Part I: Borderlands of Mind, Body, and Spirit

Chapter 2 Weird states of mind: psychology, neurology, and scientific worldviews in Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Machen

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Arthur Machen's 1890s fiction did much to establish the terms or basis of the weird tale in the late-nineteenth century. *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Great God Pan* (1890) use scientific ideas to rationalise the generating of a weird monster that then exceeds the capacity of science to know it. The predominant scientific worldview wobbles under its inability to cope and a weird version of what really is takes its place. These stories, I argue, find weird crevices in nineteenth-century science and prise the cracks open to imaginatively explore what the implications might be.

Weird fiction contests a deterministic, mechanical, positivist worldview. It rejects assumptions that human beings can ultimately comprehend the universe. It makes space for the unknown and unknowable, for realms of existence beyond those of the human and indifferent to human concerns. As we see in the tales discussed here, encounters – accidental or deliberate – between humans and other dimensions or their occupants can produce awe, wonder, insanity, horror, terror and sometimes briefly an advanced state of knowledge. The weird worldview is forward-looking. Rather than rejecting the current state of scientific knowledge (in favour of fantasy, metaphysics, gothic revenant or supernaturalism), the weird reworks it, arguing that different conceptions of "science" or "knowledge" may do better at describing reality while still allowing rational (rather than superstitious) scope for the unknown and unknowable lying beyond.

"Ripples over the threshold": the weird case of *Jekyll and Hyde*

Robert Louis Stevenson's most famous story is not usually claimed for the weird – it is more often recruited to the gothic tradition and sometimes to sf.[1] Yet, James Machin points out, it was received by contemporary readers as "a 'weird story' and a 'weird novelette' with a 'weird hero', but not a Gothic novelette."[2] Traits identified in the novella by critics also mark it as weird even when they don't call it that. In a centenary essay on the multiple narrative voices of *Jekyll and Hyde*, Ronald R. Thomas remarks that readers "move through [the] secret door" of Enfield's story "into a world where names cannot be named, points cannot be

reached, stories cannot be told."[3] Thomas's language here is strikingly weird. It describes a storyworld that resists knowing, while doors themselves, Mark Fisher argues of another *fin-de-siècle* story, H. G. Wells's "The Door in the Wall" (1911), are portals, "thresholds leading […] into the weird."[4] Thomas's description expresses the particular way *Jekyll and Hyde*'s plot and narration interlock – between them they make it, amongst other things, a weird tale. Added to this is the problematic figure of Hyde, whose "pathology," Michael Davis notes, "real enough in its effects on others, is nonetheless ghostly rather than material, somehow present yet simultaneously absent, and so beyond the scope of mapping or diagnosis in physical terms."[5] In these terms, Hyde is an eerie force, failing to be entirely absent or present, an invisible agent that nonetheless produces real effects.

Jekyll and Hyde can be understood as a weird tale (enfolding the eerie) through the way it unfolds an unstable conception of reality – a reality of multiple selves – which (like the ambiguities built into the narrative's construction) ultimately eludes being fully comprehended or comprehensible. What the novella's premise has to do with late-nineteenth-century science is similarly multiple – evolutionary theory, psychology, psychoanalysis, spiritualism, medical pathology, criminology, sexology, and chemistry are all among the contexts in which a number of absorbing critical studies have read it.[6] Davis's argument, for example, links the instability of the self in *Jekyll and Hyde* to a "chemical fluidity" that explores relative psychological and physiological contributions to consciousness and identity.[7] Such scientific borderlands enweird *Jekyll and Hyde*.

The radical, new, weird reality that the text demands to have accepted has roots in nineteenth-century psychology and especially in the profound changes the discipline was undergoing in the 1880s – changes that challenged not only assumptions about the nature of human consciousness and selfhood, but also about the stability and comprehensibility of reality itself. *Jekyll and Hyde*, I suggest, picks up on the weirdness of this rapidly-evolving area of *fin-de-siècle* science, while also pushing the limits of its implications even further. By the 1880s, the "unshapely, accommodating, contested, energetic discipline" of psychology showed a clear drift towards the firmer rules of experimentalism.[8] Such tightening reflected a shift away from understanding the mind predominantly on an intellectual, metaphysical level and towards biological models basing mental health in the body, although, Rick Rylance emphasises, Victorian psychology maintained a "discursive turbulence," remaining a "mosaic always in process of completion."[9] Modern empirical approaches driving nineteenth-century positivism understood the brain as an organ, its functions (and dysfunctions) observable in physical effects.

Nonetheless, physiological explanations were not universally accepted. Theosophist Annie Besant, for example, looked back at the last quarter of the nineteenth century from the vantage point of 1912 and complained of the way that "physiology had captured psychology" to render mental life biologically determinable (from which, of course, Theosophy offered rescue).[10] In principle, from different perspectives, many shared Besant's complaint. The psychologists of the Society for Psychical Research were amongst those who disputed the limiting of investigation of mental capacities to the methods and epistemologies of the physical sciences. F. W. H. Myers and Edmund Gurney both recognised multiple levels of consciousness; the ego as a concept was in circulation well before Freud and provided a way to describe consciousness that released it from reductive, psychophysiological models.[11]

Without necessarily discounting the value of physiological understandings of the brain, many were convinced it was insufficient on its own. For Henri Bergson, physical determinism offered a tempting logic, but was inadequate and could never be experimentally proved. Critiquing mechanistic, unitary models of the mind, Bergson understood consciousness as, rather, made up of heterogenous states. As he put it in *Time and Free Will* (1886), we "grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate each other."[12] David Lindenfeld explains that for Bergson, psychological atomism couldn't account for

> psychic intensity, the emotional nuance that is present in all our mental states, and ebbs and flows in a way that can be neither quantified nor verbalised. Once the preconceptions stemming from outward experience are removed, inner experience reveals itself as a continuous, heterogenous flow of mental states, melting into one another in a way that could not be analysed.[13]

To theorise a fluid melding of the mind's pathways and the unanalyzable quality of those states is to work against the notion of a knowable, constant self, and so to pose potentially radical challenges to conventional suppositions of a single unified individuality, in control of its thoughts and actions. In place of that coherent self is a conception of human consciousness that sits much closer to that of the weird, open to the possibility of multiplicity and contradiction, resisting stable and absolutely-determined answers.

