inquiry, 'the evidence of our own senses' (253). Her size so flouts the expected categories of humanity that she cannot be classified as such. She is, as well as being 'inconceivably below the standard' generally required, somehow not quite real: a 'tolerable sized doll', a 'creature', 'perfect in all parts and lineaments, uttering words in a strange unearthly voice' – here 'is the fairy of your superstition in actual life... the pigmy of ancient mythology brought down to your own day' (253). Noting that 'the expression of her countenance varies with whatever affects her mind', the columnist's astonished admission that 'on my faith, there is a mind and soul in this diminutive frame!' highlights that neither is expected. Despite 'a little of the simia' in her features, a somewhat tottering walk and that 'very remarkable' voice, she is otherwise 'perfect'. She displays human characteristics, likes wine and finery, and objects to being caressed and 'saluted' by the author, although she has been most offended, perhaps unsurprisingly, by the attentions of doctors, who have insisted on 'examining her too minutely'. Her health is good and her limbs complete. The single aspect that makes her utterly remarkable is her very small size – 'about nineteen inches in height and five pounds in weight' (*'Sights of London'* 1824: 253). It is as if the 'performance' of humanity is perfect, but her diminutive dimensions make the whole incredible.

This article expresses the contradictions evident in many early nineteenth-century attempts to describe and categorize little people with regard to their humanity: Crachami is a 'doll'; she is also a mythological pygmy; she possesses the entirely human qualities of pride, vanity and temper; there is something 'of the simia' in her features, which implies a strong, non-human connection with the

animal world; and finally, she is a fairy, delightful, extraordinary, and unclassifiable. On June 10th she died, after being exhibited as usual and receiving ‘upwards of 200 visitors’ (‘Obituary – Miss Crachami’ 1824: 92). On her death, her grieving father was forced to pursue her corpse around London, finally running it to earth at the Royal College of Surgeons, where he received a cheque for ten pounds and left distraught (‘The Sicilian Dwarf’ 1824: 3). The *Gentleman’s Magazine* expressed a remarkably detached ambivalence over this, with familial affections failing to count much against the requirements of medical research, noting that ‘putting [Crachami’s father’s] paternal feelings aside, it certainly was a fit subject for anatomical study’ (‘Obituary – Miss Crachami’ 1824: 92). ‘The great wonder’ the obituarist went on, was that a creature like this should possess all the physical, moral, and

intellectual attributes of perfect humanity. It staggered the inquiring mind to contemplate her; and one could not help revolving the strange doubts which arose — Is there here in this pigmy production of nature, which we can merely say belongs to the highest order of creation, responsibility of action, principle, soul, and immortality?

(‘Obituary – Miss Crachami’ 1824: 92)

Boundaries between species were a contentious area, and of critical importance at the time of Crachami’s exhibition in 1824. Since the turn of the century, and for some decades thereafter, there existed a ‘general anti-evolutionary reaction’ in British thought, which had developed as a delayed response to the shock of the French revolution and its implied threat to the foundations of European civilization (Stocking 1987: 42). The borderline between man and animal went through a period of being anxiously policed, to the extent that the 1793 evolutionary writings of Erasmus Darwin, deistic though they were, were reviled, and even the old idea of the Great Chain of Being fell from favour, as allowing too much blurring of taxonomical distinctions (ibid.). Anxiety over the issue had been compounded by the publication, in 1819, of a work by William Lawrence entitled *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man*. Lawrence was a materialist and an anti-Vitalist, and the lectures he delivered to the Royal College of Surgeons made clear his uncompromising devotion to the

rigor of independent scientific research, uninfluenced by any transcendent or theological hypotheses (Holmes 2008: 312-3).

When published, his *Lectures* inspired the *Quarterly Review* to deliver an excoriating appraisal:

[What] is it that Mr Lawrence [...] modestly requires us to believe? That there is no difference between a man and an oyster, other than one possesses bodily organs more fully developed than the other! [...] Mr Lawrence considers that man, in the most important characteristics of his nature, is nothing more than an orang-outang or an ape, with “more ample cerebral hemispheres”!

(Abernethy 1819: 14)

By no means an early promoter of evolutionary theory, Lawrence was concerned only with establishing the position of humanity in zoological classification, by means of comparative physiology, but such was the pressure from medical institutions, Lawrence finally withdrew his *Natural History of Man* from publication (Holmes 2008: 336). Caroline Crachami’s little body did not quite fit into the prescribed matrix of what was acceptable in order to qualify as an entirely human being. Certainly in the view of both the *Literary Gazette* and the *Gentleman’s Magazine* she displayed all the physical attributes of humanity in terms of number and quality of limbs, expression, response to stimuli, and intellectual ability. The fundamental question both ask – as does ‘Midget’ nearly seventy years later – is whether or not she has a soul, a question which proved to be unanswerable. However, it was critical, as possession of a soul clearly defined a body as human, thus making taxonomical distinctions satisfactorily evident.

Taxonomically contradictory, her status as human undecided, Crachami was consistently objectified. The *Morning Chronicle’s* obituary writes about her death and its gruesome consequences in a manner which is apparently sympathetic, yet emphasises the gothic and melodramatic qualities – gruesome horror, incipient insanity, a sinister villain – of the event. The article describes the arrival of Miss Crachami’s father from Ireland, who having made his ghastly and futile tour of various ‘private places of anatomy’ and public hospital morgues searching for his dead daughter, eventually came to the house of Sir Everard Home, first president of the Royal College of Surgeons and founder of the Hunterian Museum (Coley

2004). Having refused to buy the body himself from her manager, a Mr Gilligher – or possibly Dr Gilligan (Dobson 1955: 269) – and appalled by the unexpected appearance of ‘the dwarf’s’ father’, Sir Everard immediately issued an order allowing him to see the body which he had presented for dissection to the Royal College of Surgeons, and gave him a cheque for ten pounds. Arriving in Lincoln’s Inn Fields ‘in a state bordering on insanity’, Mr Crachami found ‘the body of his darling progeny mangled in the most dreadful manner’ (‘Miss Crachami’ 1824: 3). Notwithstanding its mangled state, ‘he clasped the corpse in his arms in a manner that excited the feelings of all present’ (ibid.). The sinister Gilligher, on the other hand, ‘has not since been heard of’, although it seemed known that he had fled to France with the money (‘about 1500l.’) he made from exhibiting the child (ibid.). In this article, with its staged events which unfold like the scenes in a play, and its use of the heightened, gothic, histrionic language of penny dreadfuls, the body of the Sicilian Dwarf is objectified as the inanimate focus of a gruesomely melodramatic and inescapably theatrical gaze. Placed in the position of audience, the reader sympathises with Miss Crachami’s father, despises the wicked Gilligher (or Gilligan) and is shocked and revolted by the dissection of the little body, an object of both medical and prurient fascination.

Equally objectifying, another obituary in the ‘Literary and Scientific Intelligence’ section of *La Belle Assemblée* focuses almost entirely on her proportions. Her height, the length of her foot and finger, and the circumference of her head, waist and wrist are all exactly related, and while she is described as a ‘delicate little creature, whose conformation was nearly perfect’, the dreadful aftermath of her death is summed up in a single, uncritical, impenetrable sentence: ‘The body was clandestinely conveyed by the person who had the charge of her to the College of Surgeons’ (1824: 42). Lacking the hyperbole of the *Morning Chronicle* piece, as well as its sense of outrage, the Sicilian Dwarf is here dehumanised and reduced to a set of measurements. There is no sense of her being anyone’s ‘darling progeny’, her body remarkable only for its miniature dimensions. Once again an object of scientific interest, here by measurement rather than dissection, the press’s treatment of Crachami concentrates on her status as a taxonomical and medical puzzle. Her tiny size demands that her humanity be questioned, while her corpse is reported both as the focus of a

human tragedy and a legitimate scientific curiosity. She is, in the twenty-first century, still fulfilling the role of scientific curiosity – her skeleton can be seen today in the Hunterian Museum alongside (for greater comparison) that of Charles Byrne, the ‘Irish Giant’.

In contrast, the media coverage of Maximo and Bartola, the ‘Aztec Lilliputians’ (see Fig. 2), illustrated the role that dwarfs began to play in the evolving ethnological and anthropological discourse of ‘race’, with its connotations of degeneration, miscegenation and the ‘inevitable’ disappearance of the ‘dark races’ of man (Brantlinger 2003: 44). Although associated most often with Robert Knox’s work, *Races of Men* (1850), it was a work entitled *Natural History of the Human Species*, originally published in 1848, by Charles Hamilton Smith (1776-1859), historian, zoologist and friend of Cuvier (Jackson 2008) which best illustrates how the Aztec children were discussed and viewed at the time. While James Cowles Prichard (1786-1848), early pioneer of British ethnology, ascribed the extinction of ‘savage races’ to the relentless process of colonization (Brantlinger 2003: 36), Smith attributed their destruction to miscegenation. His theory stated that there were three primary ‘types’ of man: the ‘woolly-haired, tropical type’, the Mongolian, beardless ‘type’, and the bearded Caucasian (Smith 1852: xv/xvi). Aboriginal American races (with the single exception of ‘Esquimaux’ whom he classified as Mongolian) are all abnormal, ‘intermediate races of man’ – in other words, the product of different racial configurations due to waves of immigration, conquest and ensuing miscegenation (120). Thus, they are ‘not a typical people, but [...] stems occupying debatable ground, which we have before shown are alone liable to annihilation [...]’ (238). He argues that, while these ‘intermediate varieties’ of mankind may flourish for decades or even centuries, if they become isolated, their eventual extinction as a result of infertility is inevitable (Brantlinger 2003: 37). Such degeneration is the proposed fate of the ‘Aztecs’, Maximo and Bartola.



Fig. 2 ('Maximo and Bartola' c. 1850 Beckers and Piard of New York)

It is important to establish here that this pre-Darwinian theory of degeneration is quite unlike the theories of the same name that developed towards the end of the century. The mid-century discourse concentrated on the idea of the inevitable extinction of so-called 'primitive' races of man, and did not query the possible degeneration of 'civilized' man, a central anxiety of the fin de siècle mode.¹¹ Mid-century degeneration theory was concerned solely with examining newly-discovered, or newly-accessible, primitive aboriginal cultures who were believed to be 'dying out', and assigning reasons for that decline. Whether founded on natural history, economics or the nascent science of anthropology, these degeneration discourses supported a view of savagery as a Hobbesian, anarchic

¹¹ This topic has been thoroughly interrogated by contemporary scholars such as Daniel Pick in *Faces of Degeneration* (1989), Judith R. Walkowitz in *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992) and Kelly Hurley in *The Gothic Body* (1996).

state of nature (Brantlinger 2003: 18). In turn, this model allowed predominantly white, western anthropologists to view those remote 'savage' races as anthropological objects. The development of 'scientific racism' by anthropologists such as Prichard, Smith and Knox, enabled – and encouraged – that perspective.

As 'Aztecs', Maximo and Bartola typify the inevitability of the decline of these 'intermediate races' (Smith 1852: 119, 121, 123), but they are also dwarfs, who, along with 'giants', lead Smith's catalogue of 'abnormal races of man' (ibid. 34). Smith makes direct reference to the liminal position of dwarfs in terms of reality and imagination, noting that some instinct of self-preservation has made dwarfs, in the regions in which they still exist, 'miners, metallurgists, smiths, and architects', the traditional employments of the dwarfs of fiction and fairy-tale. He claimed that they often preferred to live in 'woods and fastnesses', driven out by taller and stronger conquerors, and these qualities, 'in conjunction with retiring, defensive habits, have, in every region, conferred upon them mystical properties, generally marked in legends by more excessively reducing their stature' (Smith 1852: 140). This is a fundamentally euhemerist reading of the easy shift between fact and fantasy that seems to shadow little people in the nineteenth century. However, in the case of the so-called 'Aztec Lilliputians', their stature was most commonly read as evidence of the degeneration of their race, and the great public interest they instigated was credited to their position as the last survivors of an extinct – and hitherto undiscovered – people.

Exhibited first some three decades after the death of Caroline Crachami, and only two years after the Great Exhibition, during 'a crucial and triumphant moment in Britain's imperial self-fashioning' (Durbach 2010: 115), Maximo and Bartola were shown in drawing rooms and galleries, presented to the Queen, and to the recently established Ethnological Society.¹² Richard Owen was so intrigued, he collected photographs of them throughout their long career, but the marketing of these children to the general public, which focused on their origins, added a new aspect to these 'Aztecs' in particular and to little people in general (Durbach 2010: 116-7). They represented, according to the *Times*, 'a new type of humanity,

¹² Coincidentally, when Maximo and Bartola were first presented to the British public in 1853, they were also taken to the Royal College of Surgeons to see Crachami's skeleton and were 'much struck' with it (*Lancet* 1853, qtd. in Durbach: 11).

only three feet high, without the deformities of ordinary dwarfs... the last of that ill-starred race [the Aztecs]' ('The Aztec Lilliputians' 1853, *Times*: 8). The *Literary Gazette* reported on their presentation to the Ethnological Society, where Professor Owen read a paper on them which was followed by a lively debate amongst those present 'as to the probable race to which the children belonged' ('The Aztec Lilliputians' 1853, *Literary Gazette*: 674-5). The children were shown as examples of the inevitable extinction of 'primitive' races, their smallness of stature 'accounted for by a well-known cause of degeneracy – namely, a prohibition against marriage with strangers or with members of an inferior caste' (ibid.). The Aztecs are here proposed by the *Gazette* as a model of Smith's inevitable 'prospective extinction' of all the American races when isolated (Smith 1852: 258-9).

Initially, the *Gazette* proposed that this degeneracy had not affected their intellect, as far from 'having any idiotic or cretinised look', the children displayed 'liveliness and intelligence' ('The Aztec Lilliputians' 1853, *Literary Gazette*: 675). A week later, this reading of their bodies and behaviour was challenged, in the same publication, by Owen's further thoughts on the children. He concluded that they were of 'inferior intellectual condition', and 'not the representatives of any Aztec or other Indian race, but accidental instances of arrested growth and development of particular individuals, either of pure Spanish Mexican origin, or with some slight admixture of Indian blood' ('Professor Owen on the Aztec [?] Children' 1853: 695). Again, in the *Literary Gazette*, a contributor concurred that they were 'of white race', and only differed from others 'in being denied a full physical as well as mental development' ('Judge Kennedy on the Aztec [?] Children' 1853: 695-6). In a letter to the *Times* of 19 July 1853, Joseph Morris and John Henry Anderson who had brought Maximo and Bartola to London and who styled themselves 'The Guardians of the Aztec Lilliputians', countered by stating that 'Professor Owen, the first comparative anatomist of the age... concurs with the learned physicians of Charleston, South Carolina' that the children are human and that they are 'not dwarfs'. However, they disagreed with Owen's amended judgement, and insisted that the children were 'placed before the public as examples of a race of people hitherto unknown – a race unlike in form and feature all the modern inhabitants of the earth'. Furthermore, 'this race which in past

ages has held a high position among mankind... [is] a race now becoming extinct' (Morris 1853: 8).

The debate carried on throughout the summer of 1853, always centred on race and degeneration, and in particular on Maximo and Bartola as examples of an aboriginal American race, of whom Knox had written that 'extinction of the race – sure extinction – it is not even denied' (1850: 153). *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, while disbelieving the overblown story of their rescue by a San Salvadorian merchant from the mysterious city of Iximaya where they were kept imprisoned and worshipped by guardian priests, was prepared to accept that they were 'specimens of the ancient Mexican people' ('The Aztec Children' 1853: 111). The *Leisure Hour* posited that the hypothesis that they represented a race of people hitherto unknown was supported by some physical anomalies. Apart from their small stature, the front teeth 'do not meet, but those of the lower jaw strike against the palate' and their ears were set higher up on the side of the head than is usual ('The Aztec Children' 1853: 596). *Household Words*, however, ridiculed not only the story of their capture, but the possibility that they represented the remnants of an ancient race of humanity. 'They are, doubtless, a couple of dwarf children, bought from Indians, and made into a show', sneered the editorial, and excoriated both the entrepreneurs who displayed the children and the credulous public who paid to see them ('Lilliput in London' 1853: 576).¹³

Notwithstanding *Household Words*, it was the racial degeneration reading of the Aztec children that dominated. Little people were no longer taxonomically distinct from humanity, but Maximo and Bartola were used as models of the results of the isolation of 'primitive' cultures and the resultant miscegenation. In 1855, Knox wrote an article about them for the *Lancet* in which he ascribed to the children the quality of being representations of the ancient Aztec race by means of what he by then called 'interrupted descent' (1855: 358). He had first posited this theory in *Races of Men* (1850), in which he suggested that 'the influence of one parent extends to an unknown number of generations... reappearing

¹³ Maximo and Bartola probably suffered from microcephaly, an unusual condition caused *in utero* by malnutrition, exposure to toxic substances or, most often, by infections caught during pregnancy. The recently-discovered Zika virus, borne by mosquitoes, is one such cause (Facts About Microcephaly 2019).

occasionally after the lapse of a century' (111-2). He illustrated his thesis by noting that 'in one of the noblest families in Britain there is an admixture of dark blood, which reappears from time to time' and remarking on a family in Berwickshire 'in whom the dark blood shows itself from time to time, after more than a hundred years' (112). The idea of qualities – inevitably unwanted – transferred by means of an occluded blood-taint was a powerful influence on much later gothic fiction, such as *Carmilla* (Le Fanu 1872) and *Ollala* (Stevenson 1885).

Contra Morris and Anderson, Knox asserted that the Aztecs from whom Maximo and Bartola were descended were not only few, but extinct. Their distinguishing racial features, 'a remarkably convex outline of face, small cranium, and retreating chin' were due to a resurgence of blood from the ancient American races, which, although sometimes quiescent for centuries, could reappear without warning (1855: 359). Knox here implied that Aztec blood, like 'Jewish, Negro, or Gipsy blood, once mingled with another race, seems never to disappear' (ibid.). Inclined towards a polygenist view of human evolution and no subscriber to the progressionist argument, Knox argued that fundamental physical and mental inequalities between the races mean that progress is far from inevitable, and that, in most cases, fairer, stronger races enslave or exterminate darker, weaker races of men (1850: 28).¹⁴ Here, he sounds a warning note, through the anomalous bodies of Maximo and Bartola, about the degeneration of those 'intermediate' races, and the eternal dangers of miscegenation.

Maximo and Bartola were married in London in 1867 with a wedding breakfast given for them by their guardian, Mr Morris, in Willis's Rooms in King Street, the *Morning Post* describing them as 'the most amiable creatures belonging to the lower scale of humanity' ('Marriage of the Aztecs' 1867: 3). The sibling status on which basis they had been previously exhibited was ignored for the most part, although the *British Medical Journal* found the marriage regrettable and disgusting because of the likelihood that the two would 'perpetuate a race of... unhappy deformities' ('The Aztecs' 1867: 62). The *Journal* did not establish whether this was on the grounds of their fraternal relationship, or on the grounds

¹⁴ For contemporary views on this theory, see Stocking 1987: 65 and Brantlinger 2003: 39.

that they were representative of a degenerated people, but as the Aztecs were assumed to have degenerated because of their isolation, and thus their habit of marrying close relations, perhaps that was not important. They returned to England quite often after their first great success, in 1855, 1867, 1870 and 1876, then again in 1889. Their last known appearance was in 1893 (Durbach 2010: 116).

The press coverage of the 'Aztec Children' throughout the many decades of their long careers demonstrates how fantasies of race, and in particular of racial degeneration, were focused on Maximo and Bartola, in contrast to the human/not human debate which centred around the little figure of Caroline Crachami. Notwithstanding the mobile nature of cultural anxieties projected onto little people, they consistently also display qualities that are read as indicating some kind of superior link with the transcendental, such as Crachami's fairy characteristics, or Maximo and Bartola's supposed status as totems of a priestly caste. They are also assigned recognisably gothic features, as can be seen in the reporting of Crachami's death, and in the suggestion of occluded 'blood taints' in the Aztec children. These features seem to be an inevitable part of the dwarf condition, and are evident in the reporting of the pygmy discoveries of the latter years of the nineteenth century, to which I now turn, alongside a new status assigned to little people: that of the model of 'primitive man'.

Ancient and Modern: African Pygmy Discoveries

The discovery by Paul Du Chaillu of pygmy peoples in Equatorial Africa, published as *A Journey into Ashango Land* in 1867, although soon overshadowed by the expeditions of Georg Schweinfurth in the late 1860s and Henry Morton Stanley in the 1880s, confirmed the existence of little people as an anthropological group rather than as single instances of physical anomaly. These explorer narratives highlight the cultural space that little people began to fill during the latter half of the nineteenth century, as their bodies came to exemplify primitive man. Although their racialization during this period is undeniable and well documented by contemporary scholars, they are relocated as models of prehistoric humanity rather than members of a different species altogether.

African pygmies are raced on two issues: the colour of their skin and their diminutive size, which positions them as 'primitive' members of the human race. Their supposed proximity to beasts, which is often referred to, is now part of an evolutionary context, on a chronological rather than a taxonomical scale of reference. This implies that, however distasteful the modern reader finds the assignment of adjectives such as 'primitive' or 'savage' to delineate a group of people, the noun to which those adjectives apply is now, always, 'man'. Furthermore, in the broader context of this thesis, pygmy peoples now begin to be thought of as a possible link to human prehistory, exemplifying an ancient human state, and thus a connection with something fixed and permanent, and perhaps even accessible, in the bottomless 'abyss of time' that confronted the Victorians (Trautmann 1992: 380).

A previous work of Du Chaillu's, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (1861), had exacerbated the scientific and cultural controversy over man's place in the natural world that followed the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* by emphasising, perhaps unintentionally, the similarities between man and gorilla. It also highlighted the imprecision of travel narratives as reliable, scientific documents, as did his and Stanley's later 'pygmy' books. Du Chaillu's works (1863/1867) particularly drew attention to the challenges of accurate scientific attribution, and of the difficulties of policing the porous boundary between scientific narrative and adventure fiction.¹⁵ Stanley's more famous *In Darkest Africa* (1890), although initially hailed as an absolutely honest and reliable account of a heroic expedition, was later the subject of considerable controversy due to the scandal over the behaviour of Major Edmund Barttelot and William Sligo Jameson, both attached to the Rear Column, and Stanley's attempts to cover that behaviour up ("With Stanley's Rear Column" 1890: 3). Attempts at the accurate demarcation of little people on the margins of reality and fantasy mirrored the unreliability of the travel narratives, as the literary context, and often the lexis, in which the real pygmy peoples were portrayed partook of myth, legend and fantasy. However, perhaps this last issue is less surprising when it is

¹⁵ Mary Louise Pratt and Laura Franey have both interrogated this issue, see Pratt 1992 and Franey 2001.

understood that, until Du Chaillu's account of his second African expedition was published, pygmies were believed by the vast majority of people to be mythical.

Before 1867, pygmies' position in Victorian cultural consciousness was based on medieval debates which centred on their place in the natural order, in which they were generally agreed to be a discrete species somewhere between humankind and apes (Thijssen 1995: 45). They were ranked among the more unusual human-like beings in Pliny's *Natural History* (77C.E.) those 'monstrous races' which included the 'Monocoli' who have only one enormous foot which they use as a parasol and who 'move in jumps with surprising speed', or the 'people without necks, having their eyes in their shoulders' (Pliny 2012 VII/2: 329-330). As Thijssen points out, 'the pygmies who appear in the writings of the ancient and medieval scholars were mythical dwarfs. The medieval efforts to determine their nature would be comparable to modern anthropological discussions concerning the human status of dwarfs and goblins on the basis of information derived from fairy tales' (1995: 46).

In 1699, the comparative anatomist Edward Tyson had published his findings of the examination and dissection of a creature that he called both an 'Orang-Outang' and a 'pygmie'. Although this creature resembled 'a Man in many of its Parts, more than any of the Ape-kind, or any other Animal in the World', because of its stature which was 'just the same with the Stature of the Pygmies of the Ancients', he decided that it was 'an intermediate Link between an Ape and a Man' (1699: 1). The subject of Tyson's dissection was, in all probability, a chimpanzee, and he classified it as absolutely, definitively, not human (Nash 1993: 52). Tyson had never believed the theory that pygmies were human anyway, firstly because 'the first account of them, was from a Poet [Homer], so that they were only a Creature of the Brain, produced by a Warm and Wanton Imagination', and secondly because, despite 'the most diligent Enquiries of late into all the Parts of the inhabited World could never discover any such Puny diminutive Race of Mankind' (1699: 1).

There were attempts to disprove Tyson throughout the next century and a half, but lack of evidence continually left the existence of pygmies in doubt. Joseph Ritson's dissertation 'On Pygmies' is a summary of the history of pygmy knowledge, first published in 1831. It was, however, written some thirty-five

years earlier, as a precursor to his collected *Fairy Tales* and alongside another essay, 'On Fairies', a contiguity which highlights the insecurity of pygmy claims to reality at this time (Ritson 1831: 2). By 1865, the situation had not changed: two years before the publication of Du Chaillu's book, Dickens' *All the Year Round* published the following paragraph:

Physiologists have discussed the question whether there are any causes in operation likely to produce a race of dwarfs, such as the pigmies believed in by the Greeks, and such as those little people whom travellers once asserted to be living in Abyssinia. Physiologists have arrived at a few general conclusions as to persons a little above or a little below the middle height; but they disbelieve in any race exceedingly tall or exceedingly short. All the examples well authenticated are individual only.

(1865: 376-380)

This, then, remained the general consensus on the existence of pygmies until the publication of Du Chaillu's *A Journey to Ashango-Land and Further Penetration into Equatorial Africa* in 1867.

By 1867, Du Chaillu, a French-born American explorer, was well-known to the scientific – and wider – community in England and in America (Olivier-Mason 2014: 100). He had given a series of lectures in England in the spring of 1861, before the publication of *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, a lavishly-illustrated book of over five hundred pages, in which he wrote of finding gorillas and chimpanzees during a four-year journey into hitherto-undiscovered regions of central Africa. These talks were greeted with a combination of delight and disbelief. Picqued that the *Times* had published only a short paragraph on the first of his lectures, one of his earliest supporters aimed to put the record straight by praising Du Chaillu's 'great merits' in delivering to the Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society 'a most animated and graphic sketch of his personal adventures among the cannibal negroes' and 'of his encounters with the gigantic gorilla ape, 22 individuals of which he shot' ('The Gorilla Region of Africa' 1861: 12). This first lecture, which took place on 25 February 1861, was illustrated with stuffed specimens of these gorillas, numerous drawings (including one of a 'huge gorilla falling under the gun of the author') and examples of local weaponry (ibid.) The Society also arranged that he should have use of a large room in Whitehall

Place in order to display his most remarkable specimens ('Science and Inventions' 1861: 352). Subsequent talks on his findings were received with clear pleasure and Du Chaillu's 'vivacity' and 'quiet humour' especially praised. While his assertion that, although he had 'anxiously searched for any intermediate form between [the gorilla] and the negro' he could find 'no race, no species, to form a link' ('Learned Societies and Institutions' 1861: 317) was greeted with much (perhaps relieved) applause, it was a disingenuous conclusion. His account of shooting a gorilla told a different story.

Under the section-heading 'Man-Like Appearance of the Gorilla', Du Chaillu recounted the story of his first gorilla-hunt.

I protest I felt almost like a murderer when I saw the gorilla for the first time. As they ran – on their hind legs – they looked fearfully like hairy men; their heads down, their bodies inclined forward, their whole appearance like men running for their lives. Take with this their awful cry, which, fierce and animal as it is, has yet something human in its discordance, and you will cease to wonder that the natives have the wildest superstitions about these 'wild men of the woods'.

(1861a: 86)

The alignment of gorilla and human is reiterated: the ape's cry, for example, was 'half human, devilish' (1861a: 85). Du Chaillu repeated curious local stories told about gorillas: that they have a propensity to carry off and 'misuse' native women; that there exist terrifying gorillas of 'extraordinary size', possessed by the 'spirits of departed negroes' who unite the intelligence of man with the strength and ferocity of the beast; that a party of gorillas was found in a sugarcane field, neatly tying up bundles of the crop to more easily carry it away (ibid. 86-7). Later, he ate a monkey that his men had killed and roasted, his hunger outweighing qualms, as 'under average circumstances, the human look of the animal would have turned me from it' (90). Finally, on meeting another gorilla, the animal reminded Du Chaillu 'of nothing but some hellish dream-creature – a being of that hideous order, half man, half beast' (101).

Du Chaillu's gorillas became an instant cultural phenomenon. The gorilla skulls he brought back from Africa were used as physical specimens in the Huxley/Owen *hippocampus minor* debate (McCook 1996: 177; Dawson 2007: 60-

66), in which the uniqueness of the structure of the human brain proposed by Owen was challenged by Huxley in a paper published in the *Natural History Review* in 1861 (Huxley 1861: 67-84). Du Chaillu's most recent biographer, Monte Reel, makes an extremely strong case for the publication of the *Punch* cartoon, 'Monkeyan'a' (see Fig. 3), a parody of the anti-slavery Wedgwood medallion, being prompted by the extraordinary popularity of Du Chaillu's gorilla book and lectures rather than the debate around *Origin of Species* (2013: 129-130). Du Chaillu was even mentioned, alongside Darwin, Owen and Huxley, in the long satirical poem that served as a caption for the cartoon: 'They [*apes*] can't stand upright,/Unless to show fight,/ With 'Du Chaillu', that chivalrous knight!' ('Monkeyan'a' 1861: 206). It is clear from these examples not just how celebrated Du Chaillu's gorillas were, but how the boundary between science as a discipline and science as the subject of popular debate is as porous as that between travel writing and adventure fiction in Du Chaillu's *Explorations and Adventures*.

However, Du Chaillu's gorilla book and lectures were also the subjects of ridicule and repudiation, greeted 'almost by hoots and jeers by savants who had never been to Africa' (Duignan 1984: 109). He was accused of overstating and romanticising his findings, initially by John Edward Gray who, in a letter to the *Athenaeum*, claimed that Du Chaillu's 'qualifications as a traveller were of the slightest', and his 'qualifications as a naturalist were of the lowest order' (1861: 662). According to Gray, Du Chaillu's stories were 'improbable', his illustrations were exaggerated, his specimens were all known previously, his chronology was at fault, and he was, to all intents and purposes, an imposter (Gray 1861: 662-3). Most importantly, his writing style risked converting natural history 'into a romance rather than a science' (663). Read now, *Explorations and Adventures* clearly conforms to the conventions of the generic 'white hunter' narrative, plotted like a picaresque novel, with Du Chaillu, the hero, always front and centre of each dramatic scenario. Then, as keeper of the Zoological Department at the British Museum, one of the founding members of the Zoological Society and a Fellow of the Royal Society, Gray was an opponent of considerable gravitas. Du Chaillu replied to the charges on 25 May, Gray responded a week later, and the so-called 'Gorilla War' of the 1860s commenced, continuing for some years (Reel 2013: 149).



Fig. 3 ('Monkeyan'a' *Punch*, 1861: 206)

At a meeting of the Ethnological Society later that summer, one member questioned the truth of some of Du Chaillu's findings, at which Du Chaillu was so incensed that he spat in his interlocutor's face, an incident for which he later apologised, but which indicated how bad-tempered the debate had become ('M. Du Chaillu and Mr. Malone' 1861). Both Owen and Huxley supported Du Chaillu,

and the argument supplied pages of copy in the periodical press, including a four-page essay in the *Critic* that attempted to deconstruct what was really taking place. The publication ended by being convinced of ‘M. Du Chaillu’s veracity’ and noting that Dr Gray was ‘in no respect more notorious than for his propensity to soil the good name of every other naturalist, dead or alive’ (‘M. Du Chaillu and His Critics’ 1861: 724). The *Saturday Review* summed up by deciding that Du Chaillu had had ‘the best of it’, and even though his discoveries were, perhaps, somewhat overstated it was not true that Du Chaillu was ‘an imposter, and cannot be believed “on his oath”’ (‘Gray v. Du Chaillu’ 1861: 633-4). He would, the journal suggested, benefit financially from the media storm in sales of his contested book, and be ‘amply compensated in pocket for any quantity of dirt that may be left sticking to him at the end of the struggle’ (ibid.).¹⁶ Du Chaillu, his reputation tarnished and ‘hurt to the quick by these unfair and ungenerous criticisms’ set off again in 1863 in an attempt to ‘vindicate my former accounts by facts not to be controverted’ (Du Chaillu 1867: vi).

Reading between the lines of all the insults and accusations that were hurled at Du Chaillu over his gorilla book it seems that there were a number of issues at stake. Du Chaillu had made some notable errors in his record, including mislabelling a nest-building ape as a new species he called ‘mshiego-mbouvé’, while it was actually a chimpanzee (Reel 2013: 147). His topography was believed to be faulty, and the distances and exact location of where he claimed to have travelled were challenged (Simmonds 1862: 84). These were substantial allegations, and caused the rest of his account to be called into question. Du Chaillu was also a natural showman, capable of a great deal of charm and given to exaggerating his own bravery and cleverness in what were, no doubt, extremely trying circumstances, and while the reports of what he saw of gorillas in Africa were largely true they were heavily embroidered. His credibility was severely damaged by the attacks by Gray, the explorer, philosopher and historian Winwood Reade and others, and although much of what he had claimed turned out to be perfectly valid, his reputation was injured, almost fatally.¹⁷

¹⁶ For a full account of the ‘Gorilla War’, see Mandelstam 1994.

¹⁷ See Reel 2013: 248-9 for a summary.

There were other, more personal and much less reasonable, concerns that demonstrated that the contentious matter of race affected the author as well as the subjects of his future work on African pygmies. Du Chaillu was probably illegitimate, and bi-racial (Reel 2013: 183), and a letter from an R. B. Walker, an African trader who claimed to know Du Chaillu personally, to the *Morning Advertiser* was notable for its excessively combative and aggressive tone, and its hints at impropriety. It appears to allude to Du Chaillu's origins by commenting that 'Du Chaillu' was an unacknowledged pseudonym, and the author's 'real' (ie: maternal) name is Paul Belloni, as well as a reference to his (Walker's) possession of 'information the most exact as to his antecedents' (1861: 5). Furthermore, Du Chaillu was not a scientist by training, but an enthusiastic amateur collector. As the son of a French trader working in the Gabon, and with a peripatetic, non-scientific education barring him from membership of the small, self-selecting group known as the 'gentlemen of science' (White 2003: 32), Du Chaillu's 'class, educational background, and race quickly became key issues in in debate over the scientific worth of the *Explorations*' (McCook 1996: 179).

Notwithstanding the controversy, or the dirt, *Explorations and Adventures* was a great success, selling 10,000 copies in its first two years in print (Meyer 1992: 206). The concept of 'popular science', and more specifically popular scientific writing, had emerged during the 1850s, although the disciplines of literature and science were growing further apart (White 2003: 69-75, 97). Men of science such as Thomas Henry Huxley had established ground rules for accessing scientific authority based on criteria that differentiated between modes of acquisition and media of communication, as well as levels of expertise (White 2003: 72-3). Du Chaillu fitted neatly into none of these categories. He acquired his data via conscientious personal field experience, the approved methodology then and now. However, he communicated his discoveries via a popular bestselling book and a series of lectures, the audiences for which were made up of both the scientific and non-scientific communities. His level of expertise, also, was questionable and under considerable scrutiny. Given the imputations of the 'Gorilla War' and his dubious scientific status it would seem likely that Du Chaillu's report of a tribe of little people living deep in the African forest would be received with scepticism. Indeed, this was the reception claimed by Du Chaillu

himself (1890: 777) as well as by Ashley Montagu in his biography of Edward Tyson (1943: 311), and more recently by Michael Clarke (2007: 24), but it was not the case. While not entirely absent, the issue of authenticity that had so plagued his gorilla book did not affect his account of the existence of hitherto mythical pygmy peoples to the same extent.

In 1867, on the publication of *Journey to Ashango-Land*, the 'Gorilla War' was still fresh in the public memory. 'Famous among battles, even as that of the Frogs or the Books, is the battle of the Naturalists, which was caused by the publication of M. Du Chaillu's *Equatorial Africa...*' ran the introduction to a review of Du Chaillu's new publication ('Ashango Land' 1867: 361). The same article rated Du Chaillu's new work as a 'not displeasing account of the gentle savages who inhabit Equatorial Africa', and while mildly reproving him for allowing some 'eccentricities' – or romanticising – seems not to question Du Chaillu's veracity (ibid. 363). Other journals were in agreement, deploring the hostilities of the Gorilla War, and recommending Du Chaillu's new publication as a truthful and accurate account of his most recent expedition. The *London Review's* critic, recalling the controversy his earlier book had produced, noted that 'no traveller since the days of Abyssinian Bruce had received such an amount of hostile criticism as M. Du Chaillu', and declared itself delighted that he had now vindicated himself with this new work ('Travels in Ashango-Land' 1867: 209). The *British Quarterly Review* remembered the 'incredulity' that greeted *Explorations and Adventures* and attributed it only to 'literary awkwardness, carelessness of detail, and possibly scientific ignorance' rather than deliberate mendacity, while reassuring their readers that they may 'with unprejudiced minds sit down to read this very interesting volume' ('*A Journey to Ashango-Land*' 1867: 541-2). The *Westminster Review*, although suggesting that Du Chaillu's pygmies were 'not so very short', and that, amongst other things, Du Chaillu had proved that 'the difficulties of African travel extravagantly exceed any useful results' showed no inclination to disbelieve him ('Politics, Sociology, Voyages, and Travels' 1867: 532-4). On 10 May 1867, the *Times* ran an advertisement for *Journey to Ashango-Land* which quoted reviewers from the *Examiner*, the *Churchman*, the *Guardian*, and the *Globe* all of whom praised the book, raising no doubt as to its authenticity ('African Explorers' 1867: 13).

From the beginning, *A Journey to Ashango-Land* blends the spheres of science and fantasy by using the style and tropes of fiction to write an account of exploratory research. In his report of the first encounter with the Obongo pygmies in 1866, Du Chaillu's authorial voice is that of a 'sceptical narrator', a literary device common in late-nineteenth-century ghost and horror stories, and one much used by both Machen and Allen as framing devices for their own 'little people' stories. While Du Chaillu had been told of the existence of 'a tribe of dwarf negroes' on his previous journey into Africa, he claimed to have 'given no credence to the report of the existence of these dwarf tribes, and had not thought the subject worthy of mention in my former narrative', thus emphasizing his sceptical credentials (1867: 269). While the possibility of a supernatural connection occurred to him immediately, this was because he first believed the 'extraordinary diminutive huts' to be some kind of 'fetich-houses', used as totems by the surrounding Ashango tribe. He wrote of the Obongo pygmies as feral creatures – as 'dwarfed *wild* negroes' (1867: 315, my italics). Like rare animals, they are described as shy, refusing to come into the surrounding Ashango villages when Du Chaillu was there, and he was advised to 'take with me only a very small party, so that we might make as little noise as possible' when first visiting an Obongo village (1867: 315).

The village was discovered deserted, 'in a quiet nook', and the huts of the pygmies are described as of remarkably 'slight construction' as the Obongos were 'so changeable, that they frequently remove from one place to another' (1867: 315). Again and again Du Chaillu represents himself as a man confronted with timid animals: his Ashango guide tried to 'calm the fears of the trembling creatures' (316); there was an 'untameable wildness' in their eyes (320); and when he saw one of the old women to whom he had spoken and, he believed, constructed a kind of relationship with, running from him, he was disappointed 'as I had flattered myself that I had quite tamed her' (318). The literary vignette of Du Chaillu trying to create some kind of special relationship with this woman, with its overtones of both wonder and archness, is reminiscent of the press reports of Caroline Crachami. Here, once again, is 'the fairy of your superstition in actual life... the pigmy of ancient mythology brought down to your own day' ('Sights of London' 1824: 253). Traces of the earlier debates around race and

degeneration, which so influenced the press reports on Maximo and Bartola, are also evident. During his days spent with the Obongo, he noted their 'dirty yellow' colour, 'much lighter than the Ashangos who surround them', and the smallness of their communities, suggesting that the resultant interbreeding has caused 'the physical deterioration of their race' and contributed to their distinctive facial characteristics, and the unusual hairiness of the men (Du Chaillu 1867: 320-1).

As with Caroline Crachami, the 'Sicilian Fairy', there is something fairy-like in Du Chaillu's description of the Obongo. Here, it was not entirely to do with their small stature, but with their will o' the wisp changeability, their diet of nuts, fruit and berries (323), and their woodland habitat. As well as likening the Obongo to shy wild animals, Du Chaillu's ascription of heightened changeability confers on them a kind of supernatural, shape-shifting quality. This sense was exacerbated by the woodcut illustration Du Chaillu used, depicting him and his Ashango bearers entering the pygmy village, and the inhabitants disappearing into the surrounding forest (see Fig. 4). A legendary flavour is common to all nineteenth-century writing about pygmies. Their existence outside the world of ancient myth was invariably remarked upon as extraordinary, sometimes obliquely, sometimes directly. This framing was as much part of the context in which they were viewed as their perception as a racial 'type', or their relationship to nineteenth-century modes of thinking about degeneration. Du Chaillu, before he encountered the Obongo, enquired about 'the *Sapadi*, or people with cloven feet – a mythical race, believed in by all negroes' (1867: 309). He decided, on learning that the Sapadi country is 'a long way further on', that the myths about them 'originate in accounts of the Obongo or hairy dwarfs, who are really inhabitants of Ashango-land, as we shall presently see' (310). One 'mythical' people – who do not exist – have been replaced by another, who do, despite having completely different anomalous characteristics. It is only the flexible fact/fantasy axis that ties them together.



APPROACH TO THE CAMP OF THE OBONGO DWARFS.

Fig. 4 (Du Chaillu 1867: 316)

Perhaps surprisingly, as I suggested earlier, the publication of *A Journey to Ashango-Land* caused little commotion. Most contemporary critics seemed content to allow the truthfulness and accuracy of Du Chaillu's report of a whole tribe of little people living hidden in the African jungle without very much comment at all. It is true that, at the first reading of his paper to the Royal Geographical Society, and despite the support of Professor Owen and Sir Roderick Murchison, the Society's President and chairman, John Crawford (1783-1868), the President of the Ethnological Society, stated that he found Du Chaillu's report of the Obongo Pygmies 'impossible to believe' ('Royal Geographical Society' 1867: 3). The review of *Ashango-Land* in the *Athenaeum* was less than flattering, but contained no direct challenge to Du Chaillu's truthfulness, and, astonishingly, the pygmies are not mentioned ('*A Journey to Ashango-Land*' 1867: 187-8). They were discussed in a similar review in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but that publication, like the *Westminster Review*, seemed disappointed that 'they had not got tails, and indeed were not very remarkably dwarfed' ('*Ashango Land*' 1867: 10). Crawford's was the only voice raised in disbelief, and once Du Chaillu had clarified the situation, even his was stilled. Du Chaillu answered Crawford's challenge with a letter

containing further information, clarifying that he understood that ‘Mr. Crawford had no intention of disparaging the accuracy of my description’ (‘The Small People of Western Equatorial Africa’ 1866: 10), perhaps understandably betraying sensitivity to any implications that his report was fabricated. It is less surprising, given his extraordinary adventures in the Congo together with his predilection for romance, a predilection that worked very much against him in his lifetime, that Du Chaillu has been credited with influencing much adventure fiction, from Conan Doyle’s *Lost World* (1912) to Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Tarzan* tales (1912); from the stories of Jack London (1894-1915), who said that *Explorations and Adventures* was one of the first books he had ever read at the age of seven, to *King Kong* (1933) (Reel 2013: 267-9).¹⁸

It has been claimed that Darwin’s *Origin of Species* ‘began to be widely debated only after Paul Du Chaillu returned from Africa with his gorillas’ (Secord 2007: 147), but the latter’s compromised credibility as a scientist undermined his achievements. Like the pygmies he ‘discovered’, his writing was liminal, outside the professionalizing scientific mainstream, too finely balanced on the science/fiction borderline to be taken completely seriously. Perhaps this, in part, is the reason why it is not Du Chaillu but the Latvian-German explorer, Georg Schweinfurth, who is generally given credit for discovering pygmies in Africa, by everyone from his obituarist in the *Geographical Journal* in 1926 (‘Obituary – Dr. Georg Schweinfurth’: 93) to Carole Silver in *Strange and Secret Peoples* (1999: 50), despite the fact that his book, *The Heart of Africa*, was published six years after *Ashango-Land*, and Schweinfurth himself credits Du Chaillu as ‘the only traveller... before myself who has come into contact with any section of this race’ (Schweinfurth 1874. II: 135).¹⁹ In his introduction to *The Heart of Africa*, Winwood Reade (one of Du Chaillu’s chief opponents during the Gorilla War) claims that Schweinfurth’s report proves the ‘existence of a dwarf race in Central Africa... a point which has long been under dispute’ (1874: viii). He frames

¹⁸ In *The Lost World*, for example, Professor Challenger is initially disbelieved by the learned societies of London, and returns to the scene of his first expedition to prove himself. He has a number of hair’s-breadth escapes from hostile natives, and finally appears once again before his peers, earning their cheering vindication, a narrative arc which closely mirrors Du Chaillu’s experience.

¹⁹ See also Werner, who credits Schweinfurth with ‘the first real announcement of their existence to the civilized world’ (1890: 560).

pygmies as a people 'mentioned by the classical writers', a reference to their hitherto mythic status, and although he admitted that 'Du Chaillu met them in Ashango Land' he implies that it is the work of Schweinfurth which has put their reality 'beyond a doubt' (ibid.). However, Schweinfurth too was sceptical, explaining that when he first heard tales of pygmies around the campfire, he 'laughed at the accounts which eye-witnesses gave of them, and, for my part, quietly put them into the category of men with tails' (Schweinfurth 1874: 68). This is a particularly telling anecdote, as we understand from his own account that Schweinfurth *knew* of the existence of pygmies from Du Chaillu's report. Is this then further evidence that Du Chaillu, at some level, simply could not be relied upon as a credible witness, even though his story of meeting the Obongo pygmies in *Journey to Ashango-Land* had been, apparently, received as a truthful account? It sounds as if Schweinfurth had earmarked Du Chaillu as one of those whose eye-witness accounts lack credibility.

Almost twenty years after Schweinfurth's book was published, Henry Morton Stanley's *In Darkest Africa* appeared to instant acclaim. Stanley's reception on his return from Africa where he had been on an ultimately disastrous mission to rescue an unwilling Emin Pasha was heroic ('Stanley Archives' Treasures'), with huge crowds at both Dover and Victoria to welcome him home via a special train, and a trip to Sandringham to recuperate ('Mr. Stanley's Return' 1890: 10). A week later, he gave a speech at a special meeting of the Royal Geographical Society held at the Albert Hall to accommodate the numbers who wanted to attend. Among the audience were several members of the royal family and a large number of those comprising 'all that is distinguished in literature, art, science, and travel', as well as Du Chaillu ('Mr. Stanley' 1890: 10). Despite the earlier work of Du Chaillu, Schweinfurth and others, Stanley was the first to put pygmies on the front page with the publication of *In Darkest Africa*, and such was his celebrity, he was awarded a kind of ownership of central Africa's pygmy peoples. They became

known as 'Stanley's pygmies' (Roy 1890: 253), and the area of the Belgian Congo he had traversed as 'Stanley's great pygmy forest' ('The Great Pygmy Forest' 1899: 6).²⁰

In Darkest Africa marked a tipping point in the relationship between truth and fiction in writing about pygmy peoples. While the scientific credibility of his narrative was unchallenged, unlike Du Chaillu's, Stanley made available occult qualities that were picked up by writers of weird and science fiction at the fin de siècle. He imbued the pygmies he discovered with degenerated characteristics that resonate with much fin de siècle horror and science fiction, specifically with Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), as well as qualities of gothic malice and evil intent more familiar in the little people who infest the weird fiction of Arthur Machen. There has been much scholarly investigation of texts written in literary styles that cross boundaries between travel narrative and travel fiction during the nineteenth century.²¹ The relationship between the two modes is complex. As the empire expanded and narratives such as Stanley's were published and publicized, they inspired authors such as Joseph Conrad, whose *Captain Kurtz (Heart of Darkness* 1899), it has been argued, was largely modelled on William Sligo Jameson, a member of Stanley's vilified rear column (Franey 2001: 227). However, many narratives of expeditions that claimed to be unembellished accounts of previously undiscovered terrain belonged to a genre that only 'represented itself as non-fiction' (White 1993: 11). These writings were, as White's wording implies, if not completely, at least partially imagined. Characteristics described in these narratives were, therefore, at best unreliable, especially if those encountered were unfamiliar – dark-skinned, for example, or smaller than average.

²⁰ Stanley did not enjoy his popularity for very long. By the end of 1890, the terrible crimes and appalling cruelties of Stanley's rear column, led by Major Edmund Barttelot, were known, for the most part, to the general public ('Stanley's Rear Column' 1890, 8 November: 11, 10 November: 9). The colossal loss of life suffered by the Africans seconded to the column, Barttelot's assaults and murders, and the purchase by William Sligo Jameson, a scion of the Irish whiskey family who had contributed £1,000 in order to join the expedition, of a young girl so that she could be killed and eaten in order to satisfy his curiosity about cannibalism, not only tainted the Emin Pasha expedition, but briefly caused the whole idea of exploration to be questioned *per se* (Jeal 2007: 412). Stanley himself tried 'to keep the shameful story of the Rear Guard from the public', but failed ('Mr. Stanley's Rear Guard' 1890: 3).

²¹ See Brantlinger 1988, White 1993 and Franey 2001.

Stanley claimed to have discovered telling 'racial' distinctions between the two tribes of little people he found which share distinct characteristics with Wells's Eloi and Morlocks (Murray 2014). One tribe, the Wambutti, have 'round faces, gazelle-like eyes, set far apart, open foreheads, which give one an impression of undisguised frankness, and are of a rich yellow, ivory complexion' (1890 Vol. II: 104). The others, the Batwa, have 'longish heads and long, narrow faces, reddish, small eyes, set close together, which give them a somewhat ferrety look, sour, anxious, and querulous' (ibid.). Elsewhere, Stanley describes the Batwa as 'monkey-eyed', and as 'fitly characteristic of the link long sought between the average modern humanity and its Darwinian progenitors, and certainly deserving of being classed as an extremely low, degraded, almost a bestial type of a human being' (1890 Vol. I: 374). Wells' Eloi, like the Wambutti, have eyes that are 'large and mild', and a benevolent aspect due to a manner of 'graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease' comparable to the Wambutti's appearance of 'absolute frankness' (Wells 1895: 53; Stanley 1890 Vol. II: 104). The Wambutti's 'gazelle-like eyes' also mark them as prey, the function of the Eloi, the 'mere fatted cattle' which the Morlocks 'preserved and preyed upon' (Wells 1895: 148). The animal qualities with which Stanley endows the Batwa – they are 'ferrety... monkey-eyed' and compared to the missing link – resonates with the Morlocks similarly simian qualities: they are 'ape-like' (108), run on all fours, or with forearms held low (109), and one of them clammers down the shaft 'like a human spider' (109). *The Time Machine* was published five years after *In Darkest Africa*, but this is not the only link to be found between Stanley's pygmies, and the little people that appear in the weird fiction of the fin de siècle, particularly that of Arthur Machen.

Stanley implied that the pygmies' size was somehow linked to an evil quality, commenting that 'their diminutive size, superior wood-craft, greater malice, would make formidable opponents' (1890 Vol. I: 103). It is difficult to understand how 'greater malice' fits into this picture, other than via the imagination of the author. Stanley explains that their hunting methods involved arrows 'thickly coated with poison', sink pits which were used to trap larger animals, 'cunningly' covered with sticks and leaves and sprinkled with earth to disguise them, and bow traps which 'in the scurry of little animals, are snapped and strangle them' (101). Alice Werner (1859-1935), linguist, teacher and traveller, took up the

theme, and wrote of certain pygmies that their ‘poisoned arrows, and the noiseless, furtive ways of coming and going, inspire the stronger races with a vague dread of them – strengthened, no doubt, by that uncanny something that “makes a Bush-boy resemble a bird the more, the more he shows a simian intelligence”’ (Werner 1890: 567). Here, the implication is that the pygmies’ imagined low evolutionary status is itself uncanny. The pygmies were, according to Stanley, ‘parasites’ (1890 Vol. I: 103), and his description, with its loaded lexis of poison, traps and the strangling of small animals, resonates with Arthur Machen’s malevolent little people, who I investigate in detail in Chapter 3. Machen’s fantasy creations, like Du Chaillu’s, Schweinfurth’s and Stanley’s pygmies, are ‘savage survivals’ themselves, chronological impossibilities, who function as unseen parasites on the modern world, living hidden for the most part, but always hoping to trap the unwary traveller, or those with the imagination and curiosity to see them, full of cunning, malignancy, and ‘greater malice’.

Stanley’s descriptions of the pygmies he found also shares other, broader, traits with fin de siècle gothic fiction. His little people live deep in an impenetrable forest, lightless and occult, a place given a gothic gloss by Stanley, who writes of the ‘trackless depths of a primeval forest’ in which the melancholy sound of the wind reminds him of a house he stayed in in England. This nameless house gave him a sleepless night, kept awake as he was by the ‘dreadful sighings of the rooky grove, which filled my mind with folornness and discomfort’. Later, in the African forest, a heavy rainfall ‘roused a deep and funereal dirge that sounded round about me [and] it seemed to me I heard sad and doleful echoes of sad and unsatisfied longings’ (1890 Vol. II: 86). The same forest also seems to Stanley a malevolent embodiment of the Darwinian struggle for life. He compares it to the crowd on Derby day, than which he finds nothing so ‘ugly and distasteful’, imagining that he sees its teeming multitude reflected in the ‘fierce, heartless jostling and trampling’ of nature to reach the light (ibid.). This counterintuitive connection between the dark, ‘primitive’ African forest and the seething mass of the ‘civilised’ Derby day crowd, is an example of an important, and not uncommon, fin de siècle trope of explorers in the urban *terra incognita* discovering savage elements in an otherwise civilised world. However, it is

generally applied to the miserable streets of poverty-stricken cities, in such texts as *In Darkest England, and the Way Out* (Booth 1890), or James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* (1874) with its 'savage woods' and relentless gloom, rather than a colourful and presumably cheerful racetrack crowd (Thomson 1892: 7).²²

Booth acknowledged the value he found in applying Stanley's lexis and associations to his own commentary on contemporary urban culture, and quoted from it extensively in his introductory chapter (Booth 1890: 9-16). He specifically compares Stanley's two pygmy tribes, the 'dwarfish, de-humanized inhabitants' of the forest with the two varieties of the poor he sees in London: the ferrety Batwa, whom he calls 'the human baboon' resembling the 'vicious, lazy lout', and the Wambutti, the 'handsome dwarf', the 'toiling slave' (1890: 12). Stanley's darkness is composed of the near-impenetrable central African forest, while Booth's is, of course, the spiritual darkness of the Godless, poverty-stricken city. Stanley himself is aware of the connection: the constant cycle of 'decay, and death, and life' of the trees in the forest, and their blind, amoral quest for life constantly reminding him of 'some scene in the civilised world' – Derby day, as I have mentioned, or an early-morning crowd crossing London Bridge. These commuters have a particular connection with the African pygmies in that they seem to be 'pale, overworked, dwarfed' (Stanley 1890 Vol. II: 85), invoking the later crowds crossing the same bridge in T. S. Eliot's 'The Wasteland' of 1922 (1977: 62).

Stanley's pygmies are often denigrated: they are 'vicious' (Vol. I: 3, 352, 359); 'bold and crafty' (Vol. I: 474); 'malicious' (Vol. I: 452, 457), and the darkness of the forest is responsible. This combination of a uniquely threatening darkness hiding a malicious tribe of anachronistic dwarfs, embodied 'savage survivals', is a trope that Machen, like Booth, transferred to the impenetrable urban jungle of London in his 'little people' stories of the 1890s. Stanley blamed the lack of light for the dwellers' ferocity: the forest 'does not admit of amicable intercourse [...] strangers cannot see one another until they suddenly encounter, and are mutually

²² Joseph McLaughlin has interrogated the connection between Stanley's *Darkest Africa* and William Booth's *Darkest England* (1890), with its apocalyptic commentary on the savage nature of the urban jungle (McLaughlin 2000: 81-7).

paralysed with surprise' (1890: 89), and asserts that 'the tribes of the forest are naturally the most vicious and degraded of the human race on the face of the earth', as a direct consequence of the darkness (88). Stanley's train of thought was reiterated in Booth's *In Darkest England* as a metaphorical darkness, 'the moral, social, and material abyss' composed of the effects of a combination of poverty and hopelessness (Booth 1890: 15-16). Machen, in his short story 'The Red Hand' for example, denotes the darkness in which his little people habitually dwell as an enabling element that has equipped them to evolve so as to move through the darkness of the City with impunity.²³ The illustration entitled 'A Dwarf Village' intensifies this sense of dark malice: in it, Stanley's forest is a lightless mass of gothic gloom that surrounds the pygmy villagers and threatens to swallow them (see Fig. 5). This darkness is fictionally embodied in Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890) when Tonga, the pygmy Andaman islander, is first introduced as a 'dark mass' (200), who eventually 'straightened itself into a little black man – the smallest I have ever seen' (202). Doyle's creation in this scene functions as a totem of evolutionary terror, a 'savage, distorted creature' with a face 'to give a man a sleepless night', his features marked with 'bestiality and cruelty' and 'thick lips [...] writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at us with half-animal fury' (202-3). Despite his atavistic monstrosity, even Tonga cannot escape the fairy link, being later described as a 'bloodthirsty imp' (278).

²³ I investigate this story fully in Chapter Three of this thesis.

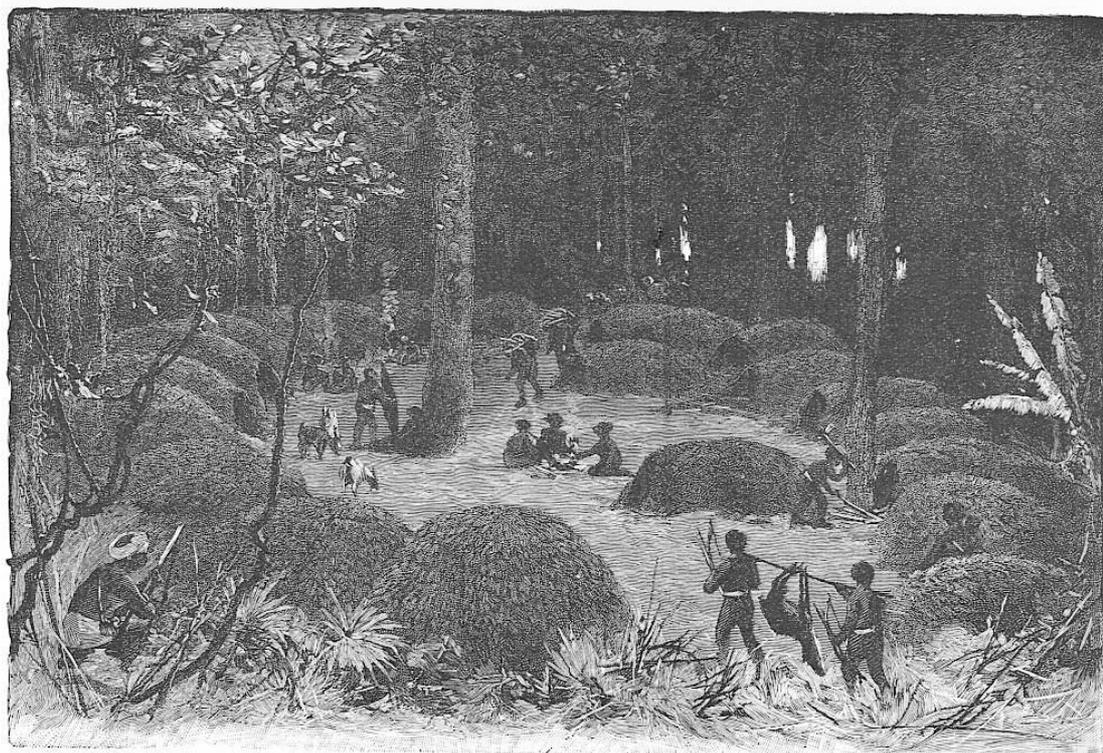


Fig. 5 (Stanley 1890: 104)

However, for Stanley as well as for Machen, gothic gloom and malicious intent are not the only defining features of little people. Both authors are thrilled by the unique combination of longevity and links to the supernatural that little people represent. Stanley's report of his first encounter with a pygmy, one of two brought for him to see, illustrates the paradoxes pygmies present, as well as the elision of fact and fantasy in these early accounts.

Not one London editor could guess the feelings with which I regarded this mannikin [*sic*] from the solitudes of the vast central African forest. To me he was far more venerable than the Memnonium of Thebes. That little body of his represented the oldest types of primeval man, descended from the outcasts of the earliest ages, the Ishmaels of the primitive race, for ever shunning the haunts of the workers, deprived of the joy and delight of the home hearth, eternally exiled by their vice, to live the life of human beasts in morass and fen and jungle wild. Think of it! Twenty-six centuries ago his ancestors captured the five young Nassamonian explorers, and made merry with them at their villages on the banks of the Niger. Even as long as forty centuries ago they were known as pygmies, and the famous battle between them and the storks was rendered into song.

(1890 Vol. II: 40-41)

Stanley approaches his subject with something like awe – indeed the page title is ‘My Reverential Feelings for the Pigmy’ – yet the writing is full of ambiguity. The pygmy is both patronised (a ‘mannikin’, a ‘human beast’) and revered (‘venerable’); both an absolutely real specimen – the preceding paragraph is a list of his measurements – and a descendant of a mythic people (the Nassamonian story derives from Herodotus, and Pliny’s cranes are here changed into storks); both a representative of the ‘oldest type of primitive man’ – an anthropological anomaly – and a biblical Ishmaelite. It is hard to tell if the ‘morass and fen and jungle wild’ is that of the Old Testament, or if Stanley has just fought his way through it. In describing the pygmy people he discovered in these terms, Stanley writes them as living ‘savage survivals’, a concept critical to the later renaissance of euhemerism, and which I investigate in detail in the following chapter.

He explicitly ponders the level of humanity of the two pygmies, indicating that this is still an issue for reflection. In Volume I, as I have already noted, Stanley indicates that the Batwa pygmies, ‘monkey-eyed’ with a ‘prominent abdomen’ and ‘long arms’ are typical of a ‘missing link’ prototype (Vol. I: 374). However, in Volume II, he repositions pygmies as definitely human.

The pair were undoubtedly man and woman. In him was a mimicked dignity, as of Adam; in her the womanliness of a miniature Eve. Though their souls were secreted under abnormally thick folds of animalism, and the finer feelings inert and torpid through disuse, they were there for all that. And they suited the wild Eden of Avatiko well enough.

(1890. Vol. II: 44)

Despite the queasiness produced by that ‘mimicked’ and by the accusation that the ‘finer feelings’ that denote civilization are buried deep beneath a ‘savage’ (black) skin, Stanley was in no doubt as to their humanity. They were ‘undoubtedly man and woman’, and more than that, they represented the original Man and Woman, Adam and Eve, in a kind of pre-lapsarian state. Even this taxonomical classification is expressed in mythical terminology. By January 1891, the year after the publication of *In Darkest Africa*, Stanley wrote for the American publication, *Scribner’s Magazine*, an article entitled ‘The Pigmies of the Great

African Forest'. Here, he is at pains to emphasise that, not only is the pygmy 'a real human being', and 'capable of reasoning', but that 'I see no difference between the civilized man and the pigmy' (1891: 3). A fervent anti-Darwinist, Stanley is at pains to persuade his readers to 'banish all thoughts of the fictitious small-brained progenitor' (4), despite his earlier efforts to direct his readers' thoughts in precisely this direction. Although the pygmy peoples of Africa were now provably real, as well as avowedly human, they were invariably still allocated fantastical elements, unable to shake off the enchantment of their small size and relative scarcity.

Pygmies, Dwarfs, 'Little People'

The revelation of the existence of groups of little people, rather than individual anomalies, to the western world in the last half of the nineteenth century increased the porousness of boundary between fact and fantasy in both chronological directions: between anthropological discovery and ancient myth on the one hand, and that same discovery and adventure fiction on the other. Both Du Chaillu and Schweinfurth (along with many others) had believed pygmies to be mythical, a figment of classical imagination, until they actually encountered them, and their discoveries were for the most part understood as a validation of ancient accounts. Schweinfurth, for example, first began to consider that the stories he heard of pygmy peoples on his journey south may be eye-witness accounts when he pondered how his Nubian servants, who discussed meetings with pygmy peoples, could possibly know the ancient authors (Schweinfurth 1870 Vol. II: 124). And it was not only pygmies that were seen as revelatory of the hidden facts underlying the fantasies of the ancient world. One of the first, less contentious, letters on Du Chaillu's *Expeditions and Adventures* came in the form of a suggestion that his discovery of gorillas may be seen as verification for Herodotus's hearsay account of 'dog-headed apes, and some without heads, but having eyes in their breasts' ('The Gorilla Region of Africa' 1861: 10). But this arc, from ancient fantasy to newly-discovered truth is precarious. In a furious article in the *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York*, Charles P. Daly, Chairman of the American Geographical Society, took Stanley to task, initially for

writing as if he, and not Du Chaillu, had discovered the pygmies in Africa.²⁴ He then admonishes Stanley for feigning ignorance of what ‘was previously known respecting this interesting race, for the existence of Pygmies has been mentioned by Homer, Herodotus, Aristotle, Pliny and Pomponius Mela’ (1892: 19). Indeed Pliny, he says, placed them in Africa, north of the equator, and notes that Schweinfurth found the Akkas almost exactly where Aristotle had suggested they would be. Daly writes as if these ancient texts are as valid as any recently-written scientific account.

By the 1890s it was clear that the cultural and scientific contexts in which little people were considered had both broadened and shifted since the early nineteenth century. From being understood only as singular examples exhibited as specimens of *lusus naturae*, like Caroline Crachami, little people had been discovered living in anthropological groups. Those groups, hitherto believed to have been a construct of ancient myth, had been shown to exist. And the location of little people in the various discourses around race and degeneration had changed materially, if subtly, over the course of the century. Maximo and Bartola were seen as degenerated examples of a discrete ‘Aztec’ race, far removed both chronologically and taxonomically from the modern, ‘civilised’ world. Their diminutive size was seen as a direct result of the degeneration produced by familial intermarriage over some thousands of years. As the consequences of Darwinian evolution for the notion of ‘deep time’ came into focus, African pygmies were established as models of ‘primitive man’, their size not a product of degeneration, but of survival over immense aeons of time, their descendants not a couple of ‘Aztec Lilliputians’, but all of humanity. At the same time, their position on the borderline between fact and fantasy remained, an unstable position further exacerbated and complicated by the rise of euhemerism, the subject of the next chapter.

Alice Werner, to whose learned essay on African pygmies I have already referred, illustrates the way in which pygmy discoveries combine with the

²⁴ Daly also mentions other nineteenth-century explorers who claimed pygmy sightings, such as Johann Ludwig Krapf and Sigismund Köelle, both German missionaries who were in Africa during the middle of the century, and Captain Thomas Boteler RN, who travelled there in the 1820s (1892: 18-19)

euemerist ideas of David MacRitchie and Robert Grant Haliburton to create a new anthropological theory of British prehistoric man. Beginning her article by crediting Stanley for his recent discovery of the Wambutti pygmies, and confirming that it had 'long been a well-known fact that the Pygmies of Homer, Herodotus and Ktesias [...] are something more than mere mythical beings' she characterizes pygmies as the 'scattered fragments' of a primitive African, nomadic race – indeed, they are 'the known fragments of *the aboriginal African race*' (1890: 556-7, my italics). However, she bemoans an inevitable disappointment, noting that, since their discovery, pygmies have been 'shorn of the mythical and magical glamour with which distance and mystery had invested them', and been shown to be 'not so very different, after all from other human beings' (568). With direct reference to MacRitchie's Shetlandic theory, which I analyse in the following chapter, she comments on 'the shock of disillusion in passing from the elves and trolls of a past age – not to mention Alberic of the Nibelung's Hoard – to the worthy but prosaic Lapps of the present day' (ibid.). The disappointment inherent when a fantasy is replaced by a reality is a feature of African pygmies too, Werner notes. They tend not to be 'much less than 4 feet 6 inches' in height, whereas, on an earlier journey of exploration into Africa, Stanley had heard tales of dwarfs, 'the queerest looking creatures alive, just a yard high, with long beards and large heads' (Stanley 1878: 101).