Jekyll and Hyde is widely recognised as a text working with psychological ideas about selfhood, personality, and consciousness. It is a story capturing "the sense of potentialities on the cusp of a reconceptualization of the psyche, where splitting contains multiple and

contradictory valences."[14] For Peter Garrett, in *Jekyll and Hyde* "a plural, disunified model of the self displaces traditional dualities and seems to anticipate the decomposition of the unitary subject" in modern literature.[15] In a way, though, this critical work was done for us, almost as soon as the novella was published: that critic was Frederic Myers.

Myers and Stevenson corresponded over *Jekyll and Hyde*, with Myers expressing his admiration for the story and suggesting corrections which Stevenson never chose to take up.[16] Although an essay by Myers often connected to *Jekyll and Hyde*, "Multiplex Personality"was published in late 1886, a number of his remarks in the later *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) particularly illuminate the implications of borderland psychological theorising for the new capacity at the *fin de siècle* to conceive reality weirdly. In *Human Personality*, Myers emphasises both the plurality and instability of consciousness: "I regard each man as at once profoundly unitary and almost infinitely composite," he wrote.[17] A person may possess multiple subliminal selves, "quasi-independent trains of thought" between which could exist "not only *co-operations*" but also "upheavals and alterations of personality of many kinds, so that what was once below the surface may for a time, or permanently, rise above it." These subconscious emergences he called "ripples over the threshold."[18]

Ideas of surfaces, thresholds, and interactions across them position mental existence itself as a weird state, neither fixed and stable nor fully knowable, from which inward rather than outward monstrosities might erupt. *Jekyll and Hyde*, evidently, dates too early to be simply reflecting *fin-de-siècle* psychological explorations like those of Bergson and Myers. It was cited in medical studies, and Julia Reid argues that a creative dialogue is visible at work between Stevenson and Myers. For Reid, Stevenson's work "may resist as well as affirm, may even *influence,* late-Victorian science" and "creative literature […] can intuit truths which are as yet denied to science."[19] Speculative literary modes like the weird have a degree of creative freedom to imagine, or intuit, alternative ways of knowing the world perhaps less accessible to mainstream intellectual enquiry in the grip of the dominant nineteenth-century positivism.

As a weird tale, *Jekyll and Hyde* shares this intuitive freedom with the borderlands of late-nineteenth-century psychology. Nancy K. Gish, for example, demonstrates connections between Hyde and psychiatric studies of hysteria by Pierre Janet, and makes the point that the story presents multiplicity of consciousness as a normal, not pathological, state; Jekyll's discourse "both parallels the [hysterical] dissociation theory of [Stevenson's] time and anticipates recent neo-dissociation theory that assumes originary plurality rather than

fragmented unity."[20] By posing the "multifarious polity" of personality as standard, Stevenson's story demands acceptance of an explanation of the nature of the self that was not part of contemporary orthodox philosophy. That adjustment is especially challenging since that plural self is not metaphorical or merely mentally internal in this storyworld, but makes an embodied irruption, as Hyde, into contemporary London life, where he both does and does not belong.[21]

Stevenson's novella presents a reconceived version of the self, driven by Jekyll's central insight that "man is not truly one, but truly two."[22] That reconstituted self is, however, not a stable one – the tempting binary simplicity of the notion of the "double self," so popularly associated with this story, conceals continually shifting ground. Indeed, *Jekyll and Hyde* is notable for its eluding of absolute certainties. It appears to encourage speculations about Jekyll's relationship with Hyde (such as blackmail for illegitimacy or homosexuality) only to demolish them later.[23] The text also occludes the precise nature of the vicious deeds that not only Jekyll but also Enfield, Utterson and Lanyon are careful and willing to ignore or smooth over.[24]

The narrative also refuses to pin down who the central character really "is." Jekyll is shifty on this point and plays the uncertainty to his moral advantage in his so-called "Full Statement" which, while presenting "the last pieces of the narrative puzzle, […] also works against [his] assertions of duality."[25] As critics have noted, Jekyll's self-vindicating, apparently innocent welcome of Hyde, that "[t]his, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human," transforms into a rejection when he needs to distance himself from Hyde the murderer: "He, I say – I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human" (58, 67).[26] Self or other, human or inhuman, Jekyll or Hyde, natural or unnatural: such dualisms litter the text as if they *can* stabilise the self and fix the story in place with comprehensible binary explanations.

Yet the narrative consistently works against such surety up until the very end. In chapter 8, for example, Utterson and Poole break into the cabinet and find Hyde's body in Jekyll's clothes, inverting Hyde's function as Jekyll's "cloak" (59), but whether this death was murder or suicide is unclear. Further, the story "ends" three times, as the documents contributed by Lanyon and Jekyll in chapters 9 and 10 each provide another version of events. Chapter 10 concludes with the words "I lay down the pen and […] bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end" (70). But who is in control of the pen at this point? This chapter is Jekyll's "Full Statement," but as Garrett observes, "[t]he more we ponder its disclosures, the more mysterious and unstable it becomes."[27] The "I" thus far, we suppose,

has been Jekyll, but if so, why refer to himself as "that" Henry Jekyll rather than "this"? If Hyde has taken over, as we know he now can without Jekyll taking the potion, at what point did that happen; when did we start reading *his* words? The figure of the author, too, shadows this final line, adding another textual layer that further undermines certainty right at the narrative's close by drawing attention to its inherent fictionality.