Werner states that African pygmies were once 'spread over a great part, if not the whole, of the continent', but have since been reduced and fragmented by 'the advent of the stronger dark races', and because of that, they are vanishing, echoing the disappearance of the fairies, their fictional counterparts. She then presents to the reader 'an analogous case in Europe', where

a race of small stature, slight frame, and comparatively low type, scarcely, if at all, advanced beyond the hunter stage, occupied the British Islands and the north-west part of the Continent. They were partly massacred or enslaved, partly driven into the mountains, by their Celtic conquerors; and in the lonely recesses of the hills and woods – what with their weakness and their strength, their cunning and their skill in metals, their music, and their underground dwellings and their strange, uncanny wisdom – a growth of

legend and poetry sprang up about them, till they were no longer known save as elves, gnomes, trolls, or “Good People,” whom one dared not name.

(Werner 1890: 568-9)

Werner also notes that while it was long believed that the exclusive British ancestors were the ‘Teutonic invaders’ who had ‘utterly exterminated’ the Celts, as the Celts were believed to have ‘made a clean sweep of’ those ‘older, dwarfish, Euskarran (sic) or Neolithic’ ancestors, neither was necessarily true (1890: 569).²⁵ ‘Grant Allen,’ she comments, ‘thinks that there is a considerable Euskarran element in the English population of today’ (ibid.) and I shall examine his writings on this in Chapter Three.

Pygmies, dwarfs, or little people are now framed as common ancestors, yet retaining the uncanniness that Werner notes. Adam Grydehøj states that it was a combination of David MacRitchie’s euhemeristic scholarship and the discoveries of pygmy peoples during the previous two decades that inspired Robert Grant Haliburton to formulate his euhemerist theory of the migration to Europe of the Akka people, the African pygmies ‘discovered’ by Georg Schweinfurth (Grydehøj 2013: 109). The African pygmy discoveries together with the establishment of euhemerism as a widely-accepted anthropological theory fuelled the surge of weird fiction featuring ‘little people’ at the fin de siècle, whether as malevolent, occult ‘savage survivals’, ghostly prehistoric brutes, or retributive agents of the supernatural. I will examine in detail this fiction shortly. First, though, the following chapter examines how the theory of euhemerism grew from the birth of anthropology in England, and developed via the concept of ‘savage survivals’, advanced by Edward Burnett Tylor, into an anthropological model that was the standard for many years, re-enchanting little people – and human evolution – in the process.

²⁵ ‘Euskarian’ is an ethnological term used to define a pre-Aryan element in the European population (*OED*).

Chapter 2

True Fairy Tales: Euhemerism, Survivals and the Fairy-Land of Science

In this chapter I show how the anthropological theory of euhemerism, a method of understanding myths by regarding them as exaggerated accounts of real incidents and an important, yet little-discussed influence on fin de siècle weird fiction, became established. The close affiliation between the natural sciences and fairy lore during the Victorian era is well-established, and has been thoroughly investigated by scholars.²⁶ The relationship between these two, seemingly opposed, views of the world worked in a number of different ways. For example, the dry facts of science might be made palatable and popularised via fairy mediators, as in Charles Kingsley's *Madam How and Lady Why* (1868) or Arabella Buckley's *The Fairy-Land of Science* (1879). While the narrative of the 'departure of the fairies' was used as a metaphor to express anxieties about the disenchanting implications of the intrusion of modernity, or the increased authority of scientific materialism, their 'mysterious, magical world... destroyed by the encroachments of science' (Bown 2001: 167/108), science could contain its own magic, its forces revealing 'a new world of fascinating interest and mysterious awe... an enchanted garden... a fairy world' (Hinton 1862: 38). Fairies, whether ethereal and benevolent or gnome-like and malicious, were thus 'at the heart of cultural preoccupations' about the natural world during the nineteenth century, and played their part in the debate over earthly and human origins (Talairach-Vielmas 2014: 6).

Nicola Bown has noted the 'craze' for natural history that developed around mid-century (2001: 122), which coincided with the boom in the publication of cheap field guides to the natural world, many of them lavishly illustrated, commonly sold in station book shops to people taking advantage of the

²⁶ See, for example, Silver 1999, Bown 2001 and Talairach-Vielmas 2014.

availability of day trips by rail to visit the countryside. While John Ruskin was praising the work of the pre-Raphaelites with their determination to 'study Nature attentively', the otherworldly results of which can be seen clearly in works such as John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* (1852), his portrait of Ruskin (1854), and Arthur Hughes' *April Love* (1856), microscopes were becoming cheaper and thus available for those wishing to study miniature worlds at home (Lightman 2010: 46). Books were published aimed at the amateur, microscope-owning naturalist, such as *Evenings with the Microscope* by Philip Henry Gosse (1859) and J. G. Woods' bestselling *Common Objects of the Microscope* (1861) (Keene 2015: 86). Between 1849 and 1851, 'Acheta Domestica', the author and illustrator L. M. Budgen, published *Episodes of Insect Life*, a series aimed at younger readers, specifically merging fairies and insects.²⁷ Bown suggests that Budgen employs the fairy metaphor to soften the brutal realities of insect life for her young readers, merging the worlds of science and fantasy, so that in the hands of 'Acheta Domestica' the 'study of insects becomes a way of enchanting the natural world', of 'turning it into fairyland' (Bown 2001: 127). Scientists and writers had thus been in unspoken collusion to invest the natural world with a sense of magic since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Conversely, there were also many attempts to relocate the little people of fairy-fantasy within the evolutionary process. Theosophists and spiritualists, among them Alfred Russel Wallace, favoured a proto-Darwinian explanation that fairies (or 'pretherhuman intelligences' as Wallace called them) had evolved separately (1875: vii-viii). Opinions differed as to the nature and place of these separate evolutionary ladders, and where on them the different forms of fairies might be placed. A slightly different argument, that material and spiritual evolution were analogous, ran from the publication of Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* in 1877 until the 1920s, and Blavatsky herself compared 'Elementals' to 'Mr Darwin's missing link between the ape and man' (1877: 285), while, in *The Hidden Side of Things* (1913), Charles W. Leadbeater noted that 'nature-spirits constitute an evolution apart' (1913: 116). Leadbeater and his spiritual fellow-travellers, such

²⁷ For example, she writes 'It was not exactly a fairy who had come to visit us; but it was a little creature, both in form and attire, of most fairy-like seeming. It was none other, in short, than a lace-winged fly [...]' (Budgen 1850: 254).

as Blavatsky, the occult folklorist Walter Evans-Wentz, Edward Gardner, the secretary of the Theosophical Society, and, most famously, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, insisted on a strictly scientific, biological explanation for the existence of fairies, and Leadbeater, whilst bemoaning the lack of a Cuvier or a Linnaeus to produce a complete natural history of 'nature-spirits', insisted that there were multiple evolutionary lines for other entities that 'crowd the earth far more thickly than man' (Leadbeater 1913: 116). These attempts to shoe-horn fairies into the natural world, presenting them as evolutionary descendants of rocks, insects or cereals, culminated in the photographic trickery of Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths that duped Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1917.²⁸ Carole Silver argues that it was – indirectly and unintentionally – the ensuing trivialization of both the 'fairies', and the debate on their origins, that resulted in their most recent, and perhaps final, departure (1999: 57).

In contrast, the euhemerist argument makes no attempt to force little people from one sphere into another, and thus does nothing to diminish their power. It allows fictional little people, fairies, to remain just that, while positioning their 'real' existence firmly in prehistory, among the raths and hows of ancient Orkney, or, according to Robert Grant Haliburton, as extant tribes of dwarfs with no supernatural powers, however much they might hammer underground or make sudden appearances in the hills. In *Fians, Fairies, and Picts* (1893), MacRitchie named euhemerism as the 'realistic' interpretation of fairy tales (1893b: xviii). He explained that euhemerists were quite ready to accept 'the popular definition of Fairies as "little people"', but 'the conception of such "little people" as tiny beings of aerial and ethereal nature, able to fly on a bat's back, or to sip honey from the flowers "where the bee sucks" is regarded by the realists as simply the outcome of the imagination, working upon the basis of fact' (1893b: 23-4). MacRitchie stated that the 'little people' of legend were originally just 'little people', and that they had existed – and perhaps still did – in many places around the world. Contested by some contemporary folklorists such as Andrew Lang and Alfred Nutt, others,

²⁸ A set of five photographs taken by two young girls, Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, in their garden in Cottingley, West Yorkshire, were convincing enough to persuade Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of their authenticity. The girls finally admitted that they had faked the pictures in 1982 (Pennington 2005: 132-133).

such as Sabine Baring-Gould, Sir John Rhys and Joseph Jacobs largely concurred. The magical aspect of dwarfs and fairies is, in the euhemerist argument, ascribed entirely to the power of human imagination. This does not, however, remove all glamour from these ‘real’ little people: the very fact that they existed and were the living source of fairy fantasy is, perhaps paradoxically, enough to fire the imagination.

Euhemerism, while sometimes alluded to in the context of Victorian fairy tales, has been largely overlooked by contemporary scholars in terms of its application as a means to imagine human prehistory in fin de siècle fiction.²⁹ Evolutionary theories – whether they were based on Darwinian natural selection or Ernst Haeckel’s theory that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny – gave the natural world a new meaning. By embedding humans firmly in the animal kingdom, evolution questioned the value of human supremacy and subjected human antecedents to scientific analysis. However, as Talairach-Vielmas points out, like fairyland, evolutionary theories cannot be seen: their conception requires imagination rather than strict adherence to the laws of empirical scientific investigation (2014: 6). Fairies, pixies, dwarfs or elves could, for example, be imagined as real on purely scientific grounds, as ‘life-forms developed on a separate branch of evolution’ (Silver 1999: 51). As well as revealing hitherto unknown truths about the world, science also exposed the troubling extent of human ignorance about nature’s systems and structures, as well as about the deep past. The increasing popularity of euhemerism in the nineteenth century provided another way of connecting science and the supernatural, by locating the fairies, elves and dwarfs of imagination within human prehistory, thus positioning them as simultaneously inhabiting the fields of anthropology, evolution and fantasy.

As I stated in my introduction, euhemerism enables a reversal of the usual flow of imagination regarding little people: as well as real little people being depicted or imagined as fairy-fantasy, it allows fairies to be imagined, once upon a time, as real. It is my argument that if, as Bown suggests, ‘fairies are part of the lost enchantment of the world’, euhemerism rediscovers and re-enchants them via

²⁹ Both Silver (1999: 45-51) and Talairach-Vielmas (2014: 131) interrogate the hypothesis, but both authors contextualize euhemerism purely as a racial theory.

evolutionary science (Bown 2001: 182).³⁰ The way euhemerism recalibrated the fantastic as forgotten, prehistoric reality, established in the relatively new fields of both anthropology and folklore a supernatural connection that exponentially increased the fertility of their relationship with late-nineteenth-century gothic, horror, and weird fiction. By commingling science and fantasy, euhemerism created a seemingly material foundation on which authors such as Arthur Machen and Grant Allen were able to establish their fictions about the deep past. The hybrid conjunction of science and the supernatural to which euhemerism gave shape should be considered alongside other established influences on fin de siècle gothic fiction, such as the development of psychology, and anxiety about degeneration. It brings a different – a weird – tone to late-century gothic fiction, less pessimistic than that produced by those two powerful influences, modifying but not displacing them.

Euhemerism gradually gathered popularity during the course of the nineteenth century, although the term began to be used only during the 1840s ('Euhemerism', *OED* 1891). During the second half of the century, it came to be applied to the study of folklore and anthropology as a way of understanding belief in fairies, gnomes, ogres and similar supernatural beings in terms of the prehistoric existence of a 'pre-Aryan' race of smaller-than-average British aborigines. These peoples, it was said, had been driven out by waves of conquering colonists – the Celts, then the Teutonic tribes of Angles, Saxons, Vikings and Jutes – and had hidden largely underground, giving rise to tales of mysterious lights inside the hills, and of a small, elusive people, invisible and unknowable. During the 1880s and 1890s, the efforts of David MacRitchie and Robert Grant Haliburton, among others, established euhemerism as the most widely-accepted anthropological theory at the fin de siècle, and I examine their work later in this chapter.

The development and popularization of euhemerism, and the extent of its influence on fin de siècle horror and weird fiction would not have been possible without the earlier work of the folklorist and anthropologist Edward Burnett

³⁰ Other attempts to re-enchant included, as I have stated, renewed interest in the occult, in non-Western religions, in neo-Paganism, and the Arts and Crafts movement's nostalgic medievalism.

Tylor (1832-1917), who established and promoted the anthropological 'doctrine of survivals'. At mid-century, anthropology was a new and contested field. The emergent disciplines of ethnology and anthropology, and the study of folklore, all three of which flowered during the course of the nineteenth century, were profoundly intertwined. The folklore movement developed from the formation of The Society of Antiquaries, founded in 1717, whose members published, in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, much material noting the traces of the past which had survived among the British rural peasantry. These men were descendants of an antiquarian tradition dating back to the sixteenth century, which was itself one of the sources from which ethnology emerged: those early antiquarians were, at least partly, concerned with trying to establish a genealogical link between an imaginary 'national ancestor' and Noah (Stocking 1987: 53-6).

Tylor's doctrine of survivals, however, was based on an evolutionary rather than a theological model, and insisted on the prehistoric, communal 'savagery' of early man, and thus on a shared human – and, indeed, animal – past. Early folklorists were essential to the development of anthropology, as antiquarian enthusiasts used surviving oral traditions to support their more physical, archaeological, source materials: stone circles, ruined forts and Celtic burial grounds.³¹ But these oral traditions were sometimes viewed with a level of discomfort, and attitudes to anachronistic survivals, which included old wives' tales or local customs, often coinciding with pagan festivals and fairy tales, were varied. While ignorant superstitions were felt to be at odds with an enlightened age, they were also seen as evidence of the indomitability of the rural English working classes attempting to keep alive at least some vestige of their ancient, beloved, Catholic – or even pre-Christian – rites. Attitudes to rural superstitions became more accepting and their value was acknowledged as the science of folklore developed during the second half of the nineteenth century. For example,

³¹ By 1877 the President of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Colonel Lane-Fox (later Pitt Rivers) gave an address reviewing the past year's work at the Institute, which included thirteen papers on 'Archaeology', ten on 'Ethnology' and eight on 'Sociology', which included work on superstitions, mythology and religion (Lane-Fox 1877: 491-510).

the *Dublin Penny Journal* commented in 1833 that the ‘superstitious belief which still prevails to a great extent in Ireland, with regard to fairy children, or changelings... is of very injurious tendency’, but by 1885 these same superstitions were valuable – even indispensable – to the study of folklore (Gomme 1885: 12). However, ancient superstitions that still existed in modern times uncomfortably collapsed the chronological and imaginative distance between modern ‘civilized’ man and his early, ‘savage’ forebears. How to think about such survivals was the subject of much uneasy reflection.

The pygmy discoveries of the latter decades of the century discussed in the last chapter gave human shape to the concept of ‘savage survivals’. Contested borderlines between ‘savage’ and ‘civilized’, man and animal, truth and illusion, and between natural and supernatural phenomena are repeatedly found together in the literature of folklore, anthropology and travel narratives during the second half of the nineteenth century, and occur in a variety of ways. The context in which the idea of savage survivals played out was a broad one: the lens of degeneration through which it has been viewed over the last thirty years or so caused elements of it to be lost. With a closer focus on the role that both folklore and anthropology played in the cultural interchange at the time, particularly with regard to little people, ‘savage survivals’ can be read not as ‘throwbacks’ to be feared, but as representations of human tenacity to be admired, and, in the light of euhemerism, to be venerated as a link to the supernatural.

Euhemerism: breaching the borderline between fact and fantasy

Caroline Sumpter has suggested that the first person to popularise euhemerism in the nineteenth century was Edgar Taylor, translator (anonymously at the time) of the Grimm brothers’ *Kinder und Haus-Märchen*, in the 1820s (2008: 50). However, Dr James Cririe, in his *Scottish Scenery*, published right at the beginning of the century in 1803, sets out in detail the complete euhemerist argument, later taken up by MacRitchie, and supported by Grant Allen and the folklorist John Rhys, inspiring Arthur Machen, and giving credence to Haliburton’s ‘discovery’ of the dwarfs of Mount Atlas. Cririe’s short paragraph is worth quoting almost in its

entirety. After observing that belief in fairies is still very prevalent in the Highlands, he notes that

most traditional stories respecting fairies [...] might perhaps be accounted for, upon supposition that the Druids, or some conquered Aborigines, had fled from their enemies, and taken up their residence in those subterraneous dwellings, so frequently discovered in digging in various parts of Scotland, and in some places called Picts' houses. Covered with artificial mounts, they were generally green hills. When the country came to be inhabited around them, a regard for their own safety would induce them to lie hid by day, and to come abroad only in the night; it would be of consequence, if at any time their occasions should force them abroad in daylight, that their clothing should be as like the ground as possible; hence they were always dressed in green. Their narrow dwelling kept them much confined by day; hence the exercise of dancing by moonlight must have been to them most delightful, and frequently repeated in remote glens and sequestered places. Hence also their music by night in the open air; by day in their dwellings, it might have betrayed them. Hence also, in dark nights, those gleams of light, which were necessary to find their way to water, or any thing else they might need. Their stock of provisions might at time run short; hence their females, appearing in green gowns, borrowing oatmeal, and repaying it. Their families, in that confined state of life, from putrid or infectious diseases, might become thin, or wear away; hence also their carrying off women and children, to recruit their stock: hence also the return of those carried off, being permitted to depart, after several years of absence from their own families, under a promise of keeping their secret.

(1803: 347-8)

This passage illustrates how the principle of euhemerism, which seeks to expose a folk-myth or fairy tale as, originally at least, a reality, works against itself. The elements of fantasy and imagination are so intertwined with the hypothetical reality that both are imbued with a sense of the uncanny. The idea of men, however real, a conquered race, living beneath 'green hills', dancing and playing music by moonlight, causing 'gleams of light' to shine on dark nights, dressed always in green, sometimes carrying off women or children, is absolutely the stuff of fairy tales. The reality or otherwise of these people seems to be imaginatively immaterial. In the case of euhemerism, science does not impose a dull, rational explanation on an element of wonder: it enhances the magical by locating it in reality. Its hypothesis is that the imaginary beings – fairies, elves, dwarfs – who

people children's fairy tales really existed, while the myths that surround them, such as the lights in the hills, the moonlit dancing, and fairy thefts and kidnappings, are based on survival. It is this uncanny light of euhemerism which illuminates many fin de siècle tales of 'savage survivals' rather than the bleaker, duller, 'reddened light of the Dusk of Nations' in which Max Nordau saw the 'stunted growths' of degeneration (1895: 6/17).

However, euhemerist interpretations of prehistory are not confined to either the beginning or the end of the nineteenth century. In 1868 *Good Words for the Young* began the publication of *Madam How and Lady Why*, by Charles Kingsley, which over the next ten months introduced young readers to a version of the natural world that, like *The Water-Babies* (1862-3), was both evolutionary and deeply religious. In Chapter VI, entitled 'The True Fairy Tale', Kingsley wrote a euhemerist interpretation of 'savage survivals', set in England, and addressed to a young British audience. Kingsley framed the chapter as a 'fairy tale'

because it is so strange; indeed I think I ought to call it the fairy tale of all fairy tales, for by the time we get to the end of it I think it will explain to you how our forefathers got to believe in fairies, and trolls, and elves, and scratlings, and all strange little people who were said to haunt the caves and the mountains [...]

(1869: 258)

While the main thrust of the euhemerist argument, and of Kingsley's chapter, was that the little people of imagination were, once upon a time a little people of fact, Kingsley did little to differentiate between the two. His reading of the nature and behaviour of these ancient British inhabitants was complex: they were possessed of 'reasonable souls', they were 'cunning', 'brave' and 'had wits', they liked to draw, and were therefore 'the kinsman of every painter and sculptor', with the 'same wonderful and mysterious human nature as you'. But they were also 'poor creatures', 'dirty' and 'ignorant' (1869: 260-1).

Kingsley puts the essential euhemerist question to his young audience thus: '[s]uppose that these people, after all, had been fairies?' Although quick to deny them any kind of supernatural power, or admit that they were 'anything but savages', the association is nonetheless created by the question itself, by the lexical proximity of 'people' and 'fairies', and Kingsley prolongs and enhances that

association throughout the text (1869: 260). He goes on to propose ways in which the fairy legend may have grown around this diminutive displaced and conquered people, which MacRitchie was to echo some two decades later. Some of these savages, he suggests, may have been very short, 'as the Lapps and the Esquimaux are now', so a 'story grew of them being so small they could make themselves invisible'; some, perhaps, were extremely tall, so tales were told of giants and ogres. The tales became, no doubt 'ridiculous and exaggerated', but there were indeed 'strong and terrible savages, who ate human beings'. Kingsley then refers to 'a personage whom I should have been very sorry to meet, and still more to let you meet, in the wild forest [...] a savage of enormous strength of limb (and I suppose of jaw) [...] who could have eaten you if he would' (1869: 261).

Kingsley indicates that this preternaturally strong and terrifying savage was based on the discovery in 1856 of the remains of Neanderthal man, who was, like Kingsley's ogre, 'buried in a cave in the Wanderthal, between Elberfeld and Dusseldorf, on the lower Rhine' (ibid.).³²

Such savages may have lingered (I believe, from the old ballads and romances, that they did linger) for a long time in lonely forests and mountain caves, till they were all killed out by warriors who wore mail-
armour, and carried steel sword, and battleaxe, and lance [...]

(1869:261)

This is a potent mixture of quasi-palaeoanthropology and fantasy. These 'savages', or Neanderthals in Kingsley's understanding, are clothed in the language of enchantment, in 'lonely forests' and 'mountain caves', their existence the stuff of 'old ballads and romances' (ibid.). Even those who drove them out appear straight from the pages of *The Idylls of the King*. Here Kingsley uses a euhemerist structure to make the dry sciences of anthropology and archaeology not only palatable, but thrilling.

³² Although what we would now call 'Neanderthal' remains were found during the 1820s, '30s and '40s, the fossilized bones discovered in 1856 in the Neander Valley in Germany were the first to be recognized as fossil proof of primitive, pre-modern humans (Pettit 2010: 31).

Euhemerism's increased popularity and visibility during the 1890s was largely due to the work of MacRitchie, who arranged and consolidated the work of earlier authorities, such as Cririe, Sven Nilsson, J. F. Campbell, and Joseph Jacobs, and deemed euhemerism the "realistic" interpretation of such traditions' (1893b: xviii). MacRitchie published one major euhemerist work, *The Testimony of Tradition*, in 1890, of which *Fians, Fairies and Picts*, published in 1893, is a consolidation and restatement, and contributed many essays and articles to journals including the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, *Science*, and the *Celtic Review*. He and Haliburton worked together (Haliburton 1895: 177), and Haliburton's *The Dwarfs of Mount Atlas*, originally a paper read before The Congress of Orientalists in London on September 3rd 1891 and published later that year, caused months of discussion in the *Times*' letters page, and in the pages of *Nature* and *Academy*.³³ MacRitchie's and Haliburton's research tried to be strictly empirical. MacRitchie based his research on the accepted folkloric technique of gathering local tales of fairy raths and hows, and from these eliciting information as to where he should begin his excavations. Haliburton had travelled in Morocco and otherwise gathered as much reliable material as possible (1882: 9), citing 'thirty-five' Berbers who stated that they had seen 'towns or hamlets' of dwarfs in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains (1891a: 51, 29).

Despite MacRitchie's appropriation of the 'realist' label, and for all their denials of any kind of super- or preternatural classification for their 'little people', the evidence they presented stubbornly retained an element of the fanciful. For example, MacRitchie only knew where to start looking for his real 'little people' by following the guidance of local legends of fairy folk, thus embedding his 'realist' theory firmly in the fantastic. Haliburton's initial interest in the dwarfs of Mount Atlas was sparked by 'a remarkably intelligent Susi' he met in 1888, who told of a race of little people, 'not higher than four feet', who wore embroidered woollen shirts, red leather knee-length boots and made 'spindles and other small articles, which they sold at the markets' (1891a: 33-4). Illustrating the cross-fertilization between fiction and non-fiction, like Paul Du Chaillu and Henry

³³ See 1891c: 32, 96, 16, and 1893a: 134 for the major part of this correspondence.

Morton Stanley before him, Haliburton uses the 'sceptical narrator' as an authorial voice, a narrative technique commonly used by Machen and other writers of fiction as an aid to claiming the 'truth' of an unlikely event.³⁴ To Haliburton, this story of a small people wearing such clothes and manufacturing and trading in the artefacts of fairy tales, such as spindles, seemed 'utterly incredible' (1891a: 33-4), echoing the initial disbelief of Du Chaillu and Schweinfurth on their African explorations. George Laurence Gomme, then President of the Folklore Society, wrote in 1892 a summary of where fairy-euhemerism stood at the time.

The theory that fairies are the traditional representatives of an ancient Pigmy race has met with considerable support from folklorists. It is needless to repeat all the arguments in support of this theory which have been advanced during the past twenty years, because they are contained in works easily accessible and well known. But it is important to note that these beliefs must have originated not with the aboriginal pigmy race themselves, but with the conquering race who over-powered them and drove them to the hills and out-parts of the land. The influence of the despised out-driven aborigines did not cease after the conflict was over. It produced upon the minds of their conquerors mythic conceptions, which have during the lapse of time become stereotyped into certain well-defined lines of fairy lore.

(1892: 63)

Gomme's synopsis make clear that the magical power ascribed to these prehistoric peoples was entirely in the minds of their persecutors, embedded as myth only after centuries.

Tylor: survivals, evolution and degeneration

As I have already noted, while euhemerism was never universally accepted, it showed remarkable resilience and surfaced repeatedly throughout the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth. Its cultural traction owed much to Edward Burnett Tylor's development of the 'doctrine of survivals'. Tylor's importance to

³⁴ For example, in 'The Shining Pyramid' (1895) the idea that a young girl who has disappeared has 'gone with the fairies' or been 'taken by the fairies' is initially dismissed as 'Such stuff!' (80).

the sciences of anthropology and folklore, the study of which began to overlap almost to the point of indistinction during the 1860s and 1870s, rests on three major contributions. He began the first volume of his most important work, *Primitive Culture* (1871), with a definition of culture that characterised the subject matter of anthropology (and thus the science itself) until the 1920s.³⁵ He developed the theory of animism among primitive peoples, contending that the subjective and objective become fused, and inanimate objects are invested with spirit life, as totems or fetishes. Extending this thesis, he posited the idea that 'savage' animism, while close to amoral was, nevertheless, the foundation of religious belief. From this he extrapolated not that savages themselves were morally wanting – while religious morality is 'little represented in the religion of the lower races' both moral sense and moral standards are 'strongly marked' (1871 Vol. I: 386) – but that religion and morality have no intrinsic link: they have become linked only relatively recently through the idea of retribution in a future life (83-85). In 1869, in an essay entitled 'On the Survival of Savage Thought in Modern Civilization', he first used the term 'survivals'. The idea was not new – nearly twenty years later Andrew Lang testily asserted that 'the followers of Mr Tylor do not seem to be aware that they are only repeating the notions of the nephew of Corneille' (1887a, Vol. II: 321).³⁶ Nevertheless, Tylor codified and developed the theory so that it both shed light on the distant history of man, and confirmed his own progressionist ideology.

As evolutionary theory became accepted and expanded, and man's place in a reconstructed Great Chain of Being was debated and reconfigured, the cultural, social and psychological importance of establishing boundaries between 'savage' and 'civilized', and even between animal and human developed new significance, and was continuously contested (Corbey 1995: 1-10). Much more became known about the great apes – mankind's evolutionary, living 'savage survival' – during the 1860s. When Paul Du Chaillu's gorillas were introduced to the general public, their relationship with man (and the degree of their savagery) was the subject of

³⁵ 'Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor 1871, Vol. I: 1).

³⁶ Bernard de Fontenelle (1657-1757) Pierre Corneille's long-lived nephew, saw myth as the product of 'the childishness of the human mind at the dawn of reason' (Cools 2017).

much investigation and speculation, as examined in my previous chapter. The interpretation of 'savage survivals' thus became a disturbing reminder of humanity's bestial origins as well as a method of gaining access to that deep past. Tylor acknowledged at the beginning of *Primitive Culture* that '[t]o many educated minds there seems something presumptuous and repulsive in the view that the history of mankind is part and parcel of the history of nature' (1871 Vol. I: 2) but he was determined to ensure the place of anthropology amongst the natural sciences. The method on which he based his theory of survivals was to examine cultural similarities, not only between disparate countries of the world, but between 'barbarous hordes' and 'civilized nations', and he found striking examples of affinity within contemporary superstitions and mythologies.

Comparing the 'modern European peasant' to his ancient forebears, he remarked that 'his tale of the ghost in the nearest haunted house' or 'of the farmer's niece who was bewitched with knots in her inside till she fell into fits and died' have 'altered little in a long course of centuries' (ibid. 3). As Gillian Bennet has noted (1994: 29), folklore was 'methodologically and substantively integral to social evolutionism' and folklorists were keen to 'join the scientific community on the coat-tails of anthropology'. In 1893, there was even an attempt to amalgamate the Folk Lore Society with the Anthropological Institute, although the attempt (and another made in 1898) failed on financial grounds (Simpson 1999: 99-101). Both fields relied increasingly on the interpretation of 'savage survivals', and while he was not the inventor of the term, Tylor was primarily responsible for establishing the detection and interpretation of 'savage survivals' as the basis of the science of folklore in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

'Survivals' in the shape of rural superstitions were viewed during the first half of the nineteenth century, variously as trivial (although interesting), as embarrassing reminders of a credulous and uneducated socio-political underclass, and as a vital facilitator of social cohesion in the face of barbaric modernity.³⁷ Current literary and cultural scholarship has observed that between 1850 and 1900 the idea of common folklore mythology as 'savage survivals'

³⁷ For examples of these three perspectives, see Brand (1813), Dalyell (1834) and Wilde (1852).

became racialized in the aftermath of Tylor's work.³⁸ Carole Silver, for example, suggests that his hypothesis inspired fellow-folklorists, such as Alfred C. Haddon, George Laurence Gomme and John Stuart Stuart-Glennie to model a 'clash of races' theory, 'a useful concept in an era of imperial expansion' (1999: 45). Stuart-Glennie, perhaps the most extreme of these racial anthropologists, expounded a theory – which he named 'sociological Evolution' – in which the development of civilization grew from the migration southward of an ancient 'Archaian White Race' who eventually settled 'among lower Coloured and Black races' (1889a: 204-5). Belief in fairies was formed by the 'lower' race mythologizing their white conquerors, and Stuart-Glennie proposed as part of his theory of the development of matriarchal societies, that 'Swan-Maid' tales – perhaps the most familiar of which is defined in the plot of the ballet *Swan Lake* – were rooted in this extreme hypothesis (Nutt 1891: 368).

Equally, other scholars have noted that the concept of 'savage survivals' was also internalised, and applied to notions of psychological and physiological atavism amidst fears of cultural, social and biological degeneration. Gillian Beer is, it seems, alone in suggesting that the idea of survivals may be of some comfort, a means by which 'the Victorians imaginatively healed their sense of the enormity of oblivion' because the concept relies on the continued existence of evidence, both physical and psychological, which enables the seeker to track the prehistoric origins of current enigmas (1989 17-18). The ascription of 'savage' mentality to the contemporary criminal mind was encapsulated in Daniel Tuke's description of 'moral insanity' as 'reversion to an old savage type... born by accident in the wrong century' (Tuke 1885: 365), and this concept has provided a modern focal point, both for scientific historians and for literary scholars of late-Victorian gothic fiction.³⁹ Robert Mighall, for example, proposes that the 'anthropological focus' of the genre entailed a double movement, both outwards towards the edges of the empire, and 'inward, to focus on the domestic "savages" which reside in the very heart of the civilized world, and even in the ancestral memory of the civilized subject' (1999: 136). Perhaps the most celebrated fictionalization of an internal

³⁸ See Silver (1999: 45-50; 117-147) and Brantlinger (2003: 178-181).

³⁹ Scientific historians include Gould (1981: 122-142), and Manias (2013: 203); literary scholars include Arata (1995), Mighall (1999) and Ruddick (2007).

'savage survival', noted by Mighall (141), Arata (1995: 234) and Ruddick (2007: 191-193) among others, is the existence of the 'troglydytic' or 'ape-like' Mr Hyde inside the superficially civilized Henry Jekyll (Stevenson 2003: 16, 69, 70).

As I have already noted, survivals had functions both as proof of an earlier stage of civilization, and as mines of historic knowledge. Despite Tylor's scientific and anthropological credentials, the description he uses to rescue the concept of 'survivals' from the taint of 'superstitions' was expressed in language easily interpreted as gothic and redolent of the idea's later incarnation as an expression of anxiety about throwbacks.

The very word "superstition," in what is perhaps its original sense of a "standing over" from old times, itself expresses the notion of survival. But the term superstition now implies a reproach, and though this reproach may often be cast deservedly on fragments of a dead lower culture embedded in a living higher one, yet in many cases it would be harsh, and even untrue.