Hyde and Jekyll do not so much exist in a dualistic balance as, rather, the only two facets that are presently visible of a profoundly fragmented, pluralistic self. *Jekyll and Hyde* has become widely known, even among those who have not read the original book, primarily for its trope of the doubled self.[28] For Rylance, the story reveals "the persistence of well-worn conceptual archetypes" in its binary divisions that follow a nineteenth-century tendency to treat psychological pathology as "largely an all-or-nothing game."[29] But Jekyll's discovery, or revelation, is really somewhat more troubling, and undermines binary conceptions; he predicts, in language not unlike Myers's, that "man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" (56).

The binary language of good and evil so often associated with *Jekyll and Hyde* in fact emerges only from Jekyll – none of the other characters use it.[30] Gish relates Hyde to "a theory of a 'normal' multiplicity of the self that, in this case, takes the form of a good/evil split."[31] But this binary is normative rather than descriptive, part of Jekyll's untrustworthy efforts to impose what Jerrold Hogle calls a "grid of intelligibility" on his relations with Hyde rather than being an accurate expression of what they actually are.[32] Jekyll's problem (or one of them) is that there is no better philosophical discourse available to him: "Jekyll, sensing the flicker of an alternative multiplicity but having no means to name it, can only resort to moralistic and materialistic binaries, collapsing back into an account that divides the pathological doctor and his savage self."[33] Deflected from the radical insights of multifariousness and simultaneity, Jekyll returns to conventional and more comforting choices between two fixed knowns: saint or sinner, self or other, "an angel instead of a fiend" (59). But it is too late: having roared out of his cage, Hyde can't be put back.

Hyde is a troublingly liminal figure, the physically-manifested proof that a radical new understanding of reality must be accepted. This material identity that returns after Jekyll's severe physical and existential trial is, in effect, a weird horror, monstrous and amoral and unknown; he is an embodiment of the kind of world Villiers uncovers in *The Great God Pan*, a ripple across the threshold of "a world before which the human soul seemed to shrink back and shudder."[34] Jekyll separates spirit from body and exposes himself to occupation by a "foul soul" whom Utterson and Enfield are unable to describe, but who produces in Utterson

a "hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear" (16). As an expression of something these Victorian gentleman may not want to acknowledge about themselves, Hyde, through their eyes, lets us "see the inside from the perspective of the outside."[35]

None of the other characters, including Jekyll, can fully admit or describe Hyde. They comprehend him partially, obliquely, uncomfortably, in horror. As Martin Tropp observes, *Jekyll and Hyde* "is about Utterson's and Lanyon's incomprehension as much as it is about Jekyll's new understanding. […] Both a detective case and a case in abnormal psychology, it constantly escapes pinning down by the lawyer's methodical logic";[36] for Garrett, similarly, "the power of naming" fails, and Hyde remains "faceless […] a blank to be filled in by each interpreter."[37] Despite Utterson's efforts to explain him as "troglodytic" or as "Satan's signature" Hyde remains inexplicable and indescribable (16). Enfield "can see him at this very moment" yet "can't describe him," "couldn't specify the point," "really can name nothing out of the way" (10). The language does not exist, it seems, to articulate Hyde or what he means; Stiles argues that the novel "lays bare the limitations of scientific prose."[38] The other characters experience Hyde empirically at the level of individual impression and emotional response, but he eludes the systemic mastery of language and so remains troubling.

The mismatch between the weird outcome of Jekyll's hybrid chemical-occult experiment (Hyde's existence) and the capacity of scientific discourse to articulate it is clear. Jekyll does try, though. Late on, to his tortured imagination, Hyde appears as

> not only hellish, but inorganic. This was the shocking thing: that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, would usurp the offices of life. (69)

Jekyll's effort to express such extremities of horror presents a Hyde who is monstrous in the way of weird monsters, assimilable neither to conventional mythological traditions nor to any available moral frameworks. Despite the moral language of "sin" and "hell," Jekyll has by now given up on the false comfort of stable binaries. What form the sin and gestures of the "amorphous dust" take can hardly be pictured; these are only the best words available to Jekyll to signal its awfulness. This horror is "inorganic" yet slimy, dead with no shape, yet taking on a form and function like life.

The monstrousness of Hyde takes place outside such comprehensible dualities. Like other weird monsters, as Kelly Hurley demonstrates of *fin-de-siècle* fiction in *The Gothic Body* and Graham Harman shows of Lovecraft's weird tales, he exists in gaps and occlusions –

conceptually, psychically, physically, and linguistically.[39] However, clearly Hyde is no outer monstrosity. Of twenty-first-century weird fiction, Timothy Jarvis finds

> themes and tropes no longer orientated outward, or only outward, at a cosmos indifferent or hostile to humanity, but also inward at the crossings of borders forced upon us by our changing bodies, by the revelation of the world-without-us.[40]

An inward orientation of the weird like this is encapsulated in Jekyll's transformation into Hyde, which dissolves all boundaries that might have been thought to exist around Jekyll's physical and intellectual identity. Originating within Jekyll, Hyde feels "natural" to the doctor, even to the extent of being more of a self than the original. "In my eyes," Jekyll reports, the new form "bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single" than he did (58). At first, in Jekyll's unreliable testimony, at least, Hyde appears as something progressive, a purer (which is not to say *gooder*) self in comparison to the contaminated doctor.

Yet Jekyll initially hopes to produce a *better* version of the self, which finds a corollary in spiritualist speculations on the possibilities for spiritual development, later undermined by the actual results of his experiment. W. T. Stead, in "The Man of Dreams" (1895), offers the remarkably optimistic spin that while people may be brewing a Hyde, "under the outward semblance and mask of an unregenerate reprobate, the suppressed other self may be building up, little by little, the higher and purer nature, which will only be seen in its reality when the mortal scaffolding of the flesh falls into the tomb."[41] Myers, in "Multiplex Personality," also argued that identity is "capable of being reconstituted after an improved pattern" and that "spontaneous readjustments of man's being are not all of them pathological or retrogressive."[42] Although these aspirations are undermined rather than fulfilled, what Jekyll has produced may look horrifyingly forward to *other* unthinkable possibilities for the human self as much as back to its perceived savage, primitive biological past. Jekyll's discovery reveals previously unthought of possibilities and hints at unknown wonders beyond the limits of the physical world as currently understood. These revelations, too, must be acknowledged as components of the narrative if Hyde's origin, actions and extant corpse are accepted as such.

Hyde's depravity, crimes, and the horror of Jekyll's gradual disintegration may ultimately dominate in most readings of the novella, but Jekyll's discovery has nonetheless revised what must be accepted as reality in this storyworld. This revision is more or less in line with

emerging contemporary psychological theories of the self and consciousness, and yet exceeds them by invoking occult language of dimensions beyond the visible everyday world. It presents a weird, reconfigured version of reality and ways of knowing, while revealing that behind the everyday is something horrific and soul-threatening, unknowable, shapeless, beyond current grasp or ken.

Stevenson's engagement with contemporary debates and developments in psychology enables *Jekyll and Hyde* to use and establish a weird ontology or conception of reality – one which secures its place in the weird tradition as well as helping to account for its recognised influence on later writers. Ontologically and narratologically, *Jekyll and Hyde* is an unstable, ungraspable, irreducible text, never fully knowable, resisting the fixing of meaning and existing on the brink of the weird. Through its multiplicity, the novella's rich and varied contributions to literary and popular culture exist not only at the level of its tropes and plot premise, but also at the level of the story's underlying worldview. That includes its contributions to the emergence of the weird tale, as this and the next chapter will show through stories by Machen and Nesbit. Jekyll's experiment has exposed a new and perhaps unwelcome aspect to reality – and he also deploys an unorthodox mixture of knowledge and methods in order to prove it. The "stamping efficacy" (58) shaping the amorphous, indescribable, and "hitherto unknown" (16) horror that is Hyde rests on an enweirded epistemology that rewrites the relative contributions of body and spirit to the nature of the self and the nature of reality. I return to the epistemological dimensions of Jekyll's experiment and its outcomes in chapter 3, but for now I continue exploring ideas about weird borderlands – this time through the writing of Arthur Machen.

Enchanted student: Arthur Machen's borderlands

In *Far Off Things* (1922), Machen describes his young self as "an enchanted student of the daylight country, which […] for me never was illuminated by common daylight, but rather by suns that rose from the holy seas of faery and sank down behind magic hills."[43] As a writer still best known for chilling weird tales like *The Great God Pan* and "The White People" (1899), Machen's visionary emphasis on magical illumination and holy enchantment may seem out of kilter with the unspeakable horror confronted by so many of his 1890s characters, for whom the strange wonder of the world often manifests as miraculousness gone wrong.

Dreadfulness was only one expression of the vision of a writer whose formative years in Gwent in Wales impressed on him the ways in which "[e]verything visible was the veil of an invisible secret."[44] Machen was a lifelong Anglo-Catholic, yet, like Algernon Blackwood, was drawn to the occult (and to writing) in search of the kind of visionary revelation and mystical experience the regular church couldn't provide.[45] Machen's interest in occult texts and ideas dates to at least 1885 and his employment by publisher George Redway, and he became a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1899 after the death of his first wife and on the encouragement of his friend A. E. Waite.[46] His writings are seen as a set of elaborations on a single project; Mark Valentine and Roger Dobson observe that "[p]ractically his entire writing career was devoted to expressing a spiritual philosophy: that the world and everything in it is a good deal stranger and more miraculous than we know."[47] This is visible across his work – in weird tales like *The Three Impostors* (1895) and "The Terror" (1917), autobiographical fiction *The Hill of Dreams* (1907), and non-fiction like *Hieroglyphics* (1902). S. T. Joshi considers *Impostors* to be "Machen's most sustained weird work" and it and *The Great God Pan* are also significant for the weird tale as successors to *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Dynamiter* (1885) respectively.[48] They were received as such by contemporary readers, and a direct line can be traced from *Jekyll and Hyde* through *The Great God Pan* to Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror" (1929), which refers to Machen's tale.[49]

Machen's weird tales are sure that a wondrous reality lies beyond the everyday, but the capacity of the modern world's state of knowledge to understand it is severely limited, especially by its narrow materialism. Machen's mystic, anti-science worldview is well known, articulated in his own work as well as through those of his critics and biographers.[50] According to James Machin, although Machen was "willing to press contemporary scientific (and pseudoscientific) ideas to his own ends" in fiction, his interest in it was "superficial and rebarbative."[51] He certainly had strong feelings about it, especially its modern, materialist iterations. "If I were writing in the Middle Ages," he remarked in a letter to his publisher,

> I should need no scientific basis […] In these days the supernatural per se is entirely incredible; to believe, we must link our wonders to some scientific or pseudo-scientific fact, or basis, or method. Thus we do not believe in "ghosts" but in telepathy, not in "witchcraft" but in hypnotism. If Mr Stevenson had written his great masterpiece about 1590-1650, Dr Jekyll would have made a compact with the devil. In 1886 Dr Jekyll sends to the Bond Street chemists for some rare drugs.[52]

Here and elsewhere, Machen suggests that changes in attitudes to wonder have been a matter not of essence but of construction or labelling, which links *Jekyll and Hyde* to a literary tradition as well as to its contemporary context. Wonders remain wonders, however they are constructed, while old forms of knowledge may even be somewhat better at recognising truths about the world than the modern late-nineteenth-century variety.[53]

For Machen, however, the nature of wonder is not inherently a force for good but occupies, as Vincent Starrett describes it, "a strange borderland, lying somewhere between Dreams and Death"; Machen's readers "see only dimly the phantasmagoria beyond [the veil]; the ecstasies of vague shapes with a shining about them, on the one hand; on the other the writhings of animate gargoyles."[54] Thus the secrets uncovered by characters in Machen's stories are never clearly represented, but like Hyde, they are only half-known, lingering on the cusp of the weird: what, exactly, makes the opal of "Inmost Light" shine both beautifully and horribly, or, in *The Great God Pan*, lights up Mary's face a moment before she succumbs to madness?