(1871 Vol. I: 65)⁴⁰

However coolly scientific Tylor's intent, the language he uses has a certain gothic quality, a quality later deployed to recruit the concept of 'savage survivals' into the service of late-nineteenth-century horror fiction. By drawing distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' superstitions and by admitting that the 'reproach' implicit in the word might be deserved, he acknowledges that those survivals deserving of censure might be harmful in some way to our 'living higher' culture. Given Tylor's unsettling phraseology, it is perhaps no surprise that those 'fragments of a dead lower culture' coming back to haunt the 'living higher one' were often literally expressed in the figures of ghosts and mummies that were so prevalent in the chilling fictions of the fin de siècle, or even as the atavistic Mr Hyde embodied, and therefore embedded, in (and escaping from) the 'higher civilization' of Dr Jekyll.

⁴⁰ The *OED*, however, while agreeing with the Latin etymology of *superstes*, 'standing over', relates it to the custom of 'a soldier standing over the prostrate body of a defeated enemy which led to the sense of 'superiority, and hence developed the senses "'prophecy" and "sorcery"' (2012).

Neither a polygenist nor a degenerationist, Tylor believed that differences in levels of civilization were due to differences in development rather than capacity, although he conceded that degeneration did, sometimes, occur (Brantlinger 2003: 178). He argued that both degeneration and progress were potent influences on culture, but history provided empirical evidence that 'progression is primary and degradation secondary' (1871 Vol. I: 34). Tylor's argument, a stadial concept of history, connected modern, 'civilized' man and prehistoric 'savage' man along a shifting timeline, locating colonised people in an anachronistic timeframe, and relocating the prehistoric past within the civilized present in a wholly evolutionary framework. His hypothesis collapsed both the long arc of time and the comfort of divine intent, and was both resolutely scientific and ideologically progressive in the ways I indicate below. His insistence that 'item after item of the lower races passes into analogous proceeding of the higher, in forms not too far changed to be recognized, and sometimes hardly changed at all' brought civilized modernity into, perhaps, a somewhat uncomfortable proximity to a savage past (1871 Vol. I: 6). The 'dead lower culture' in the form of primitive tribes was, if not entirely 'embedded in a living higher one', at least existing within the same timeframe (ibid. 72).

Tylor then firmly locates those modern-day savages within that living, 'higher', urban culture. He contends, as William Booth would do nearly twenty years later, that contemporary urban savages – those poverty-stricken city-dwellers, 'the so-called "dangerous classes"', known as 'street-Arabs' and 'city savages' – are nothing of the sort (1871 Vol. I: 38). Comparing them to the Papuans of New Caledonia, for example, or the inmates of a 'Hottentot kraal' is like comparing 'a ruined house to a builder's yard'. Their condition is to do with external factors, and is not savagery but 'broken-down civilization' (ibid.). That metaphor gives the key to Tylor's progressive outlook: the poor and dispossessed who infest the mean streets of mid-Victorian cities are not degenerate types, but the result of civilization gone wrong, while all humans, even those who live in the most primitive manner, are innately capable of becoming 'civilized' by themselves. Those designated as 'savage' or 'primitive' man and those designated as 'civilized' are, in Tylor's view, victims only of chance circumstances, not of divinely-inspired placement on some cosmic social and geographical scale. He is most eager to

establish that 'savagery and civilization are connected as lower and higher stages of one formation' (1871 Vol. I: 33), and that primitive animism forms an 'unbroken line of mental connexion' between what he calls 'the savage fetish-worshipper and the civilized Christian' (453). The connections between prehistoric and modern, savage and civilized, 'us' and 'them' are, in Tylor's model, increasingly and inextricably interwoven. And Tylor subscribed to the euhemerist hypothesis, believing that the connection between myths of giants and dwarves and traditions of 'real indigenous or hostile tribes' as 'settled beyond question' (348).

However, not everyone agreed. Ever since, towards the end of the seventeenth century, the Bishop of Polignac had seen an orang-utan in a menagerie and wryly said to it 'Speak, and I shall baptize thee' (Corbey 2005: 54-55) the capacity that man had which effectively set up a real separation between him and the lower animals, which could not be challenged (as had the uniqueness of the *hippocampus minor*) was, in Huxley's words, the

marvellous endowment of intelligible and rational speech, whereby [... man] has slowly accumulated and organized the experience which is almost wholly lost with the cessation of every individual life in other animals; so that now he stands raised upon it as on a mountain top, far above the level of his humbler fellows, and transfigured from his grosser nature by reflecting, here and there, a ray from the infinite source of truth.

(Huxley 1863: 112)

Homo sapiens is thus *homo loquens*, and Tylor's most respected forerunner, Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) believed that language, the earliest work of art produced by the human mind, 'forms an uninterrupted chain from the first dawn of history down to our own times' (Müller 1909: 10), calling early man 'the ancient poets of language', comparable to Wordsworth (75). Müller thus launches his thesis that, although humankind is part of one big family, that family is unique, something apart from the 'animal brutality' of the rest of creation. 'Savage survivals', in this case in the shape of brutal creation myths, are worth studying, not because they provide a record of our common 'savage' history, but because they are symptoms of a 'disease of language', etymological fault lines along which

the genesis of eternally 'noble and pure' mankind has been, and risks continuing to be, misunderstood.

In 1856, Müller had published a long essay entitled 'Comparative Mythology' that galvanised the new science of mythology, reinterpreting western folk tales, myths and legends through the medium of Müller's twin-pronged thesis: that the key to all world-myths lay with the rising and setting of the sun, and that the omnipresence in 'Aryan' cultures of senseless, savage and obscene myths is due to a 'disease of language' which progressively changed the meanings of common words.⁴¹ Initially, Tylor and Müller had admired each other's scholarship: Müller reviewed Tylor's early work kindly, and in his early years, at least, Tylor was a member of the solar school, although he withdrew from this position over time (Dorson 1968: 67-8, 182). But the fundamental difference between their two positions is that whereas the basis for Tylor's theory is man's communal, albeit uneven, progression from 'savage' to 'civilized', and before that, from the 'lower animals', the foundation of Müller's theory, its emotional *raison d'être*, is his investment in the eternal nobility of 'Aryan' mankind, and of its regular (but not always communal) progression, not from 'savage' to 'civilized', but from 'noble and pure' towards perfection. After all, 'the divine gift of a sound and sober intellect belonged to him from the very first', so that 'the idea of a humanity emerging slowly from the depths of an animal brutality can never be maintained again' (Müller 1909: 9). In 1881, Müller issued two volumes of *Selected Essays*, including a revised version of his original piece laying out his philological system of solar mythology, and in that same year Lang, Tylor's pupil, debunked the entire construct in an essay for *Fraser's Magazine*. Lang took Müller to task for not facing the facts: that the 'savage and senseless' legends at the root of all mythology (and Lang is at pains to emphasise that *all* world mythologies contain at least a proportion of these) survive as tokens of our mutually savage pasts. They were 'preserved by tradition from an age of low savagery, when men's fancies were almost incredibly puerile and hideous' (Lang 1881: 171).

⁴¹ For example, the Cronos-myth, which disgusted both Müller and Tylor equally, tells that Cronos is the son of Uranus, who at the behest of his mother, Gaia (who is both Uranus's wife and daughter), castrates his father. He then marries his sister and eats his children, before swallowing a stone and vomiting them out alive ('Cronus' 2014).

Lang supported his argument by attacking the Cronos-myth directly, finding narratives comparable to the separation of Gaia and Uranus or the swallowing and regurgitating of children among such contemporary primitive peoples as the Maoris, Zulus, Bushmen and 'Australian black fellows' (1881: 171). When he goes on to deconstruct Müller's philological theory in terms of language, he repeatedly mentions contemporary 'primitive' races – Fijians, Eskimos, Mangaians – to compare their current mythologies with that of earlier savage races, the common ancestors of modern man. Lang, like Tylor before him, collapses time and geography, and seeks answers to the question of the psychological development of prehistoric man among contemporary primitive peoples, those living 'savage survivals'. Lang's disagreement with Müller is really very basic.

Mr. Müller's general theory is that 'mythology is the dark shadow cast by language on thought'. Our general theory, on the other hand, is that the wilder parts of mythology are the strange legacy left by a condition of thought which has become unintelligible to civilised men, but which still actively exists among savages.

(1881: 173)

Lang was relentless in confronting Müller with what he saw as the philologist's distaste for his and Tylor's more scientifically robust and reliable theory, comparing Müller to 'Thackeray's Miss Tickletoy and her *Lectures on English History*, where she dilates "on the painful impression occasioned by the contemplation of early barbarism," and on "the disposition of the human mind to avoid such a study". It is full of disagreeable discoveries, but they must be faced, not avoided' (1886a: 58).

Müller, Tylor and Lang were all appalled at the puerility, savagery and brutality of early myths, particularly that of Cronos and Uranus. All developed a progressive, positivist view of human evolution. The point at issue is that Müller's philological theory turns away from implications of the existence of those myths: that modern (civilised) man, intellectually as well as physically, has developed from early (savage) man, and thence from hominids. Lang, as Tylor had before him, expounded a theory in which all races develop from savagery to civilization, but remnants of early belief and tradition still survive amongst contemporary

'savage races' – and , indeed, amongst British rural peasantry. Both Tylor and Lang saw the study of folklore and mythology in anthropological, ethnological terms, rather than philological. In these terms, mythology is evolutionary, and myths persist as survivals from 'an earlier social and mental condition of humanity' (Lang 1886: 59). Other folklorists agreed with Tylor that an earlier condition of 'savagery' may continue into the modern world. George Laurence Gomme (1853-1916), secretary, director and President of the Folk-Lore Society between 1890 and 1894, published *Ethnology in Folklore* in 1892. In this work, he focused not on 'the advanced part of nations', the winners of tribal wars raging throughout Europe over the previous millennia, but on 'uncivilisation', on the traces seen throughout Europe of 'a powerful race of people, unknown in modern history, who have left material remains of their culture to later ages' (Gomme 1892: 2-3). Dismissing the possibility of degeneration, declaring that 'there is absolutely no evidence [...] of the introduction of uncivilised culture into countries already in possession of a higher culture', Gomme posits that these savage survivals, 'dateless and parentless [...] treasured and revered, kept secret from the Church, law and legislation [...] frequently rude, irrational and senseless' are significant precisely because their continued existence makes no sense.

The theory that best meets the case is that they are to be identified with the rude culture of ancient Europe, which has been swept over by waves of high culture from foreign sources, that nearly everywhere the rude culture has succumbed to the force of these waves, but has nevertheless here and there stood firm.

(Gomme 1892: 6-7)

Gomme's use of the phrase 'stood firm' betrays an admiration for these 'rude cultures', an acknowledgement of their considerable tenacity.

For euhemerists, the concept of 'survivals' could be employed to bring the deep, prehistoric past into sharper focus by interpreting contemporary superstitions as memories of a real people, animals or events, for euhemerism did not apply only to humans. Euhemerist interpretation of the widespread belief in dragons, for example, would contend that creatures conforming to the dragon 'type' – large, perhaps winged (Chinese dragons are flightless), of a physicality

somewhere between reptile and bird – had, at some point, actually existed, and that tales of some kind of interaction with humans had been handed down. The discoveries that took place throughout the nineteenth century of fossilized dinosaur bones, particularly those of pterosaurs, fed this interpretation, and found their way into fiction, too. ‘The Dragon of St. Paul’s’ by Reginald Bacchus and Ranger Gull, for example, features a ‘sort of dragon creature, as big as a cart horse’, which is excavated in the Arctic, frozen in a solid block of ice. Later, it is defrosted and brought back to life, and goes on to terrorise London (Bacchus 1899: 491). This fertilization of the fictional by the scientific was not a one-way process.

In 1892, Henry Neville Hutchinson published *Extinct Monsters: A Popular Account of Some of the Larger Forms of Ancient Animal Life*. The use of the word ‘Monsters’ in the title points to the way in which the fictional invaded the scientific. Hutchinson carries on this fantastic theme: chapters are named ‘The Dragons of Old Time – Dinosaurs’, ‘Flying Dragons’ and ‘Sea-Serpents’ – and one of the illustrations is titled ‘Group of small flying dragons, or pterodactyls’ (see Fig. 6). Years later, in 1924, Machen commented on these alternative designations, citing the discovery of pterodactyl fossils and claiming that the scientists who found them, ‘instead of owning up like decent fellows, and acknowledging that the simple old tale was a true tale [...] they made up a Greek word and spoke of pterodactyls [...] a stupid term and not nearly so expressive as dragons’ (1924d: 130). The imaginative link between dinosaurs and dragons was well-established by the 1890s, particularly in factual books on natural prehistory such as Hutchinson’s, and the idea of pterosaurs as dragons retained its attraction into the new century, with the publication in 1901 of H. G. Seeley’s *Dragons of the Air: An Account of Extinct Flying Reptiles*. The scientific and the fictional cross-fertilize, and as these ideas travel between disciplines, they are transmuted and destabilized. This interdisciplinarity, as Gillian Beer says, does not produce closure, and the stories ‘emphasize not simply the circulation of intact ideas across a larger community but transformation: the transformations undergone when ideas enter other genres or different reading groups, the destabilizing of knowledge once it escapes from the initial group of co-workers, its tendency to mean more and other than could have been foreseen’ (Beer 1996: 115).

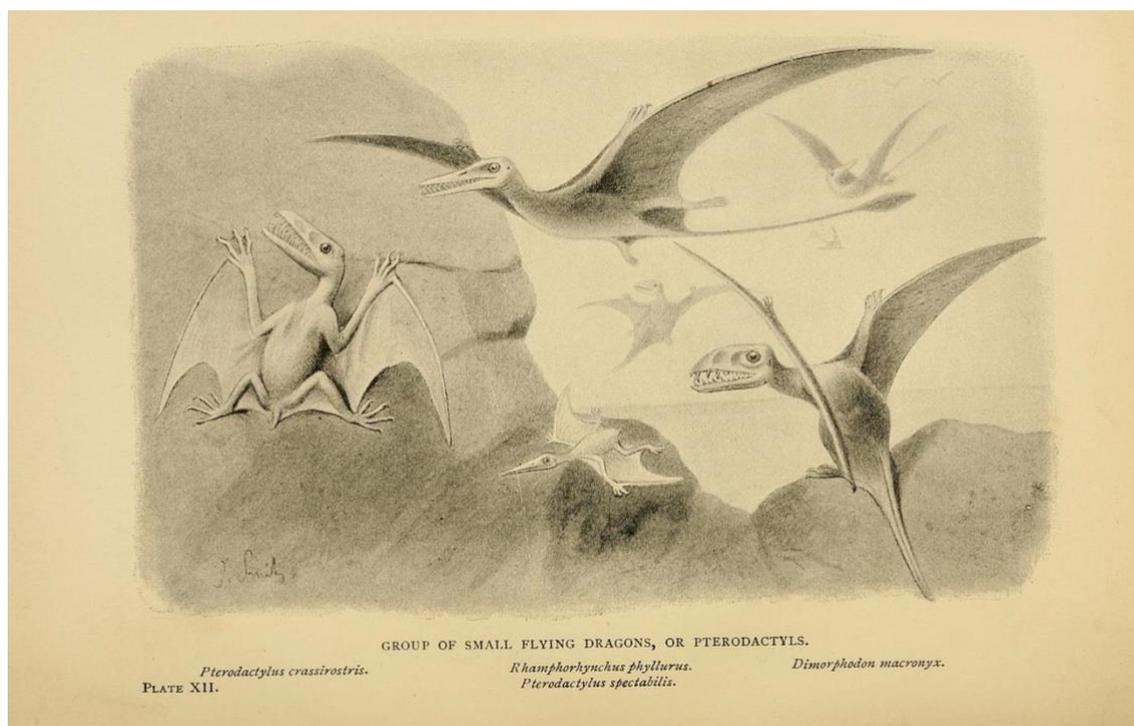


Fig. 6 (Hutchinson 1892, Plate XII: 132)

Euhemerism's position as a 'borderline' science was crucial to its revival at the fin de siècle. It mirrored the process of other transitional experimental sciences during that period by creating elements of scientific materiality for fairy myths, and insisting on the rational and actual existence of 'little people' as a prehistoric race, seeking to explain the occult in non-fantastical terms. A similar methodology was used by the Society for Psychical Research to investigate the spirit world, thought transference and mediumistic powers via engagement with new physical and neurological sciences. Because of its engagement with the deep, prehistoric past, euhemerism could be seen as illuminating the relationship between modern man and his ancestors, the subject of renewed debate and anxiety since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Interacting with newly-authoritative human sciences such as psychiatry and psychology, the perspective afforded by evolutionary theory came under closer examination at the end of the century, as the concepts of atavism and degeneration extended into popular discourse. Evolutionarily inflected ideas about heredity and race, such as those associated with Tylor, Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton, added to these

debates about human antecedents, and enhanced the plausibility of the prehistoric existence of a race of aboriginal 'little people'.

This idea of a prehistoric dwarf race – and in particular the possibility that they still existed as a hidden 'savage survival' – had an impact on fin de siècle cogitations on degeneration. With the development of the science of folklore, the collection of rural legends was seen increasingly as a valid and 'proper' method of reinterpreting the human past and of renegotiating boundaries between savage and civilized, as well as between natural and supernatural. Euhemerism made those boundaries more permeable, establishing such 'savages' not only as prehistoric ancestors, but as present inhabitants of well-loved and much-repeated folktales. These real 'little people', furthermore, were European, rather than African. According to MacRitchie, they had lived in Britain, and could thus be conscripted as part of a British national identity, a subject for consideration at the time, in the face of the increasing cosmopolitanism and modernism which had spawned the Celtic revival of the 1880s. Euhemerism renegotiated the boundary between natural and supernatural in a very particular way, by taking what had been assumed to be local superstitions held by uneducated countrymen and women, and grounding them in archaeological fact. This increased the meaning and importance of such beliefs, much as Tylor's doctrine of survivals had increased the value of local superstitions during the 1860s.

To understand how euhemerism works as a rational – or at least plausible – explanation for 'that antient contagion of Superstition' (Brand. 1813: 600), and to interrogate Arthur Machen's early investment in the theory, I will examine a euhemerist interpretation of selkie myths through his writing. His analysis, which interprets that of David MacRitchie, shows how euhemerism combines elements of both the natural and the supernatural, specifically the way in which the theory appears rationally to deconstruct uncanny myths and root them in the quotidian, while at the same time losing little of the magic and narrative satisfaction originally associated with the myth. Reviewing Joseph Russell-Jeaffreson's recently-published *The Farøe Islands* (1898), some eleven years after his first journalistic foray into the meanings and possibilities of euhemerism, Machen briefly details the common mythology of seal-maidens. A man out sealing watches

his prey lift themselves onto rocks in the morning, and is surprised when they slip out of their sealskins, and reveal themselves as beautiful women.

We know how the story must proceed. The fisherman, of course, catches one of the seal-maidens before she can put on her skin, and takes her home and marries her, and they become the parents of a large family. The skin is kept carefully locked up by the husband, but one day he leaves the key at home, and the seal-wife returns to her old shape and her beloved element. The legend has been told again and again, but Mr. Jeaffreson's tale has a touch of actuality that is new, inasmuch as he was assured that the descendants of the mermaid were alive and had webbing between their fingers. Now this legend, and all legends that resemble it, may be clearly traced to the sea-going Lapps, who, covered with seal-skins, drove their canoes through the stormiest waters and sometimes visited, not only the Faröe Islands, but the coasts of Scotland. The seal-skin, which covered the man or woman, was attached to the boat and kept out of the water, and without this protection the Lapp was helpless.

(1898b: 272-3)

Machen's tone of voice is self-consciously matter-of-fact, and his acceptance of MacRitchie's version of the euhemerist hypothesis is complete.

Some eight years before Machen wrote this article David MacRitchie had emphasised the amphibious appearance of these sea-going people – although MacRitchie denoted them as Finns, not Lapps.⁴² Their canoes were entirely covered with sealskin, 'completely "decked" with the exception of the round aperture in the middle, where the rower sits [so] that when the Finn had fastened his seal-skin garment to the sides of the aperture, he and his boat were one' (MacRitchie 1890: 12). He or she could also roll the kayak, thus appearing from the sea as if from nowhere, and the kayak floated low in the water, giving the impression that the person in it was gliding directly on the water's surface. In the same article, Machen wrote of the palaeontological foundation of 'the "worms" and "dragons" of the ancient songs, and the "roc" of the Arabian tales' being

⁴² This does not seem to me to be a critical difference: Finns may well be Lapps and vice versa. MacRitchie takes note of the synonym: '[...] the Finns (or Lapps, as they are indifferently called) [...]' (1890: 21)

‘doubtless memories of the iguanodons and pleisauri and pterodactyls, so the wildest myth may prove to be founded on a, perhaps, wilder reality’ (1898b: 273). It is a measure of the way in which euhemerism both contains and radiates elements of the numinous that a writer as gripped by the properties of mystery as Machen, convinced as he was of the sacred nature of the universe, finds his yearned-for ‘wilder reality’ here, in an ancient, but essentially un-mysterious past. Machen is clearly charmed by this euhemeristic embedding of myth in a concrete reality, the mermaid legend the result of a somewhat banal case of mistaken identity rather than supernatural agency.

MacRitchie’s argument in the case of the origins of the selkie myth is, I would argue, still persuasive. He quotes extensively from Dr Karl Blind, who had published three lengthy articles in the *Contemporary Review* in August, September and October 1881, and agrees with much of Blind’s hypothesis on the human nature of original Shetland selkies. Both men agree that the Finn in his sealskin-covered kayak must have appeared ‘as some amphibious seal-man – “a selkie i’ da sea”, as the Shetland rhyme goes’ (MacRitchie 1890: 12). As for the seal-women, or mer-women, who form the focus of these tales, they were ‘female Finns, whom the amorous Shetlanders captured before they could regain their skin-canoes’ (ibid.). As to their association with mermaids, MacRitchie enlists the combs and mirrors, their traditional accessories, as supporters of his euhemerist hypothesis. ‘No amphibious woman,’ he insists, ‘would be forever engaged in the mad task of arranging hair which every plunge into the sea would disarrange most effectually’. However, for a Finnish woman to be dressing her hair with the aid of a comb and a mirror on arriving on a strange shore in a sealskin kayak would be ‘a most natural proceeding on the part of any woman who has just landed from a sea-voyage’ (1890: 13). Whether or not this demonstration of the eternal vanity of women is credible in itself, MacRitchie domesticates the seal-women by transforming the combs and mirrors of mermaid fantasy into familiar and domestic beauty aids. He further supports his argument as to the human authenticity of these seal-people with tales of their home-life and progeny:

The reality of those merwomen of Shetland is manifest throughout the tales relating to them. They bear children to their Shetland lovers, they “were

said to make good housewives”; and their descendants in the Shetland Isles today are, presumably as “real” and as human as any of Her Majesty’s subjects.

(1890: 13-14)

Nonetheless, MacRitchie notes that these mermaids are often credited with supernatural powers: they sell winds to sailors, either in bags or bottled, and tempests follow their appearance. To this last, he offers the explanation that ‘when a tempest was threatening, those solitary rovers – knowing that their fragile “sea-skins” could never outride a heavy storm – made hastily for the nearest coast’ (17). Their appearance thus appears to herald bad weather, whereas in fact it is simply a pragmatic attempt to seek shelter.

MacRitchie goes on to elide philologically these sea-going Finns with the Feens of Ireland, whose great chieftain was Finn McCool. There are, as MacRitchie points out, many stories told of Finn McCool – most of which refer to him as a giant (a point which MacRitchie omits). The legend MacRitchie chooses instead defines Finn as the very opposite, as a dwarf. The tale is called ‘How Fin Went to The Kingdom of the Big Men’, and features Finn and his dog Bran being taken to the King, who carries them ‘three times around the town with Fin on one palm and Bran upon the other’. Nobles come to the palace to see ‘the little man’ and Finn is installed at the bottom of the King’s bed as the royal dwarf. This tale comprises, according to MacRitchie, a ‘tacit admission’ that the Feens were, in fact, ‘mere dwarfs’ a trait which ‘is precisely *the most striking* characteristic of the kayak-using Finns of Shetlandic tradition’ (1890: 56, italics in original). Furthermore, these ‘mere dwarfs’ struck terror into the hearts of those they ruled: there are ‘a mass of legends’ amongst the Gaelic-speaking peoples of both Ireland and Scotland of ‘dwarfish but dreaded tyrants [...] fierce and tyrannical’ (56-7). This combination of small size and ferocious tendencies connects MacRitchie’s ancient Shetlandic dwarfs with Stanley’s malignant pygmies, as well as with their imaginary counterparts in Machen’s fictions.

MacRitchie supports his hypothesis that Finns and Feens, Cruithné and Picts, are all dwarfs with evidence from legends, philological etymology and the opinions of fellow-folklorists. According to MacRitchie, Karl Blind is of the opinion

that the Finns of Shetland folklore are ‘reckoned among the Trows’ (1890: 56), while the folklorists Jessie M. Edmonstone Saxby (1880: 342) and the Reverend John Russell (1887: 135-6) note the tradition of ascribing small size, strength and intelligence to the Picts of history, echoing the etymologist, Dr Jamieson, in the supplement to his *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, first published in 1841 (Vol. IV: 210).⁴³ Tylor favoured euhemerism, and had stated in 1871 that, when talking of dwarfish mythology

[b]eyond a doubt, the old Scandinavians are describing the ancient and ill-used Lapp population, once so widely spread over northern Europe, when their sagas tell of the dwarfs, stunted and ugly, dressed in reindeer kirtle and coloured cap, cunning and cowardly, shy of intercourse even with friendly Norsemen, dwelling in caves or mound-like Lapland ‘gamm’, armed only with arrows tipped with stone and bone, yet feared and hated by their conquerors for their fancied powers of witchcraft.

(1871 Vol. I: 349)

In summary, MacRitchie states that ‘the ideas held by the “vulgar” (whose traditions, once contemptuously rejected by scholars, are nowadays being rated at their true value), throughout Scotland, with respect to the Pechts [Picts], agree in describing those people as decidedly dwarfish in stature’ (1890: 60).

These ‘Finn-men’, as well as, presumably, the Finn-women, also display an interesting combination of otherworldly authority and savagery, which resists any attempt to label them as simply atavistic. Looked upon as both preternatural and barbarous, despite their size they were feared by the Shetland islanders, ‘and it will be noticed that those Shetlanders who are understood to have Finn blood in their veins “look upon themselves as superior to common people”’ (MacRitchie 1890: 23). MacRitchie is here quoting from the work of the Church of Scotland Minister John Brand (1669-1738), *A Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland-Firth and Caithness* which was first published in 1701, republished in Volume 3 of John Pinkerton’s *Voyages and Travels* in 1809, and again, separately,

⁴³ According to MacRitchie, *Trow* is a Shetlandic word for dwarf, radically connected to synonyms such as *drow*, *troll*, and *troich* (1890: 56). The *OED* also offers such a definition, but most often defines a *Trow* as akin to a *troll*, with stature of no importance.

in 1883 (Cadell 2004). MacRitchie deduces that the ‘stragging “Finn-Men” of the year 1700’ to whom Brand referred ‘were really the representatives of a decayed caste of conquerors’ (1890: 23). The word ‘decayed’ here is free of the specifically evolutionary connotations of degeneration, and refers to their origins: it is more an indicator of the Finn-Men’s earlier high degree as ‘conquerors’, than a gauge of their current low ‘stragging’ status, a theme Machen takes up in his tale ‘The Turanians’, published in 1924, but written in 1897 (Gawsworth 2013: 145) and examined in the next chapter.

Another sign of their superiority for MacRitchie is that ‘they are remembered as wearing armour,’ which ‘places them before us as a distinctly military race’. This ‘armour’ appears to have been some kind of decoration, metal rings with which they covered the sealskins they wore, resembling scales and therefore rendering their appearance even more fishy (1890: 14). MacRitchie takes great exception to the denoting of the Finn-men of Orkney in the *Minute Book* of the Edinburgh College of Physicians on 24th September 1696 as ‘barbarous’ – simply savages. He emphasizes that ‘what one civilization regards as savagery is really the fag-end of an earlier civilization’ (1890: 10) and argues that reports of their semi-feral status, such as Boswell’s description of one of the rowers who conveyed him and Dr Johnson to Rasay as ‘a robust, black-haired fellow, half-naked, and bare-headed, something between a wild Indian and an English tar’ in appearance, was a mistaken reaction to a people who were simply of a different race (Boswell 1807: 152).

MacRitchie received mixed reviews for this, his first major work. *Science* dismissed his theory as ‘a Mongolian ignis fatuus’ (*The Testimony of Tradition* 1893: 83), while the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* praised his collection of ‘valuable and interesting material’ (Leland 1890: 320). Of the English folklorists, both Andrew Lang and Alfred Nutt took issue with MacRitchie’s conclusions. Lang, in his preface to the 1893 edition of *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* referred to ‘the recent speculations of Mr. MacRitchie’, but could not believe that ‘the historical Picts were a set of half-naked, dwarfish savages, hairy men living underground’ (Lang 1933: 25/26-7). He disputed MacRitchie’s allocation of the role of fairy wise-wife to the association between a Finnish woman and a Pictish man, and concludes that ‘though a memory of some old race

may have mingled in the composite Fairy belief, this is at most but an element in the whole' (Lang 1933: 28). Other folklorists had more complex reactions. Edwin Sidney Hartland, reviewing for *Folklore* in 1891 called the theory 'crude and unscientific, but ably advocated' (Hartland 1891: 108), while Joseph Jacobs, the Cornish antiquarian Henry Jenner, and Sabine Baring-Gould approved the argument and supported MacRitchie's cause (Silver 1999: 152).

The criticism MacRitchie received from his fellow-folklorists focused on his deduction that euhemerism explained *all* fairy belief. It was, however, generally agreed that he had developed a cohesive theory, a plausible narrative that established a strong case for the existence of a prehistoric race of 'little people', hounded by marauding incomers and thus eking out an existence hidden from sight, beneath the hills, giving rise to local fairy legends. After the discovery of Neolithic dwarf skeletons in Schweizerbild in Switzerland in 1893 along with others unearthed at Spy in Belgium, MacRitchie's theories seemed 'incontrovertible' (Silver 1999: 50). At no point did MacRitchie suggest that these little people may still exist. However, in the 1880s, a Canadian lawyer and anthropologist, Robert Grant Haliburton, claimed to have discovered a race of European pygmies – 'Turanian' dwarfs – who were still living in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. His account of this, *The Dwarfs of Mount Atlas*, was published in London in 1891, and was, together with Haliburton's further writings on the topic, widely debated over the ensuing decade in the pages of the *Times* and the *Spectator*, as well as other periodicals. Haliburton cites MacRitchie's work extensively in *The Dwarfs of Mount Atlas*, and they collaborated subsequently (Haliburton 1895: 177, 181). It is to Haliburton that I next turn.

Haliburton's dwarfs

It is likely that Arthur Machen, whose fictional work I will show to be influenced by euhemerism, first read of the theory that a 'race' of dwarfs still inhabited parts of Europe in 1887. He was at this time a journalist, 'de facto editor' of *Walford's Antiquarian Magazine* (Gawsworth 2013: 69), and already interested in anthropology, reviewing *Palaeolithic Man in N. W. Middlesex* by John Allen Brown favourably for the August edition (1887c: 111-2). In the following issue he

contributed an article entitled 'The Allegorical Signification of the Tinctures in Heraldry' (1887b 165-7), and in the same edition, in the 'News and Notes' section, is this short paragraph:

A strange anthropological discovery is reported to have been made in the Eastern Pyrenees. In the valley of Ribas a race of dwarfs, called by the people "Nanos," is said to exist. They never attain more than four feet in height, and have high cheek bones and almond eyes of the Mongolian type. They marry only amongst themselves, and are of a very low intellectual type.

(‘News and Notes’: 188)

Machen may have contributed the paragraph himself. According to his biographer, the 'Heraldry' piece was the only article signed by him during the months he edited the magazine, although he 'contributed in a general way to everything that was going on in the paper: "The Collectanea", the obituary notices, the news and notes; even the book-reviewing came within his province' (Gawsworth 2013: 69-70). Whether or not he actually wrote the paragraph, as editor it is hardly likely that he did not read it. Haliburton also refers to this 1887 discovery in the 'valley of Ribas' when, in 1892, he finds it mentioned in a back issue of a defunct periodical. It is tempting to think that the defunct periodical may have been *Walford's Antiquarian*, and the piece written by – or, at the very least edited by – Arthur Machen. In 1894 MacRitchie visited the Val de Ribas on Haliburton's behalf, uncovering the original paper by a Professor Morayta who claimed to have discovered these Catalan dwarfs (Haliburton 1895: 177-8).

Haliburton's interest in the possibility of racial dwarfs existing in north Africa and, later, in Europe, had been triggered much earlier. In the early 1880s, while travelling in Morocco, he heard stories of a 'little people' living south of the Atlas Mountains. After a decade of investigation, on September 2nd 1891, he presented a paper in London to the Oriental Congress on the existence of what he believed to be a 'race' of dwarfs living in the foothills of the Atlas range in Morocco. This sensational news was reported in the *Times* on September 3rd ('Congress of Orientalists' 1891: 6). His theory was immediately and vigorously contested over a period of some years by, amongst others, J. E. Budgett Meakin, the ex-Acting

Editor of *The Times of Morocco* (Haliburton 1891c: 90-5), Harold Crichton-Browne who had spent some years in Morocco on an expedition with the Scottish explorer, Joseph Thompson (1892c: 116-26) and the 'clash of races' folklorist J. S. Stuart-Glennie (1893a: 148-51). In response, in 1892 Haliburton produced a pamphlet on the subject, detailing his evidence. The *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, giving notice of its publication, suggested that 'it is difficult to see what negative evidence [...] could be of much value against the carefully authenticated enquiries set out in this little book. Mr. Haliburton deserves the thanks of historical students for the trouble he has taken in the matter' ('Notes of the Quarter' 1892: 172-3).