The fates of scientific figures and their human subjects in *The Great God Pan,* "Inmost Light," and *The Three Impostors* imply that modern science involves severe moral, physical, and spiritual risk. Wonder can be horrifying as well as uplifting, and much depends on *how* it is approached. Those "who understand nothing but materialism" are "very bad people" according to Machen, in *Hieroglyphics*.[55] In *Impostors,* Machen's fictional critique of positivist materialism is reflected as much in narrative structure as content. Its nested, obliquely-related sequence of stories – as the eponymous "three impostors" tell a series of tall tales to Dyson and Phillips, the two idle investigators of the mystery of the Young Man in Spectacles – makes for an uncertain narrative world. Within the stories, individual episodes such as "The Novel of the Black Seal" and "The Novel of the White Powder" involve characters delving into hidden or unknown occult knowledge and the unstable relationships between body and spirit. Like *Jekyll and Hyde*, Machen's novel constructs a weird narrative reality that is only partially knowable and resists fixing to a single state or meaning.

In *The London Adventure* (1924), Machen recommended a different method of knowing: "I try to reverence the signs, omens, messages that are delivered in queer ways and queer place, not in the least according to the plans laid down either by the theologians or the men of science."[56] As the narrator of the short story "A Fragment of Life" (1904) puts it

> Our stupid ancestors taught us that we could become wise by studying books as "science," by meddling with test-tubes, geological specimens, microscopic

> preparations and the like; but they who have cast off these follies know that they must not read "science" books but mass-books, and that the soul is made wise by the contemplation of mystic ceremonies and elaborate and curious rites.[57]

The path of science, then, is a path of folly, of meddling with false wisdom at the expense of true understanding. Through the use of inverted commas, even the pairing of "books" and "science" appears to be distasteful. Even more seriously, accepting a modern, materialist standpoint on knowledge is dangerous – it could make the difference between achieving an ecstatic spiritual experience or a dreadful one.

Critics have noted ways in which practices of reading and writing were central to Machen's search for the ecstatic experience through a "fusion of research, belief, and creative art."[58] Reading popular fiction, assisted by its democratic level of shared accessibility, could be a route towards "the possibility of sheer spiritual bliss and occult citizenship";[59] in *Hieroglyphics*, Machen identifies 'Ecstasy' as the defining quality of "fine literature":

> Substitute, if you like, rapture, beauty, adoration, wonder, awe, mystery, sense of the unknown, desire for the unknown. All and each will convey what I mean […] but in every case there will be that withdrawal from the common life and the common consciousness which justifies my choice of 'ecstasy' as the best symbol of my meaning.[60]

Through writing, Machen "intertwines the spiritual experience with artistic pursuit, defining art as a gateway, if an inadequate one, to the numinous."[61] The corruption of art, Zoe Lehmann Imfeld argues, such as in the elaborate artifice of the invented tales of the three impostors and their ritual treatment of the young man in spectacles, can tip everything over into horror. Machen's weird tales "show the numinous to run a troubled path" between ecstasy and evil.[62]

"The White People" walks that line, functioning as "an exploration of knowledge as grace, and of knowledge corrupted."[63] It is the story, told through her own diary, of a sixteen-year-old girl introduced to pagan magic by her nurse, and who learns the rituals enabling her to encounter the "white people" at a secret place in the woods, ultimately leading to her self-destruction. Ambrose, the scholarly recluse into whose possession the diary has passed, argues that the girl's story is emblematic of true sin, which has nothing to do with the intentions or innocence but rather with transgression against the known order. Kimberley Jackson argues that "The White People" constructs "the world of true sin" as "a world of

transgression and transcendence always present beneath the known and the civilized";[64] in this sense, the numinous, perhaps, does not so much tread a line between two states as encompass a broader sublime experience. Sin, as Ambrose claims, is "simply the attempt to penetrate into another and a higher sphere in a forbidden manner […] sin is an effort to gain the ecstasy."[65] Since both ecstasy and sin arise out of the same natural urge of the human soul towards mystic experience, the distinction between them is fine or almost non-existent; as Machen later remarked in *Far Off Things,* "[m]an […] is by his nature designed to look upwards […] to discern the eternal in things temporal."[66]

"A Fragment of Life" (1904) explores the same impulse more positively, in an effort "to imbue London life with a condition of visionary strangeness that would inspire rather than alienate."[67] It is one of several tales in which London's urban spaces become uncertain and unreal (as happens at moments in "The Red Hand," "The Idealist", and *Impostors*, for example).[68] "Fragment" tracks the escape of a young couple, Edward and Mary Darnell, from their mundane mid-income domesticity through the teachings of the ancient Celtic church. Mr Darnell realises that "the whole world is but a great ceremony or sacrament, which teaches under visible forms a hidden and transcendent doctrine. […] he found in the ritual of the church a perfect image of the world; an image purged, exalted, and illuminate."[69] Darnell and his wife gradually acquire the kind of knowledge required to gain this transcendental borderland, discarding the "follies" of scientific knowledge.[70] Even so, there are "darker perils" in these exalted teachings too – "suggestions of an awful region into which the soul might enter […] of evocations which could summon the utmost forces of evil from their dark places," while childhood memories carry "a note of warning, as a symbol of dangers that might be in the way."[71] Here ends Mr Darnell's own third-person narration, and the ultimate fate of the Darnells is left ambiguous as the narrative declares it "impossible to carry on [their] history" any further.[72] The exact nature of the state of transcendence they have reached is no longer the business of this story of a fragment of life.

Such transcendence, it seems, is an absent presence, a gap beyond the current state of knowledge that, for exactly that reason, cannot be filled. This is the space of the weird. Lehmann Imfeld argues that in *The Great God Pan*, for example, Helen Vaughan is not so much an evil presence as "an absence *of something*," locating her outside a Christian humanist teleology and problematising attempts to characterise her straightforwardly as a devil figure.[73] Since this absence is nihilistic, presenting it as horrifying reinforces Christian humanism: "The humanity which can only be realised through grace haunts the empty and negative spaces which provide the very horror to these tales."[74] These traits - absence of

supernatural teleology, negative spaces, fine line between ecstasy and evil – mark Machen's tale as weird, while as an unspeakable absence, a "nothing present when there should be something," Helen Vaughan also resonates with Fisher's conception of the "eerie."[75] Fisher's examples are questions about built monuments like Stonehenge, but we could ask similar questions about Helen: "What kind of symbolic order did these beings belong to?" and "Is there a deliberative agent here at all?"[76] As Villiers reminds Austin, "those who are wise know what all symbols are symbols of something, not of nothing" (92), but their system of meaning has been lost (which, Helen's career shows, is just as well for human sanity). We never hear Helen's version of her story, or discover much about what kind of agency of her own she possesses.

The failures of presence in *Pan*, the absences and negations, are abcanny traits, unknowable and unrelatable to human teleology; as a weird monster, as the next section of this chapter explores, Helen is an example of the "unrepresentable and unknowable, the evasive of meaning."[77] Her existence is, however, tied to a history of sorts, to what Joshi describes as the "Little People mythology."[78] In several of Machen's tales, including *Impostors*, "The Red Hand" (1895) and "The Shining Pyramid" (1895), a lost pagan Celtic world lingers alongside modern civilisation. Often located in remote regions of Wales (where the child Helen meets strange playmates), it occasionally surfaces in London, through objects like the black seal, symbols like the Red Hand, and people such as Jervase Craddock (in *Impostors*' "The Novel of the Black Seal"). In "Shining Pyramid," a missing girl and a series of objects and symbols lead Dyson and Vaughan (no relation) to witness the "Pyramid of fire," in which they glimpse a loathsome gathering of "things made in the form of men but stunted like children hideously deformed" and hear a sibliant language.[79]

Machen's Little People mythology constructs an enweirded history, an impossible history that, if it were to be true, explodes the consensus reality of what history is (or was) and demands acceptance of an alternative or co-existing, even conflicting, history existing in parallel. Aaron Worth argues that the term "little people" is not intended to suggest that a fairy superstition is real, but rather is an expression of something more profound, the "predatory, nocturnal horrors who form the kernel of truth behind folk traditions of fairies or 'little people'."[80] Worth argues that Machen's little people exist both within and outside history. They are unwelcome prehistoric irruptions, but their possession and creation of artefacts and their capacity to use symbolic language "signals their participation in the cultural stage of civilization, placing them in the domain of history proper."[81] The arts, not the capacity for reason, were what "distinguished [humans] from other animals," Machen

concluded in *Far Off Things*, and "we may say that all artists are in reality survivals from an earlier time";[82] the little people's capacity to create locates their history that much closer to that of human beings.

The idea of a weird alternative past lying behind the everyday is captured by some of Kimberley Jackson's remarks on abhistory:

> The ab-historical past that Machen invokes is that which cannot be claimed by the present or by history because it remains always past, a past with no future, or a past with no present. It is in this past where true savagery resides; and because it lies, unclaimed, alongside human history, it is capable of intruding into the human world, the world in which man has come to define himself as the most imposing figure. In Machen's tales, what has never been human cannot claim man's shape, and yet it is precisely from out of a human face that it peers. Contained within the human form itself is the very real existence of the possibility of never-having-been, or the possibility of another rationality and another physique.[83]

In this account, abhistories, like the weird, hover between true reality and unthinkable alternative, hinting of possibilities neither fully present nor entirely erasable. Jackson identifies Machen's tales as "supernatural" rather than weird, and doesn't connect abhistory with either Miéville's abcanny or Kelly Hurley's and William Hope Hodgson's abhuman.[84] Nonetheless, making the link (particularly since Jackson cites Hurley's *The Gothic Body*) is irresistible: the "ab-historical past" described here is evidently a weird past. As Miéville puts it, the weird is "suffused with abness," and recruiting weird monsters to an "invented cultural memory [...] back-projects their radical unremembered alterity into history, to en-Weird ontology itself."[85] Machen's abhistory is a numinous history, lying alongside the dominant modern British construction of the past and occasionally brushing wondrously, horribly against it.

The history of science, too, becomes abhistorical in Machen's hands. Worth deftly distinguishes *Pan* from science fiction by suggesting that the story is premised on an "'antiquum', a recovered piece of older, occult knowledge" as a counterpoint to the "novum" posited by Darko Suvin as the marker of sf.[86] Tales like *Pan* and "The Inmost Light," Worth argues, imply "that such modern disciplines [as neuroscience] are only catching up with the 'sciences' of a bygone age."[87] The knowledge likely to be mishandled by modern science is not new, but has always been there, lying behind the mainstream history of science and out of

view to most people. The existence of Machen's Little People and the secret knowledge they represent expose the delusions of anthropocentricity: its definitions of the world and its history, the limits of its knowledge and ways of knowing. The normal reality that has been constructed by histories and language, scientific rationality, and visible material forms (such as bodies and objects) is undermined.

The dangers of unwise picking and prodding at the relationship between the two is one of the subjects of *The Great God Pan*, discussed next. As far as his early weird tales go, at least, Machen's worldview consists in a sometimes-known but only partly-knowable true reality, which must be approached with caution. The weird borderland in Machen's fiction is a numinous more-than-visible world of evil and terror, or awe and ecstasy, or all of these, always there but mostly out of reach of human knowing. An understanding that the world is not limited to materiality is essential for a meaningful existence – if it is the right sort of understanding. It is not coincidence that in Machen's weird tales it is often scientists and experimental techniques that unleash the most destructive and unknowable terrors, in fictional attacks on materialist ontology as well as on the practices and epistemology of nineteenth-century positivist science.