Haliburton published the booklet because his original paper had 'attracted so much attention and so much discussion', as well as to refute claims that sightings of these dwarfs had been the province of only a few 'stray Englishmen' and 'two or three natives' rather than the sixty-five 'natives, European residents, and travellers who have seen one or more of these dwarfs, or have testified as to the existence of a dwarf race' (1891a: 31-2). While Haliburton himself had never, at that time, actually seen such a person, there were many who wrote that they had personally met an 'Akka' dwarf, and among his sixty-five witnesses he published letters from the Right Hon. Sir J. Drummond-Hay, Walter Harris 'the well-known traveller in Morocco', a 'Mr Carleton of Tangier', Captain Rolleston 'a well-known writer on Morocco', and Miss Day and Miss Herdman, both of the Mission to the Berbers, all in support of his theory (1891a: 35-47). Carole Silver's dismissal of Haliburton as 'an armchair explorer' seems, on the evidence, hardly fair (1999: 138). First, until the publication in 1922 of Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, virtually all anthropology was 'armchair anthropology', in that it involved reading the classics and analysing the writings of travellers, such as missionaries or those in the service of the Empire, as to the religious and magical beliefs, tribal hierarchies and social constructs of different cultures. Malinowski's immersive practice was itself stumbled upon: he was on a field trip to the Trobriand Islands and was forced to stay much longer than originally intended as he was unable to return to England as an Austrian national at the outbreak of the First World War. The publication of his findings in 1922 changed the face of anthropology, and ensured that extended fieldwork involving

immersion in day-to-day life became essential to its practice (Stocking 1987: 321).

Furthermore, Haliburton certainly seems to have engaged in at least some fieldwork, as he had been in Tangier in the early 1880s and Algiers in the early 1890s, and Harris met him in Morocco in November 1890 (Haliburton 1891a: 56). Haliburton's work is of interest for three reasons: he suggests the continuing existence of that ancient 'Turanian' race who, according to David MacRitchie and his followers, spread throughout northern Europe before the Iron Age and gave rise to legends of 'little people'; his writing demonstrates the potency of the fusion of scientific and supernatural language in the field of anthropology at the time, which would have gone some way towards the ensuing cross-fertilization between fact and fiction; while his part in the ensuing debates, which made news in the national press, periodicals and magazines, makes it highly likely that fin de siècle writers of weird fiction, such as Grant Allen and Arthur Machen, would have been aware of them. Haliburton's 'discovery' and the implication that these small people had once populated northern Europe suggested that these 'survivals' might yet exist, hidden, in the middle of modern communities. Machen in particular was clearly struck by the fictional possibilities of both the idea of 'savage survivals' and the euhemerist hypothesis. For example, in 'The Novel of the Black Seal' (1895), Professor Gregg sets out in his 'Statement' an unmistakable, if gothic, euhemeristic interpretation of Tylor's doctrine (2007c: 164), while euhemerism is the central concern of both 'The Shining Pyramid' (1895) and 'The White People' (1899). 'The Red Hand' (1895), echoing Tylor, locates malevolent, stunted 'survivals' in London, where they leave traces in the forms of prehistorically-fashioned flint knives and crude markings near Holborn (2003b: 4-5).

Like David MacRitchie, Haliburton made a persuasive case for his theory. In 1881, when he first heard of the 'small people' living to the south of the Atlas Mountains, as if to emphasise both his scepticism and his awareness of the permeability of the borderline between fact and fiction, Haliburton says that he 'never suspected that these expressions referred to a dwarf race but assumed that they alluded to cherubs or fairies' (1891a: 33). As I have mentioned, some years later, in 1888, he learned the 'utterly incredible' story of this race of 'very brave

and active' dwarfs, who wear embroidered shirts, make spindles and have reddish skin (1891a: 33-4). According to Haliburton 'the conversation was forgotten, and probably never would have been recalled to my mind' but he read of Emin Pasha's gift to the Royal Society of the skeletons of two Akka pygmies (1891a: 34). Emin Pasha, whom Stanley was on a mission to rescue when he 'discovered' tribes of Central African pygmies, had lent his 'collection of mammals, including skeletons of Akka people – the Lilliputians of Niam-Niam' to the Natural History Museum in 1887 ('Natural History Museum' 1887: 5). Haliburton wrote to a number of people in towns in both Morocco and Algeria enquiring whether they had heard anything of these Akka dwarfs, and had replies that seemed to confirm their existence (1891a: 35-7).

From this correspondence, Haliburton inferred that the Akka of the southern Atlas were of the same race as the Akka of Lakes Victoria and Albert in Uganda, recently discovered by Stanley, as they were 'precisely alike in every particular, except that the one race is savage and the other is civilized' (1891a: 37). Sightings of these dwarfs in the towns of northern Morocco proved, however, to be sporadic, although, taking this into account, Haliburton noted that it was surprising how many Europeans had seen them. All remarked on their small stature and on their facial similarity, which appeared to support the theory that they were part of a race of dwarfs, rather than individual anomalies. There are also intriguing references to their intrinsically preternatural character: a M. Caillé tells, for example, of talking to a dwarf at a stopping place near Akka who then seemed to reappear at another halt further on. Commenting on what he sees as the dwarf's inherently uncanny appearance, he says that "*ce petit homme m'apparaisait comme un nain mystérieux*" ['this little man appeared to me as a mysterious dwarf'] (Haliburton 1891a: 51). These reports, combined with the proven existence of the precisely similar Akkas of Central Africa, seemed to Haliburton to preclude the possibility of a mistake as to their existence in the southern Atlas. However, in 1890 Haliburton travelled to Tangier to confirm his theory.

Apparent proof of the reality of these hitherto unknown dwarf tribes and their existence in large numbers surprisingly close to well-populated areas of the western world came next. In Tangier Haliburton made contact with two Algerians

who both confirmed the existence in some numbers (one spoke of ‘a town of them’) of the Akka dwarfs (Haliburton 1891a: 52). Eventually, Haliburton found and measured one of these dwarfs at four feet six inches tall. The dwarf gave Haliburton much information about his tribe: their preferred clothing, their trade in slaves and ostrich feathers, their skill at making spindles and their ‘peculiar reddish complexion’. As Haliburton said, ‘it is hard to imagine stronger evidence than that of a kinsman of the dwarfs, whose native place was on the borders of the Sahara, and who described a tribe of dwarf ostrich hunters’ (1891a: 55). Haliburton collected more evidence from a variety of sources – a Moor connected with the Emperor’s army, a ‘native of Warzazat in the Dra valley’, a date-trader from the Sahara, a ‘Rabbi from Ternata’, a ‘native of Sakiat Hamra’ and so on – all of whom agreed that the dwarfs existed in large numbers: there were ‘some hundreds of them’ living near Sakiat Hamra (61); “‘there are villages of the small people’” (63). The contradictory nature of their supposed existence – scarcely sighted but existing in numbers, trading openly yet inherently mysterious – positions them as a people on the boundary of reality, a liminal tribe, living in the gap between established fact and theorized possibility.

These dwarfs of the southern Atlas were also ascribed occult and preternatural powers, as well as attributes commonly assigned to their fictional counterparts. They were reputed to be ‘lucky and bring good luck’ and ‘they know more about the stars and hidden treasures than other men’ (Haliburton 1891a: 65-6). They were also said to be extremely agile and often to travel as troupes of acrobats, although their performances sometimes lacked an audience, as those they had come to entertain would occasionally run away in fear, convinced the Akka performers were ‘jinns or imps who were amusing themselves’ (1891b: 69). They also displayed traits commonly attributed to fairy-tale dwarfs, believed often to work as ‘shoemakers and good smiths’ and being in the habit of living in caves. This troglodytic impulse went further to establish their small stature, as the entrances to the caves south of the Atlas range were ‘not more than 5ft. high’ (1891a: 65-6, 71). In summary, these dwarfs are ‘civilized’, with a ‘reddish’ skin colour which differentiates them from the pygmy tribes of central Africa – in other words, they are European, ‘Turanian’ dwarfs, having somehow survived, hidden, close to inhabited areas, for thousands of years. Critically, they also

appear to manifest supernatural powers, being considered 'lucky' and having occult knowledge about the stars and 'hidden treasures'. This is an enticing combination of material and mysterious information, and it is easy to see how such an arrangement of attributes would suggest fictional possibilities.

Initial reception of Haliburton's Turanian dwarf theory was positive. On 3 September 1891, when *The Times* reported the day's events at the Congress of Orientalists it gave his presentation prominence, calling it 'the most striking contribution' to the assembly and reporting it in full, while other contributors to the day's events merited only short summarising paragraphs ('Congress of Orientalists' 1891: 6). The key characteristics of the dwarfs were stipulated once again, and the nature of those characteristics somewhat clarified. According to the *Times*' introduction, the key point of difference between Haliburton's dwarfs and those pygmies found by Du Chaillu and then by Stanley in Uganda, near Lakes Victoria and Albert, was that Haliburton's dwarfs were of a 'higher social and intellectual development' (ibid.). Using a rhetorical device common in fictional narratives, Haliburton dealt with the question of how the Akka had remained hidden from the world for so long, 'for 3,000 years, at least', by ascribing to the neighbouring Moors, who refused to admit their existence, a 'dread [of] strangers knowing about this pygmy race' (1891b: 67-8).⁴⁴ The paradox of large groups of 'little people' living close to and known of by their near neighbours, yet concealed from the wider world is thus explained in gothic terms of dread and secrecy. Equally, the reason for the silence ascribed to their neighbours on grounds of fear could be that this 'race' of dwarfs simply did not exist

However, by 1894 Haliburton felt in a position to assert that 'no one now questions' the existence of dwarf tribes, not only in 'the high ranges of the Atlas almost in sight of Morocco City' but also 'far to the north of Morocco, in the Eastern Pyrenees and other localities in Spain' (1894: 162). Also in 1894, Haliburton wrote a paper on dwarf races in the Americas which was read in Brooklyn. MacRitchie once again supported his hypothesis by drawing Haliburton's attention to the discovery, by a Captain Foxe in 1861, of a cemetery

⁴⁴ In 1866, John Crawford, President of the Ethnological Society, had been equally sceptical on the same basis, when hearing of Paul Du Chaillu's discovery of the Obongo pygmies.

in Hudson Bay in which the longest corpses were less than four feet high, as well as the mention of two dwarf tribes in the Amazon valley by Clements R. Markham, recently published by the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (Haliburton 1895: 183). According to Haliburton, sightings of dwarfs in the Americas flooded in, from Cincinnati and Boston to Mexico City (184-5), and he also found evidence of European dwarfs, not only in France and Spain, but in Germany, Sicily and Italy (186-7). Indeed, members of the German Dwarf Operatic Company, interviewed when they were in Cincinnati in the autumn of 1893, claimed that they all hailed from the same district in the Black Forest, and insisted that they were 'racial dwarfs, and not mere accidents or freak of nature' (185).

If Haliburton had 'proved' the existence, in considerable numbers, of these 'racial' dwarfs in Morocco, the Americas and in Europe, was it not possible that 'little people' still survived, unseen and unobserved, in the quiet countryside of the British Isles? MacRitchie never directly claims it, but it is certainly an idea rich in fictional possibilities. Haliburton suggested as much when he elided his anthropological discovery completely with dwarfish fairytale, and moved the theory from Morocco to the British Isles with the following contention:

In Europe and Britain the dwarfs of early ages are remembered as smiths, artificers, and magicians. If the Dra [valley, south of Mount Atlas] was, as it is believed by some to have been, a great prehistoric workshop, the Birmingham of the Bronze Age, the problem could be easily settled [...] In Northern Morocco there is a belief that there is under the ground a race of little men who can be heard at work. Two centuries ago it is said that this belief existed also in Wales [...]

(1891: 72-3)

Haliburton thus intimates that civilized Akka pygmies of the southern Atlas have spread throughout Europe, reaching as far as the British Isles and prompting folk tales and superstitions about little people living and working underground.

Haliburton also quotes extensively from *The Secret Commonwealth*, Robert Kirk's seventeenth-century treatise on fairy folklore, on 'the subterranean people' who can yet be heard hammering and blowing bellows when 'laying your ear unto a clift of the rocks' on Barry Island (1891b: 73). This, together with their diffidence

and rarity, resonates with Smith's earlier designation of Maximo and Bartola as representative of the abnormality of dwarfs, explaining their tendency to work as 'miners, metallurgists' and 'smiths', and leading to the development of 'retiring, defensive habits' and the ascription to them of 'mystical properties' (Smith 1852: 140). Significantly, Andrew Lang oversaw a new edition of *The Secret Commonwealth* which was published in 1893, giving it the popular title *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, only two years after this report of Haliburton's discovery was published. This suggests that Haliburton's theory may well have influenced this publication, as well as contributing towards the resurgence of interest in a euhemerist foundation for fairy belief more generally at the fin de siècle.

So accepted was euhemerism in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Silver contends that by 1883 it was 'almost taken for granted that the dwarfs, trolls, and fairies were folk memories of prehistoric races of small people' (1999: 47). The later work of MacRitchie and Haliburton entrenched the theory even more deeply in the cultural landscape of the fin de siècle. In an 1898 review of Pineau's *Folklore and Legends of the North*, Machen discusses the author's stress on the importance of runes and their magical properties: 'the runes, it seems agreed, were the mystery of the dwarfs [...] M. Pineau, very properly, interprets these dwarfs to mean the aboriginal Turanian race which inhabited Europe before the coming of the Aryans'. He continues,

[O]f recent years abundant proof has been given that a short, non-Aryan race once dwelt beneath the ground, in hillocks, throughout Europe, their raths have been explored, and 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. The stories of changelings, and captive women, become clear on the supposition that the "fairies" occasionally raided the houses of the invaders [...] We might deduce the whole mythology from a confused recollection of the relations existing between the tall Aryans and the short Turanians [...]

(Machen 1898b: 273)

Although warning his reader to 'beware of M. Pineau's almost suppressed but all-pervading minor premiss [sic] – the supernormal never happens' (ibid. 272), Machen is in no doubt whatever of the proved truth of the existence of this short

'Turanian' race, finding 'abundant proof' in Pineau's account (*ibid.*). There is little difference between this and Dr Cririe's findings, published nearly a century before: that a race of people, smaller than their Aryan conquerors, lived in exile beneath the hills, giving rise to stories of the 'little people' (Cririe 1803: 347-8). But now the theory has scientific traction.

The extension of anthropology during the nineteenth century allowed the theory of euhemerism to retain its hold on the imaginations of both folklorists and the general population, and prove itself a hypothesis of remarkable robustness. In my next chapter I argue that, while euhemerism inspired a range of depictions of little people at the *fin de siècle*, only Machen promotes its positive and hopeful interpretations, and I examine some texts that demonstrate alternative readings. Machen's little people, I argue, exhibit a range of attributes, including permanence in a rapidly-changing world, an unbreakable connection with nature in a landscape of expanding urbanization, and a quality of enchantment that other authors, such as Grant Allen and John Buchan fail to exploit. In this light, Machen's fictional 'victims' may be regarded rather as visionaries, attempting – and perhaps achieving – an act of spiritual transcendence.

Chapter 3

Adult Fairy Tales, Popular Science, Adventure Yarns, Gothic Horror and the Inflationary Weird: Euhemerism in Fin de Siècle Fiction

As the visible world is measured, mapped, tested, weighed, we seem to hope more and more that a world of invisible romance may not be far from us [...] (Lang 1905)

The whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter; and man, and the sun and the other stars, and the flower of the grass, and the crystal in the test-tube, are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working.

(Machen 2007d: 209)

In this chapter I will investigate the ‘little people’ fictions of the fin de siècle written by Oscar Wilde, Grant Allen, John Buchan, Walter De La Mare and Arthur Machen. While Wilde, Allen, Buchan and De La Mare implement them to people and contextualise short stories across a number of genres, Machen deploys them to reinforce and authenticate his own world-view: that the material and the immaterial worlds are inseparable. Little people were not unknown in adult fiction before the last decades of the nineteenth century, appearing sometimes in response to newsworthy events. ‘The White Widow’ by Percy St John, for example, was published first in 1868 and reprinted in 1891 in the *London Journal*, two years after the author’s death. It was presented in its second incarnation as ‘a splendid new story’ and features a dwarf character called ‘Paul Ushant’ (1868: 242). Ushant is a thoroughly benign and protective character, the lone voice of reason who plays a significant role in the first part of this melodrama. However, he is also described as a man

of singular and extraordinary form, wanting some inches of four feet in height with scarcely perceptible legs; arms as long as his other members were the reverse – so that when he walked, his hands touched the ground – with a chest and shoulders which, for breadth and power, might have ‘rivalled Hercules. His head was of large size and covered with shaggy black hair, beneath which gleamed a pair of glaring and restless eyeballs. The disproportion of his limbs made him a swift and expert climber; for, with his powerful arms, he found no difficulty in swinging himself from branch to branch, in pursuit of birds and their eggs, which, with the fish he caught in the stream, roots, nuts, and berries, furnished him with his whole subsistence. He always ate his food raw.

(St John 1868: 223)

Ushant’s distinctly simian characteristics are hard to miss: his lack of height, arms so long his hands touch the ground, short legs, broad and powerful chest, and large head with its shaggy hair are all contributory clues. Furthermore, he is described as swinging through the branches of the trees, setting ‘the laws of gravitation at defiance’ by climbing up the smooth trunk of a tree ‘by his hands and toes’ then crawling along ‘the underside of a branch, with his back downwards’ in search of his raw, ‘savage’ food (ibid.). The dates of publication are significant. 1868 was the year after Paul Du Chaillu published *A Journey to Ashango-Land*, his account of the Obongo pygmies. While reprinting old stories as ‘new’ was reasonably common in 1891, it was also just a year after Stanley’s account of his meeting with the Wambutti and Batwa pygmy peoples, *In Darkest Africa*, was published. It is likely that the explorations and discoveries of first Du Chaillu and then Stanley inspired both the inclusion of a dwarf/pygmy character *per se*, and his ape-like aspect. No matter that Ushant is a benign and helpful character in the story, he is defined by his simian features, and is completely set apart from the other characters as somewhere between man and beast.

From the 1890s onward, as is now well-attested in literary scholarship, there was a flowering of weird fiction, standing somewhere between Gothic and early science fiction, a portion of which utilised euhemerist features.⁴⁵ Euhemerism’s attraction for writers of weird and fantastic fiction is clear: the theory is itself a model for the narrative arcs that became so popular they became clichéd. From a

⁴⁵ See Joshi 1990; Luckhurst 2015.

materialist basis of scientific ‘fact’ (such as a scientific experiment, or the archaeological discovery of the existence of a prehistoric race of dwarfs) comes a collection of unexpected, occult, often terrifying and seemingly inexplicable phenomena (such as a meeting with Pan, the unnerving discovery of Mr Hyde inside Dr Jekyll, or the ‘little people’ of imagination becoming the little people of reality). This model can be found across fin de siècle weird fictions, often designated as primarily influenced by degeneration theory, from Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1885), Wells’ *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), and *The Invisible Man* (1897) as well as in the neurological experimentation of Machen’s Doctors Raymond and Black in ‘The Great God Pan’ and ‘The Inmost Light’ (1894).

The cultural flux at the fin de siècle was mirrored in a new fiction debate, with the romances of Grant Allen and Rider Haggard drawing swords against the ‘New Realism’ of James, Zola, de Maupassant, and Flaubert. Haggard deemed the latter ‘carnal and filthy’ (1887: 176), and such fiction was seen in some quarters as so degenerate and shocking that questions were asked in the House about the advisability of allowing the ‘sheer beastliness’ they represented to continue to be available in translation to an English readership (Arata 2007: 170). In *Hieroglyphics*, first published in 1902, Arthur Machen extended this debate to rail against the mid-century realism of Thackeray (who he judged ‘nothing but a photographer’) and ‘poor, dreary, draggle-tailed’ George Eliot (1902: 9/13). At the same time, the way in which fiction was disseminated and marketed underwent a shift with the death of the three-decker novel, and the production of new magazines providing an environment for the proliferation of short stories, the preferred form for weird fiction. Fin de siècle weird fiction, inspired by euhemerism and firmly established on the ‘romantic’ side in Lang’s ‘Realism and Romance’ debate (1887: 683), created a new collection of modern fairy tales, twisting the concept and stretching the notion of savage survivals to its ultimate imaginative extent, handing supernatural faculties back to the beings in question and thus creating a brand-new supply of stories in which the reader can rediscover a different kind of mythology.

During the course of the nineteenth century dwarfs had been cast in a number of different literary roles, functioning, like all fictional protagonists, as both a

filter for and a screen onto which to project contemporary concerns. Their ability to straddle the natural/supernatural borderline made them particularly useful in children's literature, but they featured surprisingly heavily in adult fiction too. Dickens wrote much of littleness, often contrasting the very tall with the very small for dramatic impact, as does Mr Crummles in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839: 386), and an increasing social awareness of and sympathy with difference can be traced through three characters in different novels whose small size is of note. Daniel Quilp (*The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1841) is evil, beast-like, and highly-sexualised, a hyperactive, lustful grotesque, a devil pitted against the 'angel messenger' Nell (2000: 324). He is, as Lang's introduction to the 1897 edition states, 'a grotesque and terrible fantasy of pure malevolence' (1897: vii), his lack of stature and physical deformity signalling his mental and moral twistedness. Quilp is referred to as a 'dwarf' or as 'dwarfish' two hundred and thirteen times in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. It is by far the most common epithet Dickens uses to describe him. In contrast, he is defined as 'ugly' only seven times, as a 'monster' or 'monstrous' five times, and, despite his diabolical habits, he is a 'devil' only once (2000: 320). It is his lack of stature that represents more than anything else his malevolent nature, and he is presented throughout the novel as less than human. Before running into the foggy night, he snarls at his wife, crouches in his 'lair' and imagines biting Kit when they next meet (2000: 508-10). He knocks over his hellish fire, shooting forth burning embers, and his behaviour in the sudden dark – darting here and there, listening intently for a further knocking, his fatal tumble into the water and his ensuing struggle – is irresistibly reminiscent of a rat in a trap (510). Even in death, and finally a man, the dull red of the flaming sky lends a tinge of hellfire to his carcass (512).

Miss Mowcher's defining characteristic (*David Copperfield*, 1850) is her changeability. Her larger-than-life personality ('Ain't I volatile?') and her apparent collaboration with and encouragement of Steerforth's seduction of Little Em'ly (2004: 343) would have resonated with the view that Victorians believed little people to be 'odd and entertaining, but potentially dangerous' (Gamble 1998: 9). Miss Mowcher's character was based on Mrs Seymour Hill, a chiropodist who took great exception to Dickens' portrayal of her fictional counterpart. She wrote to him and, abashed, he amended his plan (Dickens 1981: 674), so that in

the end Miss Mowcher is a heroine, 'cheered right home to her lodgings' (2004: 608) having given evidence at Littimer's trial. Her warning not to 'associate bodily defects with mental... except for a solid reason' (ibid. 328) resonates with sincerity. Before her redemption by the author, Miss Mowcher displays familiar characteristics: her first appearance in the text evokes a fairground presentation. She is 'one of the seven wonders of the world', and mounts the table from which she will trim Steerforth's whiskers 'as if it were a stage' (Dickens 2004: 230, 233). She is, with her tales of Russian princes and society ladies, above all, entertaining. Miss Mowcher is also connected to fairyland, as was Caroline Crachami some twenty-six years earlier, and is described as both 'Elfin' and goblin-like (ibid. 235, 236).

Jenny Wren (*Our Mutual Friend*, 1865), although certainly eccentric and somewhat fierce in her protection of Lizzie Hexham, is connected to heaven via angelic visions, and is a thoroughly empathetic and 'good' character. Children with rickets, the condition from which James Gamble suggests Jenny Wren suffers (1996: 25) possessed, or were believed to possess, certain characteristics such as precocity, emotional maturity and gravitas beyond their years (26). Perhaps, given a life full of considerable pain, this is not surprising. This unlikely maturity is well-established in Jenny, 'a child – a dwarf – a girl – a something' (Dickens 1997: 167). Although only 'twelve, or at the most thirteen' years old she assumes the role of mother to her alcoholic father, calling him her 'bad child', and her scolding and humiliation works to the extent of eliciting a shamed response from him (181). Her relationship with Lizzie is equally bossy, but she also exhibits preternatural qualities and abilities that cannot be explained by an enforced wisdom. She has visions of imaginary playmates, 'all in white dresses, and with something shining on the borders and on their heads [coming] down in long bright slanting rows'. To them, she would cry "'Have pity on me! Take me up and make me light!'" (181). These playmates, with their shining white robes and crowns, and with their implied ability to transport and transform her, appear to Jenny as angels. The visions strongly suggest that she has some kind of supernatural association or connection with a heavenly power, a power particularly apparent when she nurses Eugene Wrayburn after his attack by Bradley Headstone. Although Wrayburn is incapable of motion and barely

capable of speech, Jenny understands him, and Mortimer Lightwood relies on her 'as if she were an interpreter between this sentient world and the insensible man' (245). It is Jenny Wren who discovers the Word that brings Lizzie and Wrayburn together (it is, of course, 'Wife'), and her empathetic understanding of him verges on the clairvoyant.

Dickens' three little people form a template of the fluidity of the fictional representation of these characters in mid-century: by the end, there are some fictional signals of not only growing sympathy, but empathy with little people as part of a wider context of changing social attitudes. Captain Lobe, in Harkness's *In Darkest London* is himself unwillingly repelled by Midget's physical oddity, and likens him to 'creatures with two heads, or four legs', confronted by which he feels 'all of a creep' (2009: 20). He also knows that his reactions are unworthy, even un-Christian: to turn away in disgust at such a sight is 'to set oneself up above God Almighty' (ibid.). Lobe also understands that 'the midget's a man right enough, and yet *he* feels himself to be a missing link or something', suggesting that any uncertainty about Midget's humanity is a result of the dwarf's own feelings about his ambiguous, 'queer' appearance (2009: 20), a sentiment echoed in Oscar Wilde's 'The Birthday of the Infanta', a narrative I investigate later in this chapter. 'Midget', in Harkness's bleak tale of modern poverty, is finally comforted by the assurances of the unnamed agnostic woman in black, the only visitor who treats him like a human being (Harkness 2009: 15). Taken by Captain Lobe to see the dwarf when he is dying, 'Napoleon' asks her once more if she thinks he has a soul or not, although he confesses that his life has been so difficult, he has no desire to 'come back' (58). Forsaken by the church – 'we don't go to church because we're afraid of being laughed at, and no clergyman ever comes near us' – the 'freaks', or 'missing links' as they are called by the 'gub'nor' are also reviled by the public (15). But his visitor assures him that

things are changing fast. Social conditions are becoming different. Barriers are breaking down, and classes are amalgamating. By the time you come back all men will be brethren. Young men will be ashamed of their strength,

if it makes them despise midgets; young women will not shrink away, if it makes you look unhappy. People will put you first then, if you come into the world handicapped.

(Harkness 2009: 58)

Even Tonga, Conan Doyle's murderous 'unhallowed dwarf with his hideous face, and his long yellow teeth' is pitied as 'Poor Tonga' when, driven by need, Jonathan Small is forced to exhibit him as 'the black cannibal' at fairs (Doyle 1890: 276-7). By the end of the century, attitudes were indeed changing, and this change was fictionalised by Oscar Wilde in 'The Birthday of the Infanta' (1891).

A fable for adults set in the Spanish Court, 'The Birthday of the Infanta' addresses issues of class, cruelty, entitlement and self-perception. Oscar Wilde describes the titular celebration, contrasting the superficial charm and beauty of the court with the depths of sadness, corruption and mistrust with it, a trope that is repeated throughout the story (and indeed throughout Wilde's work). The King keeps the embalmed remains of his wife, the Infanta's mother, in a chapel and visits her monthly in his – possibly necrophiliac – mourning, while he despises and distrusts his brother Don Pedro, his chief adviser: both positions point to the perversion of healthy emotions, of connubial and familial love (Wilde 1891: 29-30). The little Infanta herself is a grave child, very spoilt and supremely conscious of her place in the world and of her right to the tributes offered on her birthday. One of those tributes, 'the funniest part of the whole morning's entertainment', is a performance by a dwarf who had been discovered only the day before 'running wild through the forest' (41). Wilde's descriptions of the dwarf illustrate that his appearance elicits attraction, repulsion and amusement for the children, while immediately engaging the reader's sympathy. He 'stumbled into the arena, waddling on his crooked legs and wagging his huge misshapen head from side to side', actions which cause a 'loud shout of delight' from the children (40). He is 'irresistible' as well as 'ugly', 'useless' and 'grotesque', 'a little misshapen thing that Nature, in some humorous mood, had fashioned for others to mock at' (42). He is also pathetically fascinated by the Infanta, 'could not keep his eyes off her, and seemed to dance for her alone', but whether this fascination is sexual is debatable: Wilde compares him to 'Caffarelli', the eighteenth-century Italian castrato, which may be a hint as to the dwarf's lack of sexual interest in the

Infanta (*ibid.*).⁴⁶ However, so enchanted by him in turn is the Infanta, she throws him her white rose, a common emblem of innocent love and, commanding him to dance again after her siesta, she is escorted back to the palace.

The dwarf takes the gift of the white rose as a token of the Infanta's love, and goes out into the garden, delighted. Here we enter the most conventional realm of the fairy tale: flora and fauna are both anthropomorphised as the flowers sneer at the dwarf's ugliness, although the birds love him, and the lizards like him too (Wilde 1891: 43-49). The dwarf imagines the Infanta in his own forest-realm, amused by the antics of the woodland animals and decorated with 'a necklace of red bryony berries' instead of the 'white berries' – pearls – she wears on her court dress (51). Indeed, he turns the spoilt little Infanta into a fairy as he imagines himself bringing her 'acorn cups and dew-drenched anemones, and tiny glow-worms to be stars in the pale gold of her hair' (52). On his re-entry into the palace, back in the human sphere, he is infected by the inherent corruption and decadence of the court when he catches sight of himself in a mirror and, seeing his reflection for the first time, is appalled at his own ugliness. He is a monster, 'foul to look at and grotesque', and the Infanta upon seeing him so distressed and believing he must be acting, laughs at him and demands that he rise and dance for her again (59-60). But he has died of a broken heart, to which the Infanta responds, as she runs off to play, that, in future, those who come to entertain her should have no hearts (61). The dwarf thus represents the only heart in the story, certainly the only loving, healthy heart, given that the Infanta proves as heartless as she would wish others to be, and the King's heart is both broken and sick. The reader's sympathy is entirely with him, and Wilde's fairy-tale dwarf echoes Margaret Harkness's realist 'Midget', both in his self-disgust and in the author's clear empathy.

⁴⁶ Wilde confuses Caffarelli with Farinelli, Caffarelli's rival, when he notes that the singer was sent by the Pope to Madrid in order to 'cure the King's melancholy by the sweetness of his voice' (Wilde 1891: 42).

Allen and Buchan's Weird Anthropological Adventures

'Pallinghurst Barrow' (1892), by Grant Allen and John Buchan's somewhat derivative 'No-Man's Land' (1899) by contrast are fictionalised versions of the euhemerist hypothesis, moving little people into a scientific/anthropological adventure narrative, and out of the social/moral context. Allen, one of the century's most prolific authors, social commentators and foremost scientific popularizers, had expounded euhemerism in earlier articles, and both he and Buchan use the theory as a framing device for their adventures, plunging their modern heroes into the midst of prehistoric tribal 'survivals'. While both texts are rooted in euhemerism, they serve as a contrast to Machen's work: although both 'Pallinghurst Barrow' and 'No-Man's Land' are written as weird adventures, and both feature the uncovering of an occluded domain, they read as yarns akin to Rider Haggard's Allan Quartermain tales, or Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger stories, and thus occupy a somewhat liminal narrative space. Walter De La Mare's tale 'A:B:O' (1895) is little-known, and uses familiar ghost- and horror-story tropes to illustrate the terrifying possibilities of the immortal endurance of man's inner 'beast', highlighting the dangers of amateur archaeology in the style of M. R. James.⁴⁷ While the little people depicted in all three tales are uncanny – indeed horrifying – they have no special access to the transcendental or the spiritual. The stories are simpler, more action-packed, and tend not to ponder on the wider implications of what it might mean if fairy-euhemerism is 'true', as Machen's protagonists do. The variety of these texts illustrates both the dissemination and plasticity of the euhemerist hypothesis across fin de siècle fiction.

Allen's 'Pallinghurst Barrow', first published in the *Illustrated London News* Christmas number of 1892, is a ghost story inspired and informed by fin de siècle euhemerist theory. In it, direct reference is made to David MacRitchie's hypothesis as well as that of Joseph Jacobs, another folklorist with euhemerist leanings (Allen 1892b: 15). The names of both in this context go some

⁴⁷ A Cantabrian medievalist, James published his most famous collections of ghost stories, *Ghost Stories of An Antiquary*, *More Ghost Stories of An Antiquary*, *A Thin Ghost and Others* and *A Warning to the Curious and Other Ghost Stories* between 1904 and 1925.

considerable way to establishing the familiarity of euhemerist theory to the general public, represented here by the wide readership of the *ILN* (*Sell's Dictionary* 1892: 341).⁴⁸ Allen had published several articles of his own particular brand of 'popular science' publicising the euhemerist hypothesis 'Pallinghurst Barrow' is also a good example of the way in which euhemerist theory lent itself to exciting short fiction, with its scientific, gothic, psychological, and supernatural perspectives. However, the indigenous tribe who inhabit Allen's barrow are ghosts rather than anachronistic survivals, and despite Allen's repeated use of the word 'weird', 'Pallinghurst Barrow' is a thrilling ghost story, rather than a truly weird tale. There is no sense, despite the ghosts, that the fixed laws of nature are threatened, as is the case in Machen's stories.