Symbols of something and nothing: *The Great God Pan*

The Great God Pan first appeared in 1890 and was published in book form along with "The Inmost Light" (of which more in the next chapter) in 1894. They share several parallels in plot and premise; in each case, an occult neurological operation opens a path to shadowy realms beyond the known world. *The Great God Pan* opens with an experiment conducted by Dr Raymond on his ward Mary, in which an incision in her brain enables her to "see the God Pan."[88] This encounter, "a metaphor for the experience of ecstasy," turns appalling and leads to her loss of sanity and to her pregnancy.[89] Their occult offspring grows into a woman usually known as Helen Vaughan, who draws the attention of Villiers and others after a series of London gentlemen are found dead, apparently of fright; she is eventually tracked down and forced to end her own life. Like *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Great God Pan* is to an extent presented as a mystery uncovered by a third party, supplemented with documents and additional accounts from other characters.

Through its piecemeal construction as well as through its content, the narrative resists absolute knowing. In the narrative's gaps and elisions, in the suicides, insanities and deaths,

and in documents discovered by Villiers and collected by Clarke, lurk hints of a terrible unknown world, beings, and history behind everyday reality. “It is an old story,” says Villiers to Austin,

> an old mystery played in our day, and in dim London streets instead of amidst the vineyards and the olive gardens. […] Such forces cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol, a symbol to the most of us appearing a quaint, poetic fancy, to some a foolish tale. (92-3)

Villiers’s efforts to articulate his sense of the numinous are marked by eerie failures of presence – language can’t bring these mysteries into existence, which is just as well because their failure of absence would be overwhelmingly terrifying; as it is, weird forces are both there and not there. The documents included in the narrative are often fragmentary or stop short of full representation (such as Dr Matheson’s account, discussed later).

Also like *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Great God Pan* uses a scientific experiment on a human subject to demonstrate radical theories that, if correct, would entail accepting a revised version of the nature of reality – one that consists in much more than what is visible. Dr Raymond explains how he “devoted myself to transcendental medicine” (2) – a new inter-discipline to complement Jekyll’s “mystic” and “transcendental” chemistry. He positions himself as an explorer, the discoverer of a world of knowledge: “[…] the great truth burst upon me, and I saw, mapped out in lines of sight, a whole world, a sphere unknown; continents and islands, and great oceans” (5). A combination of research and insight leads him to this new truth about reality and to understand, he thinks, the nature of the border separating one world from another. As he explains to Clarke, the friend he has invited to witness his experiment, the “real” world is not ours but the other one, the one that exists “beyond this glamour and this vision […] beyond them all as beyond a veil” (3). To access this world, Dr Raymond will demonstrate the physiological manipulation of spiritual consciousness by means of “a slight lesion in the grey matter […]; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells” (4). He proposes a physical, neurological basis for the activities of the mind and spirit, resembling the suggestions put forward by the SPR of receptive nerves accounting for telepathy.[90]

Raymond applies, in short, materialist, positivist approaches to an occult experiment in “transcendental medicine”; the incompatibility of the two is partly what causes the terrible events that follow. Jack Poller argues that Machen drew primarily on alchemical rather than

modern occult ideas, given his ambivalence to materialist science and scepticism of the SPR's adoption of positivist methods.[91] For Machen, materialist science, including in an occult pseudo-scientific form, could never prove a successful route to ecstatic experience, and indeed, might lead to far worse. As Ambrose remarks in "The White People," "we are so drenched with materialism, that we should probably fail to recognise real wickedness if we encountered it."[92]

Dr Raymond is therefore set up for failure despite (or because of) his sincere conviction of achieving success. Over those "certain cells," Dr Raymond claims complete knowledge and precise control: "I am perfectly instructed," he informs Clarke, "as to the possible functions of those nerve centres in the scheme of things. With a touch I can bring them into play, with a touch, I say, I can set free the current" (7). The "nerve centres" in question belong to the girl Mary, who is about to undergo a drugged but not anaesthetised brain operation. In the public imagination, Anne Stiles outlines, neurologists were popularly conceived as villains "due to their controversial research methods (especially vivisection) and the obvious ways in which their research undermined the widespread lay perception of the 'soul' or the 'will' as the governing force behind human action."[93] Dr Raymond's psychophysiological leanings and cold attitude to his experimental subject positions him among such villainous scientists of the mind; he is typical of the cool, detached figure of the experimental scientist, practicing, as Natasha Rebry puts it, a "soulless science."[94] Jeffrey Renye points out that Raymond's urge to "tear the folds that separate modes of perception" is irresponsible in that the experiment serves no obvious useful purpose.[95] Raymond pushes moral boundaries further than his real-life colleagues. Late-Victorian neurologists "could conceive of no physical locus for spirituality in the human brain":[96] this is exactly what Raymond *does* conceive and locate. But rather than his experiment providing potentially welcome scientific evidence for some kind of spirituality, it overwhelmingly backfires in a profoundly destructive way.

Raymond's beliefs and methods prove inadequate for dealing with occult realities. Despite Raymond's confidence in his skill, there are hints of doubts when he speaks of the "spirit"; he tells Clarke that "probably, for the first time since man was made, a spirit will gaze on a spirit world" (7). The comma after "probably" indicates it is the outcome that is uncertain, not the method (of which Raymond is entirely confident). Nor does he really know what that other world *is*. He ends his claim for perfect control over the "nerve centres" by saying: "with a touch I can complete the communication between this world of sense and – we shall be able to finish that sentence later on" (7). Raymond's failure to complete this

sentence suggests that mysteries endure beyond the limits of knowledge, and indicates the lack of adequate language to describe the world beyond. Only metaphors are available: currents, veils, "seeing the god Pan" (3).