The story's structure is really four-part, although there are five sections. It begins with Rudolph Reeve sitting 'by himself on the old Long Barrow on Pallinghurst Common'. Rudolph is a 'journalist and a man of science' but has a 'poet's soul', so possesses a mind equally open to the material and the numinous (Allen 1892b: 12). This stock characterization is later emphasised by his being in the countryside on the orders of his doctor, 'a famous specialist on diseases of the nervous system', having overworked his brain while writing an article about 'The Present State of Chinese Finances' (*ibid.* 13). The dryness of this title is intended to emphasise Rudolph's somewhat dull good sense, despite his poetic soul. While on the Barrow, he is struck by the strange colours of the sunset and the sense that something sinister is alive and moving inside. Not wishing to be late for dinner (his hostess, Mrs Bouverie-Barton, as well as being an upholder of women's rights, is punctilious about time-keeping) he moves to leave, but is held there by an unseen power. 'Clutched hands seemed to stretch after him and try to pull him back', but he finally breaks free and runs frantically, 'like the veriest schoolgirl' to the manor, convinced 'that somebody unseen was pursuing and following him'. Ashamed of his fear, he decides to come back to the barrow after dinner (13). The second part (which is divided into sections two and three of the published story)

⁴⁸ *Deacon's Newspaper Handbook* (1885: 60) estimated *ILN* sales could reach as high as 500,000 on special occasions. Both populist and popular, although not especially cheap (the 'Pallinghurst Barrow' edition cost one shilling) the *ILN* published a wide range of news stories, fashion, gossip and political news, as well as fiction by authors such as H. Rider Haggard, J. M. Barrie, Henry James and Thomas Hardy (Leary 2011).

revolves around Mrs Bouverie-Barton's dinner. Assembled here are the characters, familiar to readers of this type of fiction, needed to discuss the ramifications of Rudolph's somewhat self-edited experience, and who reflect Rudolph's binary mind-set in terms of their interest in or explanation of what occurred on the barrow. Joyce, Mrs Bouverie-Barton's twelve-year-old daughter, 'a frail and pretty little creature, very light and fairy-like' leads the group who believe Rudolph's experience was due to a ghostly manifestation, as she has experienced something similar (13). This group of believers also includes Archie Cameron who, despite being a 'distinguished electrician' and thus a man of science, is also a Scot, and therefore necessarily superstitious, and Mrs Bruce, an 'esoteric Buddhist and hostess of Mahatmas', and thus a Theosophist. Those who prefer a material or medical explanation include Dr Porter, Mrs Bouverie-Barton herself, who is 'modern, and disbelieved in everything', and Professor Spence, an archaeologist who is searching the local gravel pit for palæoliths, and who makes his rationalist cynicism known, in the face of the supernatural theories advanced around the table, by virtue of his 'scientific smile, restrained at the corners' (14-15).

Around Mrs Bouverie-Barton's table, the talk focuses on the existence or otherwise of ghosts, their provenance, number, and who is likely to be able to see them. Rudolph retires to his room with a headache and 'that delicious volume, Joseph Jacobs's "English Fairy Tales"', intending to read Childe Roland. Dr Porter treats his headache with *cannabis indica*, and leaves the bottle with Rudolph (Allen 1892b: 16). Much later, Rudolph ventures once again out onto the barrow, where he is taken prisoner by

grinning and hateful barbarian shadows, neither black nor white, but tawny-skinned and low-browed; their tangled hair falling unkempt in matted locks about their receding foreheads; their jaws large and fierce; their eyebrows shaggy and protruding like a gorilla's; their loins just girt with a few scraps of torn skin; their whole mien inexpressibly repulsive and bloodthirsty.

(1892b: 17)

These phantoms comprise 'the two most terrible and dreaded foes of civilized experience' – savages and ghosts – and their intention to feed Rudolph to their

skeletal cannibal king is only thwarted by the appearance of another apparition, this time in sixteenth-century garb, who advises Rudolph 'Show them iron!' (16, 18). Rudolph gropes for his penknife: the flash of steel, which 'no ghost or troll or imp can bear to behold' makes the horde momentarily fall back, and Rudolph makes his escape. The final section of the story finds Rupert safely back at the Manor. Dr Porter blames 'a bad brain fever' exacerbated by unsupervised use of his tincture of cannabis, but Rudolph manages a word with the child-seer Joyce, with whom he can discuss the supernatural character of his experience on Pallinghurst Barrow.

During Mrs Bouverie-Barton's dinner party, Professor Spence joins the conversation, and makes a direct reference to David MacRitchie:

[...] you've seen MacRitchie's last work, I suppose? No? Well, he's shown conclusively that long barrows, which are the graves of the small, squat people who preceded the inroad of Aryan invaders, are the real origins of all the fairy hills and subterranean palaces of popular legend.

(Allen 1892b: 15)

To read this casual summary of MacRitchie's euhemerist hypothesis in the middle of a work of fiction, in one of the most widely-read and popular journals of the day, is evidence that the idea of a previous race of 'small, squat people' who inhabited the countryside and gave rise to a number of fairy legends was widely known. The *ILN* was by no means a scientific journal, and its readership was broad. Professor Spence's careless reference to MacRitchie assumes that readership possessed a degree of knowledge, suggesting that his 'realistic' interpretation of fairy legends was familiar. The professor then expands his commentary to put forward Joseph Jacobs's theory that Childe Roland's 'Dark Tower' was, in fact, a long barrow. Jacobs first published this claim in June 1891 in the pages of *Folklore* (Jacobs 1891: 182-197), but Professor Spence removes Jacobs's scientific hypothesis from the realm of anthropology, and places it in the world of fiction: 'perhaps,' he suggests, the Dark Tower was 'Pallinghurst Barrow itself' (Allen 1892b: 15). In fact, 'Pallinghurst Barrow' is grounded in several earlier factual essays on excavations written by Allen for the *Cornhill*: 'Chippers of Flint' (1880); 'Who Were the Fairies?' (1881); 'Ogbury Barrow' (1885) and 'Cauld Iron' (1892), all of which advance a euhemerist hypothesis.

Grant Allen was a regular contributor to the *Illustrated London News*: between 1891 and 1897 he wrote some fifty-three pieces for the paper, ranging from a series of scientifically oriented nature-notes, to re-imaginings of key moments in the history of art, as well as three pieces of long fiction each of around 8,000 words, one of which was 'Pallinghurst Barrow' (*ILN Archive* 1891-7).⁴⁹ 'Pallinghurst Barrow', in terms both of chronology and bibliographic categorization, is the fictional result of the inspiration Allen drew from his archaeological adventures. In 'Chippers of Flint' (1880) Allen laid out the central premise of the euhemerist basis for fairy belief, using as his starting point 'the mounds and barrows which crown our English wolds' where he found 'reason to suppose that before the Kelts settled in the western peninsulas of Europe, the whole of our continent was occupied by the dark-skinned or Euskarian race. At a still earlier epoch there seem good ground for supposing that a population of yellow-faced and almond-eyed Mongolians spread over the greater part of the European world. Of these we still find relics among the Finns and Lapps [...]' (Allen 1880: 190).⁵⁰

In 1884, shortly after Allen wrote 'Chippers of Flint', David MacRitchie published a two-volume anthropological history of Britain in which he claimed the ancient Britons were a dark-skinned race. While

there are no living Britons who are as black as negroes [...] to regard ourselves, in the mass, as "white people", except in a comparative degree, is quite a mistake. This varied ancestry connects us, therefore, with almost every nation under the sun. And [...] we have inherited the blood that is akin to that of many savage races now alive [...]

(MacRitchie 1884, Vol. I: 21)

⁴⁹ Allen was an extraordinarily productive author, writing thirty-seven novels, eight collections of short stories and countless articles for the press (Morton 2005: 225-8). Although an author 'of the third rank' (xv) he came into focus for scholars of the fiction of the fin de siècle after the publication of Peter Morton's 2005 biography.

⁵⁰ 'Euskarian' is defined in the *OED* as 'Basque; used by some ethnologists to define that pre-Aryan element in the population of Europe, which they suppose to be typically represented by Basques.' The entry was first published in 1891, and has not been updated (*OED* 1891). The Mongolian features, including 'almond' eyes, was a feature of prehistoric British races noted by many anthropologists, including Beddoe (1885: 9) and Wentz (1911: 167).

The idea that the ancestors of white-skinned Britons were dark-skinned ‘savages’ complicates Carole Silver’s analysis of the ‘Victorian racial myth’ with its notion of the natural superiority of white skin (Silver 1999: 46). While those ‘dark-skinned savages’ are presented as less evolved, they are undeniably ancestors, connected to modern, ‘civilised’, white-skinned Britons by ties of blood and history. It seems likely that MacRitchie’s description of the ancient inhabitants of the Western Highlands of Scotland as ‘*ruadh*’, commonly translated as ‘red’ or ‘ruddy’ but in MacRitchie’s interpretation signifying tawny-skinned (1884 Vol. I: 153), the ‘shaggy-browed Yspaddaden Penkawr’ of Wales (155) and the cannibalistic tribes of early Scotland (105-7) provided inspiration for the savage ghosts in ‘Pallinghurst Barrow’, described as ‘neither black nor white, but tawny-skinned and low-browed [...] their eyebrows shaggy and protruding like a gorilla’s [...] their whole mien inexpressibly repulsive and bloodthirsty’ (Allen 1892: 17).

MacRitchie was not the only anthropologist who asserted that the antecedents of modern Britons were dark-skinned. Professor William Boyd Dawkins (1837-1929) gave a lecture in Manchester in 1879 on ‘Our Earliest Ancestors’ in which he denoted these as short-statured, dark-complexioned Neolithic ‘Iberians’, or Basques (Manias 2012: 910-11). Dawkins suggested that these early Iberians, who replaced Palaeolithic cave-dwellers, were connected to modern Britons and other western European nations via linguistic survivals, as suggested earlier by Müller (Dawkins 1880: 334), genetic inheritance, in the form of the long-headed ‘small swarthy Welshman’, the ‘small, dark Highlander’ and the ‘black Celts’ of Ireland (330) and in the cultural inheritance of surviving superstitious respect paid to ‘elves, fairies, and “little-men”’, which Dawkins ascribes to ‘ancestor-worship’ (340). Dawkins credits these Neolithic Iberians with establishing the domestication of animals and the cultivation of plants, as well as producing simple implements and engaging in commerce, creating, indeed, ‘the rudiments of the culture which we ourselves enjoy’ (307). He suggests that, while the preceding Palaeolithic cave-dwellers left no mark on the succeeding populace because they were driven out, subjected to ‘ruthless extermination’ by the

invading tribes, these Neolithic 'Iberian' peoples integrated with the later Celts.⁵¹ 'Subordination to a higher caste of peoples, with superior weaponry and social practices' was inevitable, but given how densely settled the 'Iberian' populace was, their enslavement was 'followed by racial blending' (Manias 2012: 927).

If these dark-skinned 'Iberians' or 'Turanians' as Haliburton designated them, are indeed the antecedents of some of the modern inhabitants of western Europe, some 'racial blending' must have occurred. This was acknowledged by Dawkins in his observation of the various physical types of 'long-headed', 'swarthy' individuals to be seen around Britain and Ireland. Euhemerism is thus capable of both confirming and destabilising the stadial, progressive account of advancing civilisation. In 'Who Were The Fairies?' (1881) Allen's first exposition of the fairy hypothesis, he credits Dawkins with supplying 'many of my facts', although he adds that 'he must not be held responsible for any of the deductions which I draw from them' (Allen 1881: 336).

In 1996, Gillian Beer wrote about how ideas circulate across disciplinary and genre boundaries, from science to science fiction, for example, and how these ideas are destabilized when they enter another cognitive community, transformed by the process to mean 'more and other' than could be foreseen (1996: 115). But such 'transformation' seems superfluous in the context of euhemerism, and certainly when Allen wrote 'Ogbury Barrows' in 1885, a light-hearted piece of non-fiction suggesting that archaeological excursions have more to do with eating, drinking and flirting than scholarship, the science-to-fiction boundary seems redundant. 'Ogbury Barrows' maintains an ironical, if indulgent, tone throughout, suggestive of Allen's ambiguous feelings about archaeology as a middle-class, amateur pastime, while detailing the uncovering of a stone-age barrow, in which no bronze or iron implements were found. Two squatting female skeletons were discovered in an antechamber, both killed with 'a single blow from a sharp stone hatchet', who Allen imagines were the 'two wives of the deceased chieftain killed so that they could accompany him in his new life underground' (1885: 518). In his mind's eye, Allen conjures the scene:

⁵¹ The fate of the cave-dwellers concurs with the ideas of contemporary 'clash of races' theorists, such as Stuart-Glennie and George Laurence Gomme, the 'extinction discourse' discussed by Patrick Brantlinger (see Brantlinger 2003).

[...] the howling band of naked yellow-faced and yellow-limbed savages surge up the slopes of Ogbury down; I saw them bear aloft, with beating of breasts and loud gesticulations, the bent corpse of their dead chieftain; I saw the terrified and fainting wives haled along by thongs of raw oxhide, and the weeping prisoners driven passively like sheep to the slaughter; I saw the fearful orgy of massacre and rapine around the open tumulus [...]

(519)

Largely because of this scene, David Hughes ascribes to 'Ogbury Barrows' the position of 'factual' counterpart to and inspiration for 'Pallinghurst Barrow (1998: 275), but 'Cauld Iron' published in the same month and year as 'Pallinghurst Barrow', is even more suggestive of the fictional piece (Allen 1892a: 520-30). In 'Cauld Iron', Allen imagines the barrows opening 'on moonlight nights,' and 'the fairies or ghosts of the old yellow-skinned warriors [coming] forth in state, to dance upon the grass-grown mound that conceals by day their last long resting-place' (520). In this essay, too, Allen discusses Joseph Jacobs' theory that Childe Roland's 'Dark Tower' is 'a poetic version of the chambered and stone-built tombs concealed within the barrows' (521), and he also notes the fatality of metal – iron, bronze or steel – to the ghosts of these ancient warriors, explaining that it is 'because it is the metal by which their rule was overthrown and themselves done for' (525):

In short, a bit of iron is a very useful thing to have about you at any time, if you desire to escape the unfavourable attention of the ghosts, the trolls, the fairies, and the demons generally. This is one more good reason for buying a pocket-knife.

(1892a: 526)

The steel of Rudolph's penknife, of course, is the cause of the ghosts falling back, allowing him to make his escape in 'Pallinghurst Barrow'. Whether writing as a 'scientific journalist' or an author of fiction, these works of Allen's illustrate how effortlessly euhemerist ideas, expressing a scientific hypothesis close to and evocative of the fantastic, cross disciplines and genres.

In his popular scientific journalism, Allen discussed and promoted euhemerist theory at some length and in some detail, examining all aspects of the hypothesis

some years before MacRitchie published *The Testimony of Tradition*. For example, in 'Chippers of Flint' he hypothesizes the racial and migrational aspects of the theory: that a rough flint Allen finds while 'grubbing among the low-lying silt at the mouth of the Devonshire Axe this sunny winter morning' was 'rudely chipped into its existing shape by the black men who chased the reindeer and the elk thousands of years since in the green valley around us' (1880: 189); that Mongolian tribes were pushed west and north by advancing Euskarians until 'only a remnant of them at length remained in the wintry northern peninsulas of Finland and Lapland' (190); that Caesar found 'light-haired Kelts and dark-haired Silurians' during the Roman invasion of Britain, both of whom were in turn driven toward the far west and north of the country by invading Teutons (190-1). The height of these people was noted by Allen in 'Cauld Iron' as an essential cause for the littleness of fairies in popular superstition: '[t]he fairies are small because they are the ghosts of a little race, compared with the big Iron Age or Bronze Age warriors, who fought and overcame them' (521). Earlier, in 'Ogbury Barrows', he had referred to the small stature of these British aboriginals, noting that the barrow he excavated was 'of comparatively gigantic and colossal proportions' and inspired the local children to believe that 'a great giant in golden armour' lies buried there. 'But if only they knew the real truth, that that big ungainly overgrown grave covers the remains of a short, squat, dwarfish chieftain, akin in shape and feature to the Lapps and Finns, and about as much unlike a giant as human nature could easily manage' (1885: 515). Allen puts a time on the existence of this dwarfish race of 'ten to twenty thousand years ago' and records that when the barrow was first opened, 'the mouldering skeleton of its original possessor – an old prehistoric Mongoloid chieftain' was found (516), bringing to mind the similar mouldering, squatting skeleton of 'Pallinghurst Barrow'.

It seems incontestable that euhemerism is the principal inspiration behind 'Pallinghurst Barrow', although the story can be read simply as a narrative that utilises the contemporary fascination with prehistoric humanity, and its attendant anxieties surrounding atavism and degeneration. Hughes (1998: 276) discusses 'Chippers of Flint', 'Who Were The Fairies?', 'Cauld Iron' and 'Ogbury Barrows' at some length without ever mention euhemerism at all. Despite the naming of MacRitchie, and Jacobs in 'Pallinghurst Barrow' itself, and despite

Allen's extensive discussion of the theory in 'Ogbury Barrows', 'Cauld Iron' and 'Who Were The Fairies?' Hughes' contention is that 'Ogbury Barrows', on which he concentrates as the major factual predecessor of 'Pallinghurst Barrow', is 'a harbinger of fin-de-siècle fascination with humanity's ancestral savagery' (ibid.). He also notes that Allen 'raises the spectre of cannibal atavism' some years before the publication of either Huxley's 'Evolution and Ethics' (1893) or Nordau's popularization of Lombroso's theory of degeneration (1892). While euhemerist theory informed a great deal of Allen's writing, both factual and fictional, 'Ogbury Barrows' and 'Pallinghurst Barrow' most of all, because Allen crafts the theory into a thrilling adventure story of a modern man pitted against his cannibalistic, savage precursors, euhemerism gets lost in the mix. Allen has no interest in investigating the preternatural possibilities of the theory beyond the horror cliché of the ghost, nor does he invest his ghostly savages with any long-lost access to the divine, as Machen inevitably does.

Unlike Allen's ferocious ghouls, Buchan's little people are corporeal, framed as an extraordinary anthropological survival, rooted in the earth as well as the earthly. The terror they instil in Buchan's protagonist, Graves, is inspired by their beastly nature, and their savage lifestyle. They are small, dark and hairy and look at Graves with 'curved beast-like glances' (1899: 15). They are also 'malignant devils', 'monstrous things', the sound of their footsteps is 'soft, eerie, incredibly swift' (ibid. 21), and they cannot cross water (20).⁵² These accounts, like the depictions earlier in the century of Du Chaillu's pygmies, identify them both as closer to animals than to men, and as uncanny – inhuman in quite another sense. While this tale has a clear association with Allen's 'Pallinghurst Barrow', its connection to Machen's 'Little People' tales, particularly 'The Red Hand', and to the work of MacRitchie and Haliburton are even clearer. Graves' scholarly status, his knowledge of anthropology and folklore, and above all, his curiosity, align him with Machen's dilettante scholars, while his desire to investigate the mystery of the 'Folk' of the hills despite his terrifying first encounter with them, his wish to

⁵² Traditionally, fairies and witches cannot cross water. In Burns' poem of 1791, its eponymous hero Tam o' Shanter escapes the furious fiends of Alloway Kirk by crossing the bridge, as '[a] running stream they [witches] dare na cross' (Burns 1986: 414).

subject them to scientific analysis, to transform the romance of folklore and myth into dreary anthropological fact – and his punishment for it – also follow Machen’s narrative and philosophical arcs.⁵³ But despite its acknowledgment of the little peoples’ uncanny characteristics – their speed and silence, and inability to cross water in particular – Buchan’s hill-folk, like the savages of Pallinghurst Barrow offer no access to the spiritual or the divine. Machen is alone in awarding his little people this peculiar attribute., although in doing so he is part of the broader search at the fin de siècle for spiritual meaning, for esoteric and numinous experience, the ‘effort towards the rehabilitation of spiritual power’ that Holbrook Jackson wrote of (Jackson. 1913: 84).

Graves is, in many ways, the opposite of the bookish, nervous Rudolph Reeve. He is, despite being Deputy Professor of Northern Antiquities at St Chad’s College, Oxford, a hearty sportsman, supplementing the attributes of the scholarly protagonists who feature prominently in Machen’s work with the characteristics of an adventure hero. He has, furthermore, learnt both Erse and Icelandic (with a smattering of Gaelic), which will prove useful (Buchan 1899: 1-2). Graves travels up to Scotland for a fishing holiday, but on the way is unnerved by the atmosphere of the landscape, imagining that the ‘silent vanished peoples of the hills seemed to be stirring; dark primeval faces seemed to stare at me from behind boulders,’ the terrain appearing as ‘a land of death, where the tongues of the dead cried aloud for recognition’ (2). As he walks, he traces the history of the peoples who have inhabited this wild place, from the Gaels to the Britons before them, and then finally to an even more ancient race, the Picts – ‘what in the name of goodness were they?’ (3). They represent to him ‘the *corpus vile* for learned experiment’, a ‘dark abyss of savagery’, ‘a sort of blank wall to put an end to speculation’ (ibid.). After his encounter with them, he has no reason to adjust this summary. Buchan’s story seems clearly influenced by Machen’s ‘little people’ tales (Machin 2018: 175), but his protagonist is neither a Machenian ‘truth-seeker’ nor quite a Quartermainesque hero/adventurer, and the horror of the little people, while their continued existence is certainly uncanny, pivots more, for him, around their close connection to beasts and savagery.

⁵³ For Machen’s influence on Buchan, see Cardin (ed.) 2017: 642, and Machin 2018: 175, 188.

Recovering from his journey, Graves reminisces about the ‘crazy theories’ of a young pupil who believed the remnants of these ancient Picts still extant and living in the guise of Brownies. What are the legends of the Brownie other than

the story of a little swart man of uncommon strength and cleverness, who does good and ill indiscriminately, and then disappears. There are many scholars, as you yourself confess, who think that the origin of the Brownie was in some mad belief in the old race of the Picts, which still survived somewhere in the hills.

(1899: 3)

Even without MacRitchie being explicitly named, as he is in ‘Pallinghurst Barrow’, the connection between the ancient race of Picts and the little people is his. Buchan’s little people embody a measure of uncanniness, but only as much as is required to provide the story with a modicum of tension. Having lost his way home on the hills, exhausted and cold, Graves is at first cheered to hear ‘a sound as of human speech’ but the thing he encounters, although making the sound of ‘articulate-speaking men’, is

little and squat and dark; naked, apparently, but so rough with the hair that it wore the appearance of a skin-covered being. It crossed my lines of vision, not staying for a moment, but in its face and eyes there seemed to lurk an elder world of mystery and barbarism, a troll-like life which was too horrible for words.

(Buchan 1899: 14)

He is struck with an ‘overmastering terror’ and runs, but he cannot escape, and is surrounded, overpowered, and taken underground.

The terror Graves feels is largely because these little men resist categorization. They are not quite human: their speech is ‘the strangest jumble of vowels and consonants I had ever met’, and while they understand a little Gaelic and there is, as Graves notes, ‘a curious kinship of sound’ (14). The tribe’s human-like speech is – at first – incomprehensible, resisting Müller’s concept of the noble savage as ‘ancient poets of language’ (Müller 1909: 75). And while Graves notes that their language is clearly cruder and more primitive, ‘blurred’ and ‘formless’, it yet has a

‘certain root-resemblance’ (16) to contemporary speech. Their behaviour and appearance is, however, unquestionably brutal. Their hairiness suggests a close relationship with animals, and this is the source of Graves’ initial horror and fear of ‘the beast-like clutch at my throat [...] those red eyes [...] the patter of those inhuman feet’ (Buchan 1899: 14). Buchan’s fiction thus opposes Müller’s notion that ‘the divine gift of a sound and sober intellect belonged to [man] from the very first’, so that ‘the idea of a humanity emerging slowly from the depths of an animal brutality can never be maintained again’ (Müller 1909: 9). The folk of the hills show significant ‘animal brutality’, are ‘malignant devils’, ‘monstrous things’, filling Graves with ‘sickened disgust’, their soft touch ‘the acutest torture to my nerves’ (Buchan 1899: 15, 16). In the end, however, Graves’ scholarship overcomes his fear, and he begins to look upon the little men no more as ‘shapeless objects of terror, but objects of research and experiment’ (17) and begins to study them, echoing the way in which little people such as Caroline Crachami and Maximo and Bartola were treated earlier in the century. Remembering snatches of ‘an impure dialect once used in Brittany’, he finds a means of communication, thus defining them clearly as human, albeit ancient (ibid. 16).⁵⁴ Although not perfect, the common ground of semi-shared language enables a relationship of sorts to develop.

The linguistic recognition of the little people as somewhat human and, most importantly, their intrinsic historical and cognitive value, continues as Graves realises that ‘here must be the fountainhead of all legends, the chrysalis of all beliefs’ (Buchan 1899: 17). ‘No-Man’s-Land’ is certainly a weird tale – indeed Machin asserts it is Buchan’s ‘first story that can indisputably be considered an example of writing in the mode’ (2018: 193), but the narrative arc and texture of the writing is more akin to imperial adventure fiction. The pitting of the modern protagonist against the ‘savage’ tribe, the chase, Graves’s capture and imprisonment and his final rescue of both himself and his host’s sister all conform to that genre. And although they have uncanny attributes in their connection to the Brownie of legend and in their inability to swim, Buchan’s ‘Folk’ are terrifying because they are remnants of a lower stage of evolution, rather than the

⁵⁴ Old Breton was spoken between the 8th and 12th centuries BCE (Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity).

possession of fantastical characteristics. They are certainly objects of horror, weirdly powerful and anachronistic, but they are not 'magical' in any sense, nor do they represent, as all Machen's little people do, an enchanted version of the evolutionary process. Buchan's anachronistic Picts are objects of terror because they are atavistic, resist categorization as familiarly human and because of their ferocious vengefulness. They have more in common with the 'savages' and 'native tribes' discovered in the Imperial romances of Haggard and Conan Doyle than with the Brownie to whom they are compared.

De La Mare's Gothic Weird

De La Mare, although he also ascribes animal characteristics to his little person, uses a very different technique in 'A:B:O' to engender a sense of creeping horror in the reader. He wrote 'A:B:O', featuring two friends, Pelluther and Dugdale, in or near 1895.⁵⁵ They are not-so-distant cousins, perhaps, of Arthur Machen's antiquarian friends and rivals, Phillipps and Dyson, and they dig up a curious box in which they find a tiny, monstrous, living creature. 'A:B:O.' is full of Gothic cliché – a midnight dig, a yew tree, a black cat, and madness. Devoid of female characters, it also deploys various contemporary scientific theories (evolutionary anthropology, recapitulation theory and euhemerism), and is rooted in the late nineteenth-century obsession with archaeological digs and the search for distant ancestors. Susan J. Navarette makes a strong case for reading the creature found in the metal box variously as an abortion, indicating hidden and guilt-ridden sexual incontinence (1998: 65-81), as an embryonic exemplar of Haeckel's Theory of Recapitulation given no time to assume its fully human identity (82-88), or as a Wellsian Beast Person (94). Other interpretations are available too.

'A:B:O.' is a narrative about the dissolution of boundaries, a common enough motif in fin de siècle weird fiction. In it, the borderlines revealed to be porous

⁵⁵ The publishing history of 'A:B:O.' is mysterious. It seems to have first come to light in *Eight Tales* (1971), a collection of de la Mare's stories edited and introduced by his friend and collaborator Edward Wagenknecht, and although it was rumoured to have been published in the *Cornhill* magazine under de la Mare's pseudonym of Walter Ramal, there is no evidence for this. The manuscript has since been lost or destroyed. For a fuller description of this history, see Navarette 1998: 251, n. 7.

include those that separate man and beast, sanity and insanity, as well as class boundaries. The thing revealed by the opening of the chest has a face that has a 'hideous and ungodly resemblance to the human face', yet is covered with 'coarse fawn hair' (De La Mare 1983: 100), making explicit the thing's existence on the borderlines of the human and the animal. Dugdale, the senior partner of De La Mare's two schoolboy-ish antiquarians, is driven to gibbering lunacy by the discovery and takes its place in the chest. His friend Pelluther ends the tale by insisting he is yet 'a benevolent kindly gentleman and fine in intellect. Say you that he was eccentric – not mad' (107). And Pelluther, after the unveiling of the horror in the chest, is so terrified of being left alone he invites a beggar to dine with him at his home, watching in barely concealed disgust as his guest snarls, gobbles and gnaws bones in his desperate hunger, revealing, through his appetite, the thinly-veiled beast within, and thus his connection to the thing in the box (104). A:B:O. is a fossil, a thing dug up, by well-meaning amateur anthropologists. It has

a flat, malformed skull and meagre arms and shoulders clad in coarse fawn hair [...] a face thrown back a little, bearing hideous and ungodly resemblance to the human face, its lids heavy blue and closely shut with coarse lashes and tangled eyebrows.

(1983: 100)

We learn later that its arms are long, though 'thin as bone' (103). With its receding facial features, coat of fawn-coloured hair and bone-thin, long arms, A:B:O. is an ape-like creature, and thus a horrifying embodiment of an earlier stage of human evolution. Despite its long and almost airless burial, it is still alive, displaying a gruesome tenacity and energy in its refusal to stay dead. This tenacity resonates with Haliburton's belief that prehistoric dwarf tribes may still exist in hiding: it is a Gothic rewriting of that account.

As Pelluther sits quietly reading in his comfortable house the night that his friend sends the message urging him to 'Come at once!' he is looking at a portrait of his great-grandfather when there is a sudden ring at the front door bell. This is unnaturally disturbing: the bell has 'an unfriendly tongue'. It is a 'router of wits, a messenger of alarms', resembles 'a sour virago's din', and is 'the devil's own

discordancy' (de la Mare 1983: 93). In contrast, his great-grandfather seems 'placid' (ibid.). This little scene forms the first paragraph of the tale, and could signify a number of things, for example Pelluther's comfort in a familiar domestic item (his great-grandfather's portrait) after the unnatural disturbance of the bell rung unexpectedly at night. The oddly-gendered sound of the bell as a 'sour virago' may also signify the intrusion of a fearsomely unwomanly female presence into an otherwise safe masculine space: the bell is the only female 'character' in the text. The significance of the portrait might also achieve two more complex objectives: to alert the reader to the presence of the past in the story; and to imply that placidity is a state of mind only available to our forebears, to those unaware of the psychological complications that living in the modern world, with its new knowledge about humanity's past, brought with it. Later on, as Pelluther, having unwittingly let A:B:O. into his house, sits full of 'a dim skulking horror of soul' and attempting to distract himself by reading, he feels all his senses disappear 'save that of hearing' (1983: 102). To his horror, he feels his 'ears move and twitch, with the help of some ancient muscle, I conjecture, long disused by humanity' (ibid.). Despite sight and hearing being allocated generally high places in the Victorian sensual hierarchy, the sudden renaissance of this beast-like muscular spasm, and its revelation of a new acuteness in hearing exposes the existence of an animal nature still existing within the carapace of the comfortable, modern antiquarian.⁵⁶

The ear is significant in another sense in the context of euhemeristic versions of evolution. Navarette refers briefly to H. G. Wells's 'A Story of the Stone Age', first published in the *Idler* in 1897, noting how Wells describes the appearance of his imagined stone-age children, some 'fifty thousand years ago' (1897: 62).

Wild-eyed youngsters they were, with matted hair and little broad-nosed impish faces, covered (as some children are covered, even nowadays) with a delicate down of hair. They were narrow in the loins and long in the arms.

⁵⁶ The hierarchy of the senses was somewhat moveable during the nineteenth century. Alexander Bain, writing in 1855 allocated taste and smell to the lower 'organic' senses, while touch, hearing and sight rank among the higher 'intellectual' senses (Bain 1855: 121), while Allen allocated lower positions to the 'close' senses of smell, taste and touch, and higher to the 'distant' senses of sight and hearing (Allen 1877: 58).

And their ears had no lobes, and had little pointed tips, a thing that still, in rare instances, survives. Stark naked, vivid little gipsies, as active as monkeys and as full of chatter, though a little wanting in words.

(1897: 63)

Two particular factors in this short paragraph stand out for my reading. The first is that Wells makes a point of acknowledging the survival of two of these evolutionary markers – the body hair and the tipped ears – in modern children. The second is that these stone-age children bear a resemblance to elves or fairies: their ears have no lobes and have pointed tips, and they have ‘impish faces’. ‘Impish faces’ is self-explanatory, but the tipped ears are more complex, both a marker of early evolution and of fairies. It was the sculptor, Thomas Woolner (1825-1892), an early member of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who alerted Darwin to the existence of a ‘little peculiarity in the outer ear, which he has often observed in both men and women, and of which he perceived the full signification’ (Darwin 1871 Vol. 1: 22). When at work on his sculpture of Puck, now in Tate Britain, he decided to give him elvish, pointed ears. He then started examining the ears of both monkeys and man, and saw commonly a ‘little blunt point... projecting from the inwardly folded margin, or helix’ (ibid.). He sent an illustration of an ear with that ‘little blunt point’, and Darwin included it in the *Descent of Man*, concluding that it represented ‘a vestige of formerly pointed ears – which occasionally reappears in man’ (23). The ‘Darwinian tubercle’ or ‘Woolnerian tip’ is thus a savage survival that physically links early man not only to his animal forebears, but to elves or fairies – to little people.

However, the type of magic that A:B:O represents is nothing to do with the sense of wonder that elves and fairies represent. A:B:O is a hairy abortion, a damaged foetus, buried then excavated, re-delivered by Pelluther and Dugdale, acting as midwives, or bodysnatchers. Perhaps the product of sexual sin, when dug up by the friends A:B:O functions as a particularly malign changeling, bringing a ‘dim, skulking horror of soul’ to Pelluther (1983: 102). There is no Machenian wonder here: A:B:O does not hold the key to understanding the hidden transcendent world; the borderline prodded is not that between the material and immaterial worlds, but that between science and occult magic, the breaching of which allows the past to encroach upon the present, and the dead to

invade the world of the living. A 'thing', buried for some hundreds of years, locked in a box covered in 'mould and rust', is dug up (99). It should be long dead, yet has survived due to the air siphoned to its metal coffin by a 'thickly rusted iron tube' running underground and emerging 'in a boss between two gnarled encrusted branches' of a dwarfed yew tree, like an umbilical cord (98). Indeed, it does appear to be dead: when they first open the box it is still only a 'monstrous antiquity', horrifying, but inert (100). But the warmth of Dugdale's fire awakens it, and it escapes to terrorise those who disturbed it and later (it is implied) central London (106/105). Thus Pelluther and Dugdale, apparently guilty of nothing more than being over-enthusiastic antiquarians, actually function as necromancers, raising A:B:O from the dead to terrorise the modern, urban world. Anachronistic little people function, for Buchan and Allen, as a cannibalistic, savage enemy for a modern hero; for De La Mare, a resurgent little figure is deployed as a non-ghost for a Gothic horror story. Machen, for whom euhemerism was rooted in his concept of the visible, material world as a façade hiding a deeper, transcendent reality, little people offer the prospect of a more divinely connected future.

Machen's Inflationary Weird

As I have already noted, scholars have tended to focus on Machen's 'little people' mythos as representative of fin-de-siècle anxieties about decadence and degeneration.⁵⁷ His little people are both atavistic and frequently malevolent, and the protagonists of his tales generally disappear in curious circumstances, presumably at the hands of these anachronistic throwbacks. However, I want to show that the negative emotions of 'fear' and 'anxiety' have occluded other, more positive readings of Machen's texts: they can be read as hopeful as well as horrifying, offering the possibility of connection with the divine. Little people are everywhere in Machen's tales. They scamper and crawl across the pages, playing

⁵⁷ See, for example, Eckersley 1992. 'A Theme in the Early Work of Arthur Machen: "Degeneration"'; Hurley 1996: *The Gothic Body*; Navarette. 1998. *The Shape of Fear*; MacLeod. 2006. *Fictions of British Decadence*; Jackson 2013. 'Non-Evolutionary Degeneration in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales'.

major (and largely malevolent) roles in ‘The Shining Pyramid’, ‘The Novel of the Black Seal’ and ‘The Red Hand’, all published in 1895. They are the subjects of ‘The Turanians’, one of the elegiac prose-poems collected as *Ornaments in Jade*, written in 1897 but only published in 1924, and they appear in ‘The White People’ of 1899. Even in *A Fragment of Life* (1904) one makes an oblique and shadowy appearance when a ‘horrible boy’ with red hair appears suddenly with ‘a dreadful face, with something unnatural about it, as if it had been a dwarf, and before she had time to have a good look, it popped back like lightning, and aunt all but fainted away’ (Machen 1988: 141). Machen continued to write about little people throughout his long career: as well as their multiple appearances in *The Three Impostors* (1895) they materialize in ‘Out of the Earth’, first published in *T.P.’s Weekly* in 1915, in ‘Opening the Door’ (1931), in *The Green Round* (1933), and in his journalism from 1887 to at least 1924.⁵⁸

The interpretation of Machen’s ‘little people’ stories takes on a distinctive quality when read through a euhemerist lens as I will show. He made no secret of his belief in the euhemerist hypothesis. In 1898 he reviewed Pineau’s euhemeristically-inclined *Folklore and Legends of the North* (1898), and made the following comment:

Of recent years abundant proof has been given that a short, non-Aryan race once dwelt beneath the ground, in hillocks, throughout Europe, their raths have been explored, and 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. The stories of changelings, and captive women, become clear on the supposition that the “fairies” occasionally raided the houses of the invaders [...] We might deduce the whole mythology from a confused recollection of the relations existing between the tall Aryans and the short Turanians [...]

(1898b: 273)

Machen is so often presented as anti-materialist, it seems perhaps strange that he was so convinced of the truth of what was, after all, seeking to establish itself as a

⁵⁸ Of these, I have not investigated either ‘The White People’ or ‘Out of the Earth’, the first because, although concerning the continuing existence of fairies, it does not reference or address euhemerism, and ‘Out of the Earth’ because it represents a fusion of *The Green Round*, a much later tale which does not add materially to my thesis, and ‘The Coming of the Terror’ (1917), a horror story concerning a sudden surge in animal attacks.

thoroughgoing materialist, scientific theory.⁵⁹ But it was an article of faith for Machen not that the material world is of less value than the immaterial, but that the material and immaterial worlds are indivisible. However much he professes to despise the growth of 'scientism', Machen used the hard sciences to unlock his characters' ability to connect with the imagined, and ecstatic, past. His protagonists are driven to probe ineffable mysteries, to investigate odd occurrences, to delve into ancient hillsides in a spirit of ruthless scientific empiricism, with the full knowledge that their investigations will be dangerous. And they are killed, sometimes callously, sometimes with agonised regret, in order to observe the result of a numinous experiment. The conceptual integration that Machen achieves here, both within the personality of the characters he creates and in the tales as a whole, is a strange marriage between science and the preternatural, in which the preternatural is accessed through scientific materialism. His rational, often exceptionally cold-blooded, scientists pursue a supernatural hypothesis embedded in the material to its inevitable end, mystic seers sacrificing themselves or others in pursuit of an impossible vision.

In fact, Machen tacitly approved of science when it confirmed his own beliefs. 'Tacitly', because even when science sanctioned his view of the world as inherently magical by helping develop something seemingly 'impossible', like wireless telegraphy, or flight, or when it confirmed, or appeared to confirm, the existence of a fabled city or the truth of a bible story, Machen never commended science or scientists outright. His opinion seemed to be that these discoveries and inventions were part of the great mystery of the material universe, and while the odd scientist may have stumbled across the secret of flight, or a method of seeing through solid flesh, it was the universe, sacred and inexpressible, which should be praised (Machen 1924a: 147). What Machen most disliked was science's tendency to demystify the world. In 1890, he wrote a short piece for the *St James' Gazette* in which he mused that '[S]urely there is nothing more pleasant than a little mystery and uncertainty: a medieval Mappa Mundi, with its strange pictures of strange peoples, is far more entertaining than a modern map of the world' (1992: 33). The

⁵⁹ All his life, Machen was scathing about 'science', in essays such as 'Roast Goose', 'How to Spend Christmas' and, of course 'Stuff – and Science' all written for the *Lyons Mail* and published as a collection *Dog and Duck*, in 1924. See also Machin 2018: 148.

‘modern map of the world’ literally masters the world through scientific knowledge, and transforms it ‘into the object of that knowledge’ (Bown 2001: 182). A modern map is a symbol of disenchantment: euhemerism re-enchants by making material those ‘strange pictures of strange people’.

Science very occasionally appeared to authenticate this sacred mystery, in which case, it gets Machen’s approval. This was a long-held opinion he expressed at length in an article he wrote for the *Lyons Mail* in 1922. In it he compares the *Arabian Nights* and Euclid, asking which is the most ‘improbable and extravagant’, and concluding that Euclid wins, listing scientific advancements which were recently believed impossible. These include ‘dirigible flight’, X-rays and ‘wireless telephony’, and Machen takes great delight in hindsight, scoffing at the scoffers, and revelling in science’s extraordinary achievements:

And then, you know, ‘wireless’: what would people have said to *that*? And wireless telephony: before long, they tell me, words uttered in London will be plainly audible in New York. Think of it, the human voice heard clearly across the Atlantic Ocean, as clearly and as easily as if the two speakers were talking to one another across the duck-pond in the farmyard. It was utterly impossible according to all our notions and all our experience; but it has happened, or soon will happen. So it doesn’t do to say that the highly improbable thing is therefore the impossible thing; Aladdin’s Lamp and the Genie and the Palace may yet come into experience.

(1924a: 147-8)

Material science here is framed as a conduit for making the impossible possible, initiating and sanctioning apparent miracles. Later in this article though, he assumes his more familiar position as a bristling blow-hard, figuring science as ‘a sort of Gradgrind and Bounderby rolled into one [...] bragging and blustering and telling its grandmother how to suck eggs,’ and, more often than not, getting it wrong (1924a: 155). ‘Science’, he jeers

tried a little Scripture History and announced, with a decision that the most dogmatic popes have been unable to command, that there are grave flaws in

the story of Abraham, because writing is mentioned, and writing was unknown in the period at which Abraham is supposed to have lived. And this magnificent proclamation was made about a fortnight before certain

inscribed tablets were found at Tel-al-Amarna; the characters having been formed 2,000 years at least before Abraham was born.⁶⁰

(1924a: 155)

He makes a similar point about the existence of the Homeric city of Troy, believed by many (and not just by scientists) to be an allegory, a 'sun-myth', until the discovery of ruins in Hisarlik by Heinrich Schliemann which appeared to confirm the city's reality.⁶¹ Machen displays real delight in the discovery of 'proof' that these ancient texts, these powerfully imaginative narratives that formed so much of his cultural hinterland, were grounded in fact. Machen's position in the borderlands between science and myth, fact and fantasy, is strategically fluid. 'Science', as Machen labels the empirical scientific method, is at once castigated for its arrogance and certainty when its conclusions do not appeal to Machen (the 'dogmatic popes' and the 'magnificent proclamation'), while its discoveries are used as empirical proof of his own beliefs when they do (the 'inscribed tablets'). When the actions and reactions of scientific processes create something he sees as magical, such as X-rays or the telephone, it is comparable to the magic of fairy tales. Similarly, when dry and dusty archaeologists declare the story of Abraham to be a later work of fiction, they are dictating a flawed 'truth' from an insufficient knowledge base. However, when those very same dry and dusty archaeologists change their minds and decide that newly-discovered evidence actually supports the Abrahamic legend, Machen is delighted.

Euhemerism, in which the real contains aspects of the unreal, the mundane aspects of the fantastic, reinforced and upheld Machen's inflationary or numinous worldview, making it easy for him to understand and accept euhemerism as a basis for interpreting belief in fairies, and convincing him of the truth of a euhemeristic interpretation of the widespread belief in the 'little people', in which they were a matter of historical fact, rather than a figment of supernatural imagination. It was this nexus of ideas that euhemerism describes that primarily animated his 'little people' mythos. Perhaps this conviction, and his evident

⁶⁰ The Amarna letters are cuneiform tablets discovered in 1887, and thought to have been written around 1360-1332 B.C.E., thus pre-dating the Bible (Ross 1967: 62),

⁶¹ In fact, Schliemann's 'discovery' was mostly the work of Frank Calvert, and the site of Homeric Troy is still disputed (Allan 379).

delight in it, was due to euhemerism's innate revelatory quality. Unlike the unveiling of tawdry theatrical mechanisms that mimic stage magic, euhemerism, with its sourcing of fairy-fantasy in the literally earthly discoveries of archaeological digs, has at its heart the demonstration of the indivisibility of the material and the immaterial. When Machen writes in 'The Novel of the White Powder' (1895) that all the elements of our world 'are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working' (2007d: 209), he encapsulates his belief that the spiritual and the material are not divided, that each contained elements of the other. Dr Raymond, in 'The Great God Pan', quotes from Oswald Crollius, an obscure seventeenth-century alchemist, saying, 'in every grain of wheat, there lies hidden the soul of a star' (2007a: 4) and Machen returned to this quote in his autobiography calling it 'a wonderful saying; a declaration, I suppose, that all matter is one, manifested under many forms' (1951: 170), echoing as it does Blake's 'world in a grain of sand' (1994: 135). Contained within the material exterior is the magical truth, like the soul of a star in a grain of wheat, or a green hill, beneath which hide an unexpected tribe of little people.

Far from being atavistic throwbacks, Machen's little people show qualities of supernatural endurance, and maintain a link with the sublime that he feared lost in the materialism of the modern world. They are exemplars of Machen's theories about literary ecstasy and spiritual transformation, their existence deployed by the author to demonstrate the universe's essential mystery. As the historian and biographer of H. P. Lovecraft, S.T. Joshi has noted (2007: xv-xvi) there is awe mixed with the horror experienced by Machen's narrators when they come into contact with the little people, which he ascribes to the latter's embodiment of both 'sorcery and sanctity', each 'an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common life' (Machen 2003d: 62). By suggesting that prehistoric hominins have lived as 'savage survivals', hidden and unknown, as modern, urban humanity evolved, the idea of atavism is reframed so that it becomes a quality of endurance rather than a random event, as a transgressive, ancient mythic force revenant in contemporary society. Machen's 'little people' are not degenerated, but re-generated, surfacing as material warnings against the lazy acceptance of superficial appearances ('The Red Hand'), or of mistaking ancient, pagan ritual for

uneducated superstition ('The White People') and underestimating the power of ancient artefacts ('The Novel of the Black Seal'). Although frequently dangerous, they are not always so: in 'The Turanians', for example, there is little hint of threat. And they are always symbols of powerful longevity, as ur-human as they are ab-human, and ambassadors of Machen's concept of the indivisibility of the material and immaterial worlds, of the universe as a 'tremendous sacrament' (Machen 2007d: 209).

'The Novel of the Black Seal' is a chapter in Machen's 1895 episodic novel *The Three Impostors, or, The Transmutations*. Reception when it was published was muted: it was compared unfavourably to Stevenson's work, accused both of obscenity and unnecessary reticence ('New Novels' 1896: 146), and dismissed as a 'curious medley' of 'the sensational, the trivial and the occult' ('Novel Notes' 1896: 131). Percy Addleshaw, reviewing for the *Academy*, liked it rather better, calling it a 'striking, clever, gruesome book' (1895: 482). Although loosely linked to others, each chapter stands alone, and 'The Novel of the Black Seal' concerns the adventures of a supremely unreliable narrator, Miss Lally, who works for Professor Gregg, an ethnologist. They leave London in order to stay near 'Caermaen', a clear double for Machen's home town of Caerleon-on-Usk, apparently to satisfy Gregg's whim of investigating the provenance of a mysterious Black Seal which has come into his possession. The existence of 'little people' in the hills around Caermaen is established by Professor Gregg's early reference to local fairy-tales: of 'a servant-girl at a farmhouse, who disappeared from her place and has never been heard of', the unexplained death of a child, and the killing of a man 'with a blow from a strange weapon' (Machen 2007c: 144). There are other clues to the existence of anachronistic 'little people', such as the *Pomponius Mela* manuscript, which Miss Lally translates as speaking of a folk who dwell 'in remote and secret places', who 'hate the sun', and who hiss rather than speak (ibid. 150). The Black Seal – or 'Sixtystone' – seems to be a kind of Rosetta Stone that may offer a way to understand these mysterious people (144). Jervase Cradock, a boy in whom Gregg later admits he knew he should find 'something of the blood of the "Little People"' (172) is a 'mentally weak' adolescent who speaks as if hissing. Employed as a general handyman, he has a curious story, as his mother was found, eight months before his birth, 'crouched up on the Grey Hills

[...] crying and weeping like a lost soul' (153-155). Gregg suspects that he may provide access to the 'secrets of the underworld', and soon discovers that he has transformative, tentacular abilities which seems to link him that that 'race who had lagged far behind the rest' (157, 166). Gregg comes to believe that Jervase is of that race himself, a race in which atavism is complicated by enhanced admission to the supernatural. These story elements are all codes for anthropological euhemerism: the attention to local superstitions, Professor Gregg's profession as a celebrated ethnologist, the archaeological artefacts that point the way to the people of the Grey Hills, and the Black Seal.

Machen adds two elements of fantasy to the basic euhemerist construct: the supernatural abilities of the 'little people', and their continued existence. Neither element is presented as solely horrific. One night, Gregg observes Jervase having some kind of fit.

I found him convulsed and foaming at the mouth [...] calling on the power within his flesh to leave him. I saw his body swell and become distended as a bladder, while the face blackened [...] Something pushed out from the body there on the floor, and stretched forth, a slimy, wavering tentacle, across the room, grasped the bust upon the cupboard, and laid it down on my desk.

(2007c: 172-3)

The tentacle that Gregg sees is certainly grotesque, and Gregg is left horrified, 'white and shuddering, with sweat pouring from my flesh' at the sight (ibid. 173). Before he actually witnesses the episode, he is convinced that Jervase's body may be an example of that human flesh which is 'the veil of powers which seem magical to us', powers that are not supernatural, but rather 'survivals from the depths of being' (166). Jervase's ability to produce the tentacle is a skill, a faculty common to those who still have the blood of an ancient race, lost to modern humanity. Gregg strives to convince himself that Jervase's tentacle is indeed as natural as the action of 'a snail pushing out his horns and drawing them in' again (173), but fails. The possible longevity of the little people is both horrifying and fascinating, comparable to the idea that one of his '*confrères* of physical science, roaming in a quiet English wood, had been suddenly stricken aghast by the

presence of the slimy and loathsome terror of the ichthyosaurus, the original of the stories of the awful worms killed by valorous knights, or had seen the sun darkened by the pterodactyl, the dragons of tradition' (2007c: 167). This passage is reminiscent of Lyell's famous statement that '[T]hen might those genera of animals return of which the memorials are preserved in the ancient rocks of our continents. The huge iguanodon might reappear in the words, and the ichthyosaur in the sea, while the pterodactyls might flit again through the umbrageous groves of tree-ferns' (Lyell 1835: 183). Lyell was imagining the possibilities of what we now call global warming, but the ghosts of the earth's deep past clearly haunts both writers.

Gregg's mixed reactions to both the tentacle and the possibility of the dwarf race's survival are 'a strange confusion of horror and elation' that resolves into a 'passion of joy' at his incredible discovery (Machen 2007c: 167). He determines to go and meet 'the "Little People" face to face' and although he fully expects not to return, he willingly pursues his curiosity to its ultimate end (173). Adrian Eckersley emphasises the biologically atavistic quality of Jervase's protoplasmic tentacle, figuring it as an expression of the 'primal slime that lurks within the degenerate race of the hills' (1992: 282). He judges Gregg (to whom he refers as 'Clegg' throughout) to be cursed with a 'Faustian hunger for knowledge', and thus morally ambiguous (282-3). This damning verdict may partly be due to Eckersley's reading of Miss Lally as a 'respectable young woman' (1992: 282), bound to Gregg by ties of gratitude because he has rescued her from starvation on the streets of London. But Miss Lally (and Miss Leicester, her alter-ego, who appears in 'The Novel of the White Powder') is also the 'Helen' of the 'Prologue', implicated in the torture and murder of the Young Man in Spectacles, whose mutilated corpse is discovered by Dyson and Phillipps at the end of 'Adventure of the Deserted Residence', the concluding chapter of *The Three Impostors* (2007c: 103; 2007e: 234).⁶² All the characters in the *Three Impostors* are mutable – hence its full title, *The Three Impostors, or, The Transmutations*, and it is in misrecognising this that Eckersley's reading of both Miss Lally and Gregg is mistaken. Gregg does not 'turn sinister' by making Jervase suffer for his pursuit of

⁶² The name 'Helen', for readers of Machen, is inevitably connected with 'Helen Vaughan', the devilish spawn of Mary and Pan, who creates such chaos in *The Great God Pan* (1894).

knowledge (Eckersley 1992: 283): Gregg sympathises with the boy's agony, struggling to remain 'a man of science' when watching his convulsions, and anyway, the boy's fits predate Gregg's involvement in his life (Machen 2007c: 173, 153). Rather, comprehension of the passage shifts if we take into account Machen's acknowledged belief in the indivisibility of the material and the immaterial, and in euhemerism as a thrilling example of a 'wilder reality'. Read in this way, Gregg becomes a heroic hunter of essential, spiritual reality. Seen through this prism, he is a daring quester after the ultimate truth: the existence of the fantastic immaterial behind the material veil. His disappearance is no failure, no Faustian fall, because he has found what he sought, even if he has paid with his life. The horror – and the thrill – of Jervase's '*confrères*' is based not only their supernatural ability, but on their survival.

Recent critics, almost without exception, presume that Machen's 1890s tales are intended to dramatize the threat that science poses in a reductive provision of new ways of understanding and interpreting the world.⁶³ Given that science, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, had continuously destabilised what had previously appeared to be secure borders – human/animal, civilised/savage, sane/insane, natural/ supernatural – Machen certainly appears to be ringing warning bells about possible transgressions in his weird and horror fiction. But his complex and ambivalent relationship with scientific materiality is vital to understanding both the fiction, and its cultural context. Some of his scientific protagonists, although morally quite distinct, are indeed guilty of breaching the borderline of what is and what is not allowable scientific inquiry.⁶⁴ In other work – including 'The Red Hand' and 'The Shining Pyramid', as well as 'The Novel of the Black Seal' – the protagonists are framed as tireless investigators, seekers after truth, searching for Machen's 'real world' which exists beneath the material surface. Machen's scientific protagonists may thus be viewed as explorers in hitherto uncharted territory, characters more akin to the adventure fiction heroes of Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard, than the 'mad scientists' who people the fin de siècle fiction of, for example, H. G. Wells. 'The Red

⁶³ See Eckersley 1992, Navarette 1998: 178-201, Ferguson 2002 and Worth 2012.

⁶⁴ In terms of moral distinction, Dr Black of *The Inmost Light* performs an evil act and repents, Dr Raymond of *The Great God Pan* does the same and is quite unrepentant.

Hand' is a particularly good example of this differentiation, pitting as it does a 'seeker' against a materialistic dullard who refuses to believe in the possibility that prehistoric forebears, antecedents of fairies, still exist, and may have access to the supernatural in a way that their modern counterparts have lost. His successful scientists, such as Gregg, use their material knowledge imaginatively, and have minds open to the possibility that the material world may not be all there is, and that the principle of euhemerism may be genuine.

Machen's characters have to be in one of two states of mind in order to perceive the world's wonders, or guided by a someone who is in that state, either by natural inclination, or by passing mood. As an example of the first, a state of passive reception, Leonard, in Machen's prose-poem 'Midsummer' (1924), has escaped the city and, entranced by nightfall and moonlight, has retreated to his farmhouse room to write 'in an ecstasy' (Machen 2003a: 54). At midnight, he becomes 'filled with longing for the wood-world at night' and wanders off, only to come across a gathering of 'white women' among the trees, whose appearance unmasks 'things that he had thought the world had long forgotten' (55). Having been vouchsafed this extraordinary vision, Leonard is bewildered but unharmed. Leonard's mind is open, but he is not actively searching for anything. Others, such as Machen's nameless protagonist in 'The Holy Things', who sees a vision of heaven while walking in Holborn (2003a: 60) or 'Mary', in 'The Turanians' (33) which I investigate later in this chapter, are in a similar frame of mind, and also experience pleasant transmutations. Most of these experiences, however, are less pleasant because the protagonists are in an investigatory 'active/receptive' state, importunately seeking to cross a border between the worlds of understood, empirical reality, and the world of the spiritual, to probe the limits of what it is allowable to know. Indeed, in the prologue to 'The White People', Ambrose, Machen's fictional spokesman, identifies true wickedness as 'a certain rapture or ecstasy of the soul; a transcendent effort to surpass the ordinary bounds' (2003c: 66). Attempting actively to 'penetrate into spheres, higher or lower' (65) is not safe, but it may be rewarding. In contrast to both these receptive states, Phillipps, the sceptic in 'The Red Hand' is so unmindful that Dyson only just stops him treading on a murdered man in an obscure alleyway in central London (2003b: 3).

‘The Red Hand’ features Machen’s two protagonists, Phillipps and Dyson, familiar from *The Three Imposters*, which was published in the same year. Both are loosely presented as scientists. Mr Phillipps is an ethnologist, older, pompous, and intellectually rigid. Mr Dyson, although a ‘man of letters’ is a flâneur of remarkable frivolity and a mouthpiece for Machen’s own thoughts and ideas. He appears in several stories and novellas, and describes himself in the ‘The Inmost Light’ as a student of the ‘science of that great city; the physiology of London; literally and metaphysically the greatest subject that the mind of man can conceive’ (2007b: 52).⁶⁵ For Machen, as for many other fin de siècle authors, London is a multiplicity of cities, ‘containing an infinitude of possible meanings, each buried beneath or within the others’ (Freeman 2007: 192). ‘The Red Hand’ is concerned with the possibility that atavistic ‘savage survivals’ are lurking in the London of the 1890s: Dyson is convinced that they are, while Phillipps resists the idea. Phillipps and Dyson come across the body of Sir Thomas Vivian, a well-known and seemingly well-liked cardiologist, his throat gruesomely slashed by a ‘primitive flint knife’ (2003b: 5). On the wall above his body is a crudely-drawn red chalk *mano in fica* (an ancient symbol of mild obscenity and protection against the evil eye) hence the title of the story. While Phillipps convinces himself that Vivian was murdered by an Italian assassin who either found or stole the flint knife from a museum, Dyson believes the truth is that the knife is modern and was both made and wielded by someone using ancient techniques, and to whom ‘darkness and gloom were familiar and habitual; by some one to whom the common dread of the rope was unknown’, indicating a person existing in an era before modern lighting systems or contemporary justice (9). Strange notes in an indecipherable script are found in the dead man’s pockets, unlikely coincidences occur, and curiously-inscribed black tablets are found before Dyson and Phillipps eventually discover the answer to the riddle. Dyson tracks down a Mr Selby, a man raised in the rural west of England, and fascinated by ‘certain wild legends in which the older people still secretly believe’, as well as rumours of ‘the existence of treasure, the hoard of a race extinct for ages, still hidden beneath the hills’ (21). Selby had since revisited the site of the buried treasure but returned to London a

⁶⁵ Dyson appears in ‘The Inmost Light’ (1894) and ‘The Shining Pyramid’ (1895), while Phillipps and Dyson appear together in ‘The Red Hand’ and *The Three Imposters* (1895).

broken man, having found only a 'small piece of curious gold-work' marked with an image, 'the Pain of the Goat', so obscene and horrific that Dyson and Phillipps 'cried out together in horror' at the sight of it (27-28).

'Who can limit the age of survival?' asks Dyson in his initial conversation with the sceptic Phillipps:

The troglodyte and the lake-dweller, perhaps representatives of yet darker races, may very probably be lurking in our midst, rubbing shoulders with frock-coated and finely-draped humanity, ravening like wolves at heart and boiling with the foul passion of the swamp and the black cave. Now and then as I walk in Holborn or Fleet Street I see a face which I pronounce abhorred, and yet I could not give a reason for the thrill of loathing that stirs within me.

(Machen 2003b: 2)

Here, Dyson's instinctive abhorrence is not triggered by class or race – that 'darker' implies obscurity and concealment rather than skin tone – but by chronological distance, the 'foul passion' attached to anachronism and savagery rather than low status or poverty. Apart from this somewhat flimsy evidence, Dyson's premise that 'primitive man' may be encountered in the city is not literally fulfilled in this story: the 'darker race', the 'keepers' of the treasure under the hill remain in the depths of the rural west country (1, 28). However, their powerful influence is felt in contemporary London, imaginatively fulfilling Dyson's hypothesis, and giving them a kind of telekinetic dominance. While this influence is undeniably dark, resulting as it does in the attempted murder of Selby and the killing of Sir Thomas Vivian, the different phraseology of the two main protagonists on their initial stroll through the night-time city is important. As they wander the streets through 'the region of faded respectability' and onto the more squalid areas, Phillipps remarks that 'he had never seen a neighbourhood more unpleasant or more commonplace' (Machen 2003b: 3). 'More mysterious, you mean,' counters Dyson. This challenging of 'unpleasant' with 'mysterious' condenses not only Dyson's, but Machen's perspective on London as a gateway world, where the merely dingy and squalid can transmute into the weird and mysterious. Dyson's positive perception of the dingy street is a choice, enabled by

his imaginative openness: he does not see merely what is there, but wonders about what may lie beneath it.

Just before this exchange, the two friends walk along a 'flaring causeway', where they can hear, 'between the clamour of the children and the triumphant *Gloria* played on a piano-organ the long deep hum and roll of the traffic in Holborn' (Machen 2003b: 2). In Machen's world, children are often signifiers of an earlier, 'savage' state, preternatural, and ominous.⁶⁶ The concept of children as little savages, close to animals and thus emblematic of aeons of evolution was prevalent at the time, and resonated with Haeckel's Theory of Recapitulation, suggesting a personal evolutionary journey and the individual embodiment of ancient savagery. James Crichton-Brown (1840-1938), psychiatrist and neurologist, believed that children were 'diamond editions of very remote ancestors, full of savage whims and impulses' (1883 qtd. Shuttleworth 2003: 96) while James Sully (1842-1923), educational theorist and psychologist, went further, suggesting that understanding children's minds would allow us to understand the ways of animals 'and vice versa' (1885: 3-4). The sound of the *Gloria* suggests heavenly transcendence, and the 'long deep hum and roll' of the Holborn traffic, supplying a kind of bass line to the hymn, represents London as a kind of psychic access point between the material and spiritual worlds. And indeed it is Dyson's investigative work in Bloomsbury that leads the friends to discover the truth of the anachronistic 'little people' who live beneath the tumulus and keep the treasure safe. Dyson's countering of Phillipps' 'unpleasant' with 'mysterious' can also be applied to Machen's positioning of the evolutionary survivals represented by the 'little people' in this tale. The words used to describe them – 'primitive', 'survivals', 'troglodyte' – and the *mano in fica* they use as a sign, designated as 'horrible', and to Selby 'the most terrible of symbols' can all be read as derogatory terms (Machen 2003b: 2, 6, 27). But to Machen, as much as to Dyson, their survival is more 'mysterious' than 'unpleasant'.

⁶⁶ In this story, children are compared to 'bats flying' (p. 1); 'The Happy Children' (1920) concerns a sighting of ghostly children on Childermas; children turn savage and murderous in 'Out of the Earth' (1915); the protagonist of the Green Book in 'The White People' (1904) is a girl, young enough to still need a nurse, and there are many more examples in Machen's writing.

Kimberly Jackson has an interestingly positive view of the little people in 'The Red Hand', designating them as representations of the 'imaginative possibilities that emerge from evolutionary theory [...] which the scientific mode of understanding cannot entertain' (2013: 130). I think this is a good definition, but I disagree with her two further points: that the 'little people' are 'indistinguishable' from civilised man; and that when Dyson says '[i]t is possible that man may sometimes return on the track of evolution' (Machen 2003b: 11) it can be interpreted that the 'track itself is not linear and unidirectional but rather consists of a looping structure such that the return is not a backward movement' (Jackson 2013: 128). Dyson's point is precisely that they are easily distinguishable from everyday modern man because of the shock of revulsion they generate, despite their modern clothing. On the second point, were these remnants to have somehow left the linear evolutionary track and then returned to it, the preposition used would have been 'to' rather than 'on', so that 'man may sometimes return *to* the track of evolution' (Machen 2003b: 11). The underground-dwelling keepers of the treasure are unquestionably atavistic remnants of an earlier human, on the same, linear, evolutionary track, but they are far from 'primitive', and thus are not contained by the evolutionary anthropology discussed earlier.

The complete sentence in which Dyson refers to evolutionary tracks is this: '[i]t is possible that man may sometimes return on the track of evolution, and it is my belief that an awful lore is not yet dead' (Machen 2003b: 11). The 'little people' in this tale are more than keepers of a treasure hoard: they are guardians of 'awful lore', knowledge that is 'full of awe' rather than the more modern meaning, 'horrible'. In his autobiography, Machen noted his authorial clumsiness when trying to communicate just this sense in 'The Great God Pan'. 'I translated awe,' he says 'at worst awfulness, into evil; again, I say, one dreams in fire and works in clay' (1951: 121). This 'awful lore' is the source of their power, and the reason that Dyson prefers, when reference is made to the death of Sir Thomas Vivian, to use the term 'sacrifice' rather than 'murder' (2003b: 17). The 'little people' are, as in much of Machen's work, knowledgeable in ways that contemporary humanity no longer has the power to be, and have an access to the natural magic that moderns have lost. In 'The Red Hand', the little people who live beneath the west

country tumulus wield enormous power, causing horror, terror and even murder in distant London. As Phillipps says, having consulted his friend at the British Museum on the provenance and meaning of the black stone tablet, '[i]t must be some wreckage of a vanished race, almost, I think – a fragment of another world than ours' (2003b: 15). So theirs is 'another world', mystical and transcendent, dangerous to be sure, but certainly not degraded: 'The Red Hand' is illustrative of Machen's belief in the ecstasy to be found in mystery. 'As a child,' he wrote, 'I realised something of the mystic injunction [...] by the light of the child's illumination, I saw *latens deitas*; the whole earth, down to the very pebbles, was but the veil of a quickening and adorable mystery' (1951: 33-4). He believed that this ineffable mystery can be seen anywhere, by those with eyes to see it: '[...] he who cannot find wonder, mystery, awe, the sense of a new world and an undiscovered realm in the places by the Gray's Inn Road will never find those secrets elsewhere, not in the heart of Africa, not in the fabled hidden cities of Tibet [...] All the wonders lie within a stone's throw of King's Cross Station' (204). This love of and belief in the power of mystery is not exclusive to Machen: in 1890 Lang noted the universal longing for 'a margin undiscovered, where hope and romance may dwell' (qtd Lecourt: 190). Machenian explorers must be in a mental state that is receptive to that romance, their minds open enough to be able to find something – a neighbourhood, a face – 'mysterious' rather than 'unpleasant', and to respect, even venerate, the very mystery they are attempting to decode.

Dyson also appears in 'The Shining Pyramid', first serialized in *The Unknown World* in May and June 1895.⁶⁷ His colleague here is a Mr Vaughan (unrelated, it seems, to the Helen Vaughan of 'The Great God Pan') who, puzzled by a series of patterns made with ancient flint arrowheads and carefully placed by a door in the wall of the kitchen garden of his house in the west country, seeks Dyson's help to unravel the mystery. The series of patterns – called by Dyson 'the Army', 'the Bowl', 'the Pyramid' and 'the Half-Moon' – appear a month after the disappearance of a beautiful young girl, now the subject of local gossip as one

⁶⁷ Edited by Machen's friend, A. E. Waite, *The Unknown World* was published monthly but ran for only eleven issues between August 1894 and June 1895. It was devoted to 'The Occult Sciences, Magic, Mystical Philosophy, Alchemy, Hermetic Archaeology, and the Hidden Problems of Science, Literature, Speculation, and History' (*The Unknown World* 1894: 1).

'taken by the fairies', and make Vaughan so uneasy he persuades Dyson to leave London and visit him (Machen 2007f: 85, 80). Once there, Dyson deciphers the signs and the two friends walk one night to the lip of a hollow ('the Bowl') where, under a crescent moon, they witness the sacrifice of Annie Trevor, the girl taken by the fairies.

Of all Machen's tales, this is the one perhaps most heavily and directly influenced by the euhemerism proposed by MacRitchie and Haliburton. The little people here communicate by means of signs made in the dead of night, a clue, used also in 'The Red Hand', as to their prehistoric background which has enabled them to see in the dark (Machen 2007f: 97; MacRitchie 1890: 162). The signs they draw are only three and a half feet from the ground, an indication of their height, and they depict a series of eyes in red chalk of an odd shape, 'the shape of the Mongolian eye', a hint of their Turanian heritage (Machen 2007f 86; MacRitchie 1890: 42, fn.1; Haliburton 1891a: 53; 1891c: 78; 1892b: 111). Finally, Dyson spells out his deduction.

I remembered what people had said about Annie Trevor's disappearance, that she had been 'taken by the fairies.' [...] And the hint came of the old name of fairies, 'the little people,' and the very probable belief that they represent a tradition of the prehistoric Turanian inhabitants of the country, who were cave dwellers: and then I realized with a shock that I was looking for a being under four feet in height, accustomed to live in darkness, possessing stone instruments, and familiar with the Mongolian cast of features!

(2007f: 98)

The reason they have chosen Vaughan's garden wall as the place to display their signs is its proximity to an old limestone pillar, 'a place of meeting before the Celt set foot in Britain' (99).

Of all these tales, the 'little people' of 'The Shining Pyramid' are the most revolting and bloodthirsty. They are likened to snakes or wriggling insects, the noise they make at their weird assembly 'a strident and horrible hissing' while their movements make the pit 'stir and seethe like an infernal cauldron', while the sides and bottom 'tossed and writhed with vague and restless forms that passed

to and fro without the sound of feet' (2007f: 93). Their speech is full of 'horrible sibilance', as is Jervase Cradock's in 'The Novel of the Black Seal', and although 'things like faces and human limbs' appear amidst the 'foul and writhing growth', that 'like' signals Vaughan's difficulty in believing the 'little people' are quite human (*ibid.*). However, as the pyramid of fire leaps up, he sees them for what they are, 'things made in the form of men but stunted like children hideously deformed, the faces with the almond eyes burning with evil and unspeakable lusts' (94). They are human but not quite, loathsome and repellent yet remain the keepers of a lost connection with the sublime, emblematic of both 'sorcery and sanctity [...] the only realities', each 'an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common life' (Machen 2003c: 62). The route to this 'ecstasy' appears more connected to sorcery than sanctity, but in 'The Turanians', a prose-poem collected in *Ornaments in Jade*, first published in 1924 but written in 1897, Machen makes his 'little people' much more marvellous than monstrous.

'The Turanians' was written only two years after 'The Novel of the Black Seal', 'The Red Hand' and 'The Shining Pyramid', and is the fragmentary tale of a young girl, Mary, who is transfigured by her brief association with a member of a mysterious wandering tribe of Turanian gypsies. By conceiving these Turanians as wild rather than savage, Machen gives them immediate access to nature, and figures them as more spiritually evolved than their ignorant, 'civilized' contemporaries. It is a sharp contrast to Machen's other, better-known 'little people' stories, and allows him to explore the Turanians' special connection with the natural world as a people who, because they have chosen to follow their ancient, peripatetic life, have not allowed the incursions of modernity to distance them from it. This, in turn, gives them special access to a kind of ecstatic, transfiguring mystery that has nothing to do with the menacing and dangerous nature of the little people he deploys in his other work of the 1890s.

The text begins: 'The smoke of the tinkers' camp rose a thin pale blue from the heart of the wood.' Machen's wording both explains the Turanians' socio-economic-historical status – for they are 'in reality, Turanian metal-workers degenerated into wandering tinkers' – while also hinting that their being there creates a 'heart' for the wood, that the tinkers' camp *is* the heart of the wood (2003a: 33). The 'heart of the wood' puts them also at the heart of Machen's

transcendent world of natural mystery. For him, the woods about his home in Gwent were 'a kind of fairyland' waiting for the boy to discover the Roman road that passed along the summit of the ancient forest of Wentwood, and the 'Foresters' Oaks, a grove of trees that were almost awful in the magnificence of their age and their decay' (1951: 30). For Machen, ancient woodland encapsulated the glamour and fascination of the unknown: 'Paths full of promise allured me into green depths [...] And so I crossed Wentwood, and felt not that I knew it, but that it was hardly to be known' (ibid.). Into this mysterious woodland comes Mary, on a hot summer's day, the forest path offering a cooler alternative to the 'brown August fields', the spreading oaks shading 'a winding way of grass that cooled her feet' (2003a: 33). Mary is a fey, sensitive girl, whose dramatic imagination is of concern to her mother, but which also marks her out as a Machenian fellow-traveller, one whose super-sensitive mind is worthy of exposure to a higher consciousness.

In *Hieroglyphics* (1902), his essay on ecstasy in literature, Machen wrote that in great literature '[W]e are withdrawn from the common ways of life; and in that withdrawal is the beginning of ecstasy' (1902: 56). In 'The Turanians', Mary's walk down the forest path, from her comfortable, safe, middle-class home, and into the wild wood, denotes just such a withdrawal, and signals her openness to another, transcendental, experience. Away from her mother, Mary is free to indulge her emotional and sensual connection to the natural world, and there is a sexual charge in the writing, perhaps implying that she is on the threshold of a sexual awakening. She walks 'in a green cloud'; the strong sunlight makes 'the tree-stems, the flowers, and her own hands seem new'; the familiar wood-path has become 'full of mystery and hinting, and every turn brought a surprise'. '[T]he mere sense of being alone under the trees was an acute secret joy', and when she loosens her hair, she sees that it 'was not brown but bronze and golden, glowing on her pure white dress' (2003a: 34). She begins a process of transfiguration – trees to flowers, new hands, brown hair to bronze – which prefigures her transformation to the preternatural via the natural when she sees her reflection in a woodland pool as a 'smiling nymph'. And all this time, as she wanders, little by little, further into the wood, towards its heart, she is waiting for something or someone, 'listening for the rustle of parted boughs' (ibid.).

In a passage full of religious reference, 'the thin blue smoke' which rises above the trees recalls incense as Mary remembers 'her childish dread of "the gypsies"' and others calling them 'those horrible people' (2003a: 34). She moves closer and, now feeling no fear, 'laid herself to rest on a smooth patch of turf, and listened to the strange intonations that sounded from the camp'. These intonations figure the Turanians as in tune with both nature and the divine. Their song is 'almost chanting', pleasing Mary 'with a rise and fall of notes and a wild wail, and the solemnity of unknown speech'. It is in harmony with the woodland sounds – the drip of the well, 'the birds' sharp notes, and the rustle and hurry of the woodland creatures' – but also has a ritual, prayerful resonance as 'the voices thrilled into an incantation' (34). Mary moves nearer, until the source of the incense-like smoke is revealed as 'red fire between the boughs'. She lacks the courage to go and talk to 'these strange wood-folk' and is 'afraid to burst into the camp' – and the sense here is clearly that she is not afraid of them, but afraid to disturb their incantatory, curiously religious meeting. Instead, she waits under a tree 'hoping that one of them might happen to come her way' (ibid.). Mary's lack of fear and the lexis of devotion – 'intonations', 'chanting', 'solemnity', 'harmony' – as she draws nearer the gypsies' camp marks the Turanians as unworldly, mystical, perhaps holy, and certainly not monstrous or threatening (35). The Turanians are soon described in more detail: they were 'people of curious aspect, short and squat, high-cheekboned, with dingy yellow skin and long almond eyes', and the camp includes a 'swarm of fantastic children, lolling and squatting about the fire, gabbling to one another in their singsong speech' (ibid.). However, 'in one or two of the younger men there was a suggestion of a wild, almost faunlike grace, as of creatures who always moved between the red fire and the green leaf' (ibid.). In this context, the faun reference seems much more benign than it does in 'The Great God Pan', and their place 'between the red fire and the green leaf' positions them somewhere between man and nature, or nature and the divine, perhaps as interlocutors.

Most intriguing, however, is the notion, already quoted, that 'they were in reality Turanian metal-workers, degenerated into wandering tinkers' (2003a: 35). What does Machen mean by 'degenerated' in this context? The word inevitably has an evolutionary (or devolutionary) quality, and may suggest a

certain amount of physical degeneration: perhaps their smallness of stature is a sign of this, although the Turanians, to whose race they belong and from whom they have 'degenerated' were believed to be a dwarf race anyway. Perhaps their movements, specifically 'lolling and squatting' and in a subsequent description, their appearance as 'a procession of weird bowed figures [...] one stumbling after another [...]' while 'the children crawled last, goblinlike, fantastic', might be a sign of physical degeneration, although it is equally probable that their figures are 'weird' and 'bowed' because each carries a 'huge shapeless pack' (ibid.). It might refer to a certain mental degeneration, although the fact that they are 'gabbling to one another in their singsong speech' does not, surely, denote that their language is meaningless, merely that Mary cannot understand it. It certainly does not refer to any kind of moral or spiritual degeneration, given that Mary is not frightened of them, and they are repeatedly framed as profoundly connected both to nature and to the spiritual.

Rather, I think 'degenerated' here is used primarily in a social, a hierarchical context. Like the 'straggling "Finn-Men" that MacRitchie reassessed as 'representatives of a decayed caste of conquerors' (MacRitchie 1890: 23), although these people are now called gipsies, they were 'Turanian metal-workers [...] their ancestors had fashioned the bronze battle-axes, and they mended pots and kettles' (Machen 2003a: 35). It is unclear for whom these 'bronze battle-axes' were made, whether for the race of Aryans who (according to the Turanian mythos) invaded Turanian land and took it over, or for Turanian warriors to fight off the invader, but it is clearly more worthy, a higher calling, to be making battle-axes than mending kettles. Their link with armour, like the 'scales' of the sealskin-wearing Lapps, is also a sign of their previous superiority in MacRitchie's social hierarchy (MacRitchie 1890: 14). This is clearly the primary meaning of 'degenerated' in this context, and it therefore implies that the Turanians were very far from being a race of squat monsters and were highly evolved, skilled and war-like (historically a sign of status), however 'goblinlike' their children. We are to take from this, I suggest, a notion that, despite their unconventional appearance, these Turanian tinkers, with a historical authority implied by their warrior caste and their strong connection to both the natural and the preternatural, are at least equal in evolutionary status to Mary. Machen seems to

be suggesting that while the Turanians' degeneration is a fall in social position, it bears no relation to Nordau's decadent interpretation of the term (1892), and thus casts no aspersions on their biological or moral status.

Back in the forest, as Mary waits in hope of an encounter, '[A] strange smiling face peered out from between the leaves, and the girl knew that her heart leapt as the young man walked towards her' (Machen 2003a: 35). Here the narrative breaks off and we hear nothing more of their encounter. The Turanians move on that night, and we encounter Mary next as she is 'lying in her white room, caressing a small green stone, a curious thing cut with strange devices, awful with age' (ibid.). Once again, the use of the word 'awful' denotes 'full of awe', as her encounter with the young Turanian – which, as it involved Mary's heart leaping as a young man walks towards her in the middle of a misty wood as the sun goes down, we assume to be sexual – has left her extremely happy. 'She laughed for joy,' caressing the stone, afraid to say anything to her conventional mother, and lies in her white room, murmuring to herself 'in the bewilderment of her delight' (ibid.). The process of transformation which started in the wood, seems to have become material: while her hands before only 'seemed' new, and her hair's brown colour was modified by the sun, now, in the privacy of her bedroom, she holds the green stone 'close to the luminous ivory, and the gold poured upon it' (ibid.). Through this ecstatic encounter, Mary's skin has become the 'luminous ivory', and her hair, previously bronze, has become gold. She has been transfigured, from being merely human, into natural materials (ivory, gold) mined and worked through her contact with the Turanians into something rich, valuable and numinous.

Much later in his career, in 1931 Machen wrote a tale called 'Opening the Door' Perhaps owing something to Wells's 'The Door in the Wall' (1906), this tale revolves around the Reverend Secretan Jones, a retired gentleman 'understood to be engaged in some kind of scholarly research [...] a well-known figure in the Reading Room of the British Museum' (1946: 55) who lives in Canonbury. Due to the unexpected rattle of a teacup in its saucer, Jones becomes obsessively concerned that the increase in motor traffic on London's road might lead to catastrophe. One day, he goes out for a walk and disappears for six weeks. When he returns, to a relieved welcome from his housekeeper, he has no memory of his

absence, and no sense that he has been away at all (58). The story is narrated by a 'newspaperman' who has interviewed Jones, and become friendly with him. During their conversation, Jones reveals that he has for some time been suffering from 'absences': putting papers carefully away then discovering them somewhere completely different (61), losing his sense of direction (62), books disappearing then appearing inexplicably (63).

One afternoon I was in a very miserable and distracted state. I could not attend to my work. I went out into the garden, and walked up and down trying to calm myself. I opened the garden door and looked into the narrow passage which runs at the end of all the gardens on this side of the square. There was nobody there – except three children playing some game or other. They were horrible, stunted little creatures, and I turned back into the garden and walked into my study. I had just sat down, and had turned to my work hoping to find relief in it, when Mrs. Sedger, my servant, came into the room and cried out, in an excited sort of way, that she was glad to see me back again.

(1946: 64)

He has no idea why this happened. The journalist suggests a nervous breakdown. However, Jones shows him a pressed flower and explains that he had picked it that day in the garden, and when he returned 'it was quite fresh' (209). Jones admits that some dim memory has been returning to him of his sojourn:

[I]n a day or two there was a vague impression that I had been somewhere where everything was absolutely right. I can't say more than that. No fairyland joys, or bowers of bliss, or anything of that kind; no sense of anything strange or unaccustomed. But there was no care there at all. *Est enim magnum chaos.*

(1936: 65)

His interlocutor notes the meaning of the Latin is 'For there is a great void', and nothing more is said. Two months later, the Reverend goes to a farm near Llanthony in the Black Mountains as his nerves have been troubling him. Three weeks later, the journalist receives an envelope, addressed in Secretan Jones's writing. 'Inside was a slip of paper on which he had written the words: *Est enim*

magnum chaos. The day on which the letter was posted he had gone out in wild autumn weather, late one afternoon, and had never come back. No trace of him had ever been found' (1946: 65).

What is the point of the three 'stunted' children in this tale? It would work perfectly well without them. They are clearly not children at all, but little people, the description of them as 'horrible, stunted little creatures' signifying their not-quite-human ontology. They should be a sign of ill-omen, positioned as they are in the narrow passage between the urban gardens and... what? The 'passage' is surely a metaphorical boundary between this world and some other, between 'here' and 'there'. But Jones's returning memory seems to signify that 'there' is a kind of peaceful paradise, specifically *not* an enchanted fairyland, but a state of being without care, almost transcendental. Two conflicting stories are here at work: the horrible, demonic little creatures playing on the borderland between our world and theirs, should signify that this other world is unpleasant, hellish. But it seems their world is a place free from human care. The 'great void' is not to be feared after all. Jones's willing disappearance can be compared to that of Professor Gregg. Machen's little people demonstrate a range of attributes, including permanence in a rapidly-changing world, an unbreakable connection with nature in a landscape of expanding urbanization, and a strong connection to the divine. In this light, their 'victims' may be regarded rather as adventurers in an unknown land, or as brave pilgrims who have been shown the way.

In his fiction, Machen deployed euhemerism to support and reinforce his long- and deeply-held beliefs in the indivisibility of the material and the immaterial worlds, in the innately fantastic nature of reality, and in the deep truths hidden in ancient myths. 'Tradition', he says, 'is always true' (1924d: 129). Long after writing his 'little people' short stories of the 1890s, in 1922 Machen wrote a short piece for the *Lyons Mail*, to which he was a regular contributor, called 'St George and the Dragon' (ibid.). In it, he discussed the essential veracity of myths and fables, in this case primarily that of St George. To Machen, merely 'the popular tradition that he was a dragon-killer proves that a very long time ago there were dragons and that there were men who encountered them and killed them' (ibid. 129). In the same piece, he talks of a 'fairy rath' said to be on an Irish hill from which flames could be seen issuing at night. And he asserts that flames could

indeed have been seen issuing from that hill 'if you happened to have been strolling that way somewhere around A.D 850', for this hill 'had been a retreat of the aboriginal inhabitants of Ireland, the dark 'little people' (136). For Machen, euhemerism provided proof beyond doubt that magic was real, and that it could be found in the material world, as he had always known.

Coda

Euhemerism

The theory of fairy-euhemerism remained established for some decades after MacRitchie recapitulated it in *The Testimony of Tradition*, quoted as fact in numerous texts on folklore and anthropology, including Sir John Rhŷs's *Celtic Folklore* (1901), *The Childhood of Fiction* by Canon J. A. McCulloch (1905) and *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* by W. Y. Evans Wentz (1911). In *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1921) Margaret Murray (1862-1962) asserted

[it] is now a commonplace of anthropology that the tales of fairies and elves preserve the tradition of a dwarf race which once inhabited Northern and Western Europe. Successive invasions drove them to the less fertile parts of each country which they inhabited, some betook themselves to the inhospitable north, or the equally inhospitable mountains; some, however, remained in the open heaths and moors, living as mound-dwellers, venturing out chiefly at night and coming in contact with the ruling races only on rare occasions.

(Murray 1963: 14)

The 'dwarf race' then gained the reputation of 'wizards and magicians', and thus Murray suggests that witches and fairies are closely linked (*ibid.*). Despite Murray's confident tone, Grydehøj notes that by the 1920s 'British scholarship was in near-universal agreement that MacRitchie's euhemeristic theory was incorrect' (Grydehøj 2013, II: 111) although it continued to have traction in Shetland where it became established as a Shetlandic 'foundation myth', largely due to the efforts of Jessie Edmonstone Saxby. Her reworking of MacRitchie's thesis in *Shetland Traditional Lore* (1932) 'became the most significant book on Shetland supernatural tradition' not only because of its intrinsic value, but because of its continuing influence (Grydehøj 2013, II: 112). What Grydehøj denotes as 'MacRitchiean-Saxbyean Picts/trows' feature in Shetlandic texts into the 1980s, with 'not a single published rejection of the theory from within Shetland – either implicit or explicit' to date (112). Indeed, Silver notes that there was a claimed sighting of small-statured 'wild men' dancing about on Hoy in 1940

(Marwick, qtd. Silver 1999: 206). The fate of MacRitchie's fin de siècle fairy-euhemerism is oddly similar to Margaret Murray's witch cult: both hypotheses have been summarily debunked, yet both appear to have an oddly powerful grip on the public imagination.

In some ways Murray was the contradictory obverse of Arthur Machen: whereas he espoused the romantic possibilities of the world while using science on occasion to substantiate his anti-materialist views, she was a 'whole-hearted sceptic and rationalist' (Simpson 1994: 89) who established the Wiccan movement by mistake, and secretly practised witchcraft and spell-making (Janssen, qtd. Mallowan 2004).⁶⁸ *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* was dismissed by many from its publication in 1921 onwards. On its initial publication, W. R. Halliday wrote a review in *Folklore* which commenced by suggesting (echoing Haliburton's critics as to the likelihood of a tribe of dwarfs managing to exist, unheard and unseen, in Morocco) that 'the supposition that an organised cult of primeval antiquity survived into the seventeenth century A. D. without attracting the notice of any previous historian is one which is not easy to take upon trust' (Halliday 1922: 224). Murray's methodology was, he implied, suspect and 'the evidence, though voluminous, is untrustworthy' (228). As Jacqueline Simpson points out, her manipulation of sources damaged her whole thesis (Simpson 1994: 91). The primary appeal of Murray's book appears to have been its tone of sturdy rationality, its insistence on demystifying witches and absolving them of devil-worship and satanic rituals, of deflating the hysteria of both the accused and the accusers. Like MacRitchie and Haliburton, she removed the supernatural element and replaced it with 'real people, villagers who go on foot to real witch meetings' (Burstein 1961: 521). Murray's witches were survivals of pre-Christian – indeed prehistoric – pagan rituals, suppressed by the Christian church, who worshipped a horned god, mistaken by that church for the devil. They were not being hysterical, 'simply worshipping what they believed was a divine being' (Sheppard 2013: 168).

⁶⁸ The 'Father of Wicca', Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) was inspired by Murray's work and after discovering (or inventing) a coven of New Forest witches in 1939, he established a new iteration of Wicca.

The parallels between Murray's Witch-Cult thesis and MacRitchie's fairy-euhemerism – both theories substitute real people for creatures of myth, both were theoretically unstable, both, while splitting academic opinion, were immediately popular with the public – are clear. While it is outside the remit of this thesis to investigate in depth exactly why this was the case, both theories have an immediate attraction in that they transform both fairies and witches into real people, thus both demystifying and authenticating them. Murray's work on witches, her three 'increasingly eccentric books' – *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921), *The God of the Witches* (1931) and *The Divine King of England* (1954) – 'must certainly have harmed the reputation of the [Folklore] Society and possibly the status of folkloristics in this country' (Simpson 1994: 89), and yet in 1929 she was asked to write the entry on 'Witchcraft' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, disseminating her ideas for decades: the entry was not revised until 1969 (*ibid.*). Perhaps largely because of this, Murray's theory became extremely popular and had a 'definite impact' upon those witchcraft studies and histories written for consumption by the general public (Oates 1998: 28). It was not until the mid-1970s that Norman Cohn showed Murray's manipulation of her sources in such a way that the entire theory was comprehensively discredited (Oates 1998: 31). Despite this, at least two European scholars, historians Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Carlo Ginzburg yet retain some support for her thesis (Simpson 1994: 95).

In terms of fiction, euhemerism in a broader sense has featured consistently in books written for both children and adults throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, from Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910) via Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* (1948), Mary Renault's *The King Must Die* (1958) and *The Bull From the Sea* (1962) which euhemerize the Theseus myth, to much of Rosemary Sutcliff's work, including her Arthurian trilogy (1979-1981). It is worth noting that, in the Sutcliff series, Merlin, the three Cornish sisters and Brissen, Elaine's nurse who tricks Lancelot into betraying Guinevere, are all designated as descendants of 'the Old People, the Little Dark People' (Sutcliff 1999: 22), once again echoing MacRitchie's thesis. The latest iterations of euhemerist fictions – in the sense that they humanize deities – aimed at adults tend towards strikingly modern, psychological renditions of classical myth, such

as Madeline Miller's *Song of Achilles* (2017) and *Circe* (2018) and Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018).

Euhemerism is also now influencing geology. The Earth science discipline of 'geomythology', referred to in my introduction, is developing, which argues that the glacial and other deposits currently understood as natural evidence of major geographical and geological changes, were earlier recorded only in the form of myth because they had happened so long ago they were outside human memory (Mayor 2004: 1; Piccardi 2015: vii). This, essentially, is a euhemerist interpretation of the evidence. Since Max Müller's work on sun myths in the nineteenth century created the intellectual milieu that allowed folklore and mythology to be recognised as a valid area of study, four theories of myth have developed, but none, as Luigi Piccardi points out, allow that 'a real observed natural process or event may lie at the core of myth storylines' (Piccardi. 2015: 13).⁶⁹ Even what Piccardi calls the 'degenerate, or transformed history of Euhemerus', which he acknowledges was 'popular in the nineteenth century', is no longer considered a viable theory, although Piccardi and his fellow-geomythologists are attempting to change this view (ibid.).

Twentieth-Century Little People

Perhaps the most celebrated fictional descendants both of the Victorian fascination with fairies and with the late-century iteration of euhemerism are J. R. R. Tolkien's hobbits. There are undoubted similarities between hobbits and the supposed Neolithic antecedents of both fairies and modern humanity. In *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), the volume that comprises the first two books of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien wrote a prologue, 'Concerning Hobbits', which contains the following information: they are an 'unobtrusive but very ancient

⁶⁹ These four theories are generally referred to as the 'psychological', the 'sociological', the 'structural' and the 'historical'. The first developed from the work of Freud and Jung, and later Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade; the second derives from Emile Durkheim's view that myth evolves in response to social existence, and functions to strengthen codes of behaviour; the structural hypothesis comes from Levi-Straus via Saussure and, as the name implies, concentrates on the structure of myth rather than its narrative content; finally the historical theory states that myth serves as the result of a historical situation or context (Piccardi 2015: 11-12).

people', 'quick of hearing and sharp-eyed', and while inclined to be fat are 'nonetheless nimble and deft in their movements' (Tolkien 1995: 1). Because they are so good at 'disappearing swiftly and silently', they have come to seem to have magical powers, but have never 'studied magic of any kind' (ibid.). They are a 'little people', measuring between two and four feet in height, and are 'in spite of later estrangement [...] relatives of ours' (2), have never been a warlike people, even amongst themselves, and had all 'originally lived in holes in the ground' (5, 6). When Tolkien went up to Oxford in 1911, John Rhýs (1840-1915), author of *Celtic Folklore* (1901) and committed fairy-euhemerist was the 'grand old authority' on all things Celtic (Cook 2013). Compare Tolkien's prologue to Rhýs's description of what he calls 'the first race' of British aborigines which consisted of

a small swarthy population of mound-dwellers, of an unwarlike disposition, much given to magic and wizardry, and living underground: its attributes have been exaggerated or otherwise distorted in the evolution of the Little People of our fairy tales.

(Rhýs 1900: 896)

Hobbits are not 'swarthy', certainly, but it is easy to see grounds for possible inspiration here.

Simon J. Cook has written persuasively on the influence that Rhýs may have had on Tolkien, particularly in terms of "Tolkien's enduring adherence to Rhýs's general conception of the complex and linguistic history of the British Isles" (Cook 2013 'Concerning Hobbits'). He also makes a credible case for Gollum bridging the cognitive gap between Bilbo and Frodo Baggins and Rhýs's (or MacRitchie's) prehistoric mound-dweller, but while scholars have made clear the links between Tolkien's elves and Victorian fairies (Fimi 2009: 45-6; Saler 2011: 170), the connections between MacRitchie's indigenous pygmies and hobbits is less clear, however tempting it is to see them. However, both Silver and Grydehøj suggest that there is considerable correlation between William Morris's 'Dusky Men' from his Germanic novels *The House of the Wolfings* (1889) and *The Roots of the Mountain* (1889), the 'little people' Grydehøj denotes as MacRitchie's 'literary racial monsters', and Tolkien's orcs (Grydehøj 2013 II: 109-110). Tolkien spoke of

his debt to Morris in his letters (qtd. Perry 2003: 11), and certainly borrowed some names, including 'Mirkwood' and 'Worm-Tongue' from Morris's *The House of the Wolfings* (1889), and he may well have drawn inspiration from Morris's 'Dusky Men' to delineate the orcs. Furthermore, Silver suggests that the highly racialized and repellent dwarfs in Morris's *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894) were inspired by MacRitchie's theory (Silver 1999: 145). Intriguingly, Gollums's disgust when Sam makes to stew the rabbits he has caught mirrors Morris's dwarfs' horror at Walter's liking for meat only when it is cooked (Tolkien 1993: 639; Morris 2007: Loc. 427). The links from MacRitchie and Rhys via Morris to Tolkien are thus viable, if unproven, but how the works of the anthropologist and folklorist are decoded, applied and fictionalised are not within the control of the originator.

There have also, of course, been multiple versions of MacRitchie-inspired little people within the realms of adult fantasy fiction, science fiction and weird fiction, notably in the work of Robert E. Howard (1906-1936) in his *Bran Mak Morn* series. Howard refers to his enduring fascination with the idea of the Picts as 'the small dark aborigines of Britain' (Howard qtd. Burke 2005: xviii), and their history is described by him in his story 'The Lost Race' (1927) and others. They feature in Anne Rice's *Lives of the Mayfair Witches* trilogy (1990-1994) and Terry Pratchett (1948-2015) seems to have based his Wee Free Men as well as the Nac Mac Feegle wood-fairies on them, renaming these last the 'Pictsies', a clear hint as to their Pictish as well as their preternatural origins, in *Carpe Jugulum* (1998).

Although not necessarily inspired by euhemerism, currently the most celebrated fictional dwarf is the character Tyrion Lannister in George R. R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* epic series (1996-2011). I will not investigate the development of the character, save to note that this character, 'a dwarf, achondroplastic and stubby-limbed, a joke to passers-by and an embarrassment to his family' (Grossman 2011) is the witty, cynical and often drunken 'star of the series' (Jennings 2011), and a favourite of both the public, and his creator (Robinson 2000). Peter Dinklage, who plays Lannister in the HBO series, now in its final episodes, has had an interesting and perhaps significant career. Tyrion was written as a dwarf, as were Finbar McBride, Dinklage's character in *The Station Agent* (2003) and James, who he played in *3 Billboards Outside Ebbing,*

Missouri (2017). However, in *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014) he played the villain, Dr Trask. In neither the original 1965 comic book, nor the previous film in which the character appeared, *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2010), was Trask a person of restricted growth (Marvel Database). Bryan Singer, the director, cast Dinklage on the strength of his performance in *Game of Thrones* (HBO), because he admired him as an actor (Weintraub 2014). After centuries of discrimination, of rejection balanced by intrusive and unwelcome curiosity, it is heartening to know of at least one instance when a person's height, or lack of it, is simply immaterial, outshone by talent.

Fairies

Silver suggests that fairies have been replaced in modern consciousness by aliens from outer space (1999: 210), a conclusion prefigured by other scholars. In 1989, Thomas E. Bullard, noting that reports of alien abductions had grown in recent years, suggested that they are part of a common legend type along with those of fairy kidnappings (Bullard 1989: 147). He further contends that aliens are often described as looking like fairies (148, 159), likewise depend on deception and confusion to kidnap their victims (160), and rely on humans because they, like fairies, are 'not reproductively self-sufficient' (161). In 1993, Joyce Bynum suggested that alien abductions had replaced fairy abductions in modern consciousness, noting that on occasion, 'human beings enter the Otherworld [a fantasy realm] through a prehistoric mound that sometimes rises on pillars of brilliant light to resemble a landed UFO' (Bynum 1993: 92). There is considerable evidence here that aliens share many attributes with fairies, and, in a more technologically advanced age, myths of alien abduction have in some measure replaced those of fairy kidnappings. It is not, however, the whole story. Fairies have now been co-opted by New Age practitioners as a means to engage with their multiple strands of Western esotericism.

'New Age' is a notoriously difficult term to qualify. It is less a movement than a 'series of contingent collectivities' encompassing both 'supernaturalistic millennial movements' and 'this-worldly spiritual humanism' resulting in a 'diffuse orientation emphasizing emotional expressivity, hedonism, and self-

realization in the here and now' (Ivakhiv 2004: 125). Springing from the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s and '70s, current academic studies tend to focus on what motivates New Age adherents, often framed bilaterally – and somewhat judgmentally – as individualistic/narcissistic versus spiritual/holistic (Farias 2008: 277). Farias and Lalljee's persuasive research argues that 'the main predictor of New Age beliefs is magical thinking characterized by a holistic worldview where entities and events are connected in a way that defies modern rationalistic notions of causality' (288). The growth of New Age esotericism, especially the importance of magical thinking, implies that there is still a robust desire for the numinous, for a world inflated by the possibility of 'sorcery and sanctity', both signifying the still sought-after ecstasy of a 'withdrawal from the common life' (Machen 2003d: 62).

In 2013, I visited 'The Fairy Fayre' at the Festival Hall in Petersfield, Hampshire. The May Bank Holiday in this part of the world has a distinctly pagan, New Age feeling, with both East Meon and Oakhanger villages holding a May fair featuring Maypole dancing and the selection of a May queen. I was unsure whether the Fairy Fayre would be a children's event, but the room at the back of the Hall was full of middle-aged women wearing fairy wings and wreaths of flowers. One of these winged women told me that she was involved in planning a series of talks at Cowdray Hall, a local health and wellbeing centre: on May 30th the subject was to be Hypnotherapy and Past Life Regression, on June 27th The Bowen Technique, and on July 25th Auras. I asked how fairies fitted into her New Age view of the world. "Fairies are elementals, part of nature, and so part of everything. They exist on a different plane." I asked her if that was why people cannot see them. "Some people, very lucky people, can," she replied. "They are similar to what happens when your loved ones pass over. They don't disappear, they're still there, but most people can't see them." This is how fairies were seen by Conan Doyle: as 'elementals', similar to spirits, allied with those who have died, with some preferred people able to see them. This year (2019) Butser Ancient Farm is celebrating Beltain on 4 May, and has a Fairy Festival planned for 9 June (Butser Ancient Farm). There is a Faerie Festival planned in mid-May at Alfriston in East Sussex, featuring workshops on yoga, 'working with energies' and Temple Dance (Magical Times 2019), a 3 Wishes Fairy Festival in June to

celebrate the summer solstice in Cornwall (Fairy Festival) and the New Forest Fairy Festival will take place in August, and feature workshops on meditation, reading the Tarot cards, communicating with animals and learning the runes (New Forest Fairy Festival). None of these festivals appears to be primarily aimed at children.

A surprising number of people still believe in fairies (Briggs 1978: 143-9; Sugg 2018: 257-269), and indeed the Fairy Investigation Society, originally founded in 1927, finally became defunct only in 1996, having fallen into a gentle decline from the mid-1950s (Young 2013). As recently as 1999, a new bypass in County Clare was built to go around a 'sacred fairy bush' after the council was warned of 'terrible consequences' if the bush was destroyed (Deegan 1999), and belief still appears to be strong in Iceland (Jacobs 2013). It is, perhaps, resistance to what John Clute has defined as 'thinning', the 'passing away of a higher or more intense reality' (Clute 1997). As Carole Silver noted, '[t]he fairies – never quite believed in – are always leaving but never gone' (1999: 192). It is clear that, in this troubled age, human desire for a world beyond the material, for an inflated, enchanted reality is as intense as it was at the end of the nineteenth century.

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