Ordinary people, though, are evidently not equipped to cope with whatever occupies the inarticulable gap beyond this world of sense, and Mary loses her sanity. Dr Raymond is "still quite cool" as he brings Clarke to see her: "it is a great pity; she is a hopeless idiot. However, it could not be helped; and, after all, she has seen the Great God Pan" (15). He regrets his broken instrument, but his main concern is that he has proved his point; only years later does Raymond acknowledge that although "[w]hat I said Mary would see, she saw," he "forgot that no human eyes can look on such a sight with impunity" (108). Raymond, then, makes several erroneous assumptions due to his positivist cast: that the knowledge set to be gained will be gained by himself, and will be beneficial to him; that he, the scientist, is in control of the situation; that the condition of the body determines the state of spirit or consciousness; and that Mary herself is no more than an operational instrument. The ultimate result of the experiment, though, is Helen Vaughan, the spirit of Pan made flesh from Mary's body. Helen can be seen as both an invoked demon and a distortion of the spirit forms channelled by mediums and clothed with their bodily matter; as a weird being she is both of these and more. With Mary unable to communicate her experience, Helen is the only worldly evidence for what "seeing the God Pan" is all about – and she, like Hyde, is at root an unknowable being who defies ultimate comprehension.

Reports of the childhood of Mary's daughter filter into the narrative through the memoirs of Clarke, telling of her corruption of two playmates (a young boy who loses his reason and a girl who later dies). As an adult, she comes to the attention of Villiers after a series of London gentlemen are found dead. The beautiful Helen, it seems, seduces her victims and reveals to them certain horrific unnameable evils that drive them to suicide. Helen has been read as a degenerate and transgressive figure, linked to *fin-de-siècle* decadence, social anxiety over women's sexuality, and inherited madness.[97] The insanity of Mary signals her intellectual inferiority (the power of her will cannot maintain her psychological unity in the face of her experiences), and she passes on her degenerate traits to Helen.

But Helen does not have to be understood as degenerate. Machin, for one, disputes aspects of reading "Machen as a deeply engaged cogitator and interpreter of contemporary scientific discourse and accompanying neuroses surrounding evolution and degeneration" and calls for a greater range of responses to his weird fiction.[98] Like Hyde, Helen is legible in more ways than only as a degenerate horror. If Raymond represents, as he claims, a peculiarly

advanced state of human scientific understanding, then Helen is a being well beyond that understanding. As a union of human with one of "the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things" (93), she is also a progressive creature: something new. She may derive from an abhistorical past and ancient knowledge, but those are revived through the modern scientific methods were used to create her; and unlike the "little people" encountered on rural fringes in "The Shining Pyramid" and *The Three Impostors*' "Novel of the Black Seal," she is a being capable of living as a modern woman in London society. Humans like Mary, Helen's childhood friends, and her adult lovers have not the strength of mind, body or will to assimilate the knowledge that she embodies and conveys.

The world is not ready for Helen Vaughan, as she too seems to acknowledge by her final, if coerced, decision to end her life. Her suicide is reported in the narrative's final chapter, "The Fragments," in an account I'll examine in detail. Helen's death is reported by a Dr Matheson, summoned by Villiers for the sole purpose of bearing witness to the event. Although he doubts whether "science would benefit by these brief notes if they could be published," he nevertheless presents them scientifically (98). As a professional, the doctor takes his duties seriously:

> As was befitting, I did all that my knowledge suggested to make sure that I was suffering under no delusion. At first astounded, I could hardly think, but in a minute's time I was sure that my pulse was steady and regular, and that I was in my real and true senses. I then fixed my eyes quietly on what was before me. (99)

Dr Matheson appeals to the reliability of his senses and the supremacy of his mind; though briefly thrown in astonishment, he soon gets his body under control and calmly observes what is happening. His report is thus to be received as an empirical account conveyed by his "real and true senses" and is rationally presented. The scientific gaze is needed to confront the weird – at the same time as its power is shattered by that confrontation.

What Dr Matheson witnesses is far from rational and instead violates many assumptions about the stability of the world. Next, he watches Helen's body undergo a series of changes, in a much-quoted passage describing how

> the firm structure of the human body that I had thought to be unchangeable, and permanent as adamant, began to melt and dissolve. […] 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 whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. (99-100)

Critics often focus here on Helen's horrible bodily instability and how it reflects anxieties over sexual transgression or evolutionary degeneration. Certainly, her transformations, like Jekyll's efforts to describe his experience of Hyde, plausibly reflect "a flickering backward-run down the evolutionary tree towards protoplasm."[99] They flout several supposedly safe distinctions: female and male, human and beast, body and world, and Darryl Jones points out that "these interstices […] in their violation of seemingly clear category distinctions, are the sites of revulsion and therefore of horror."[100] These interstices are also sites of weird, whose affect is not horror alone but comprises awe and wonder too, and the quoted passage needs to be understood in the context of the whole scene.

The scene's weirdness shows more fully when the entirety of Dr Matheson's report is taking into account, especially the contrast between its confident beginning and its troubled, fragmentary end. Watching Helen's bodily changes, Dr Matheson acknowledges that "horror and revolting nausea rose up within me, and an odour of corruption choked my breath," but assures his implied reader that he "remained firm" (99). Such scientific resolution in the face of revulsion is necessary to bring him to the brink of the weird and enable him to observe the world around him turning distinctly Lovecraftian:

> The light within the room had turned to blackness, not the darkness of night, in which objects are seen dimly, for I could see clearly and without difficulty. But it was the negation of light; objects were presented to my eyes, if I may say so, without any medium, in such a manner that if there had been a prism in the room I should have seen no colours represented in it. (100)

Observing the remainder of the scene appears to require a whole new kind of seeing, one for which there is no known word. The limits of Dr Matheson's senses to perceive in this alternative way – he can see clearly but only partially – as well as the limits of language, are discernible here in his struggle to articulate it; this weird experience resists the scientific grid of intelligibility. His endeavours can only describe the unknown with reference to the known, in language of analogy, negation, and inversions.

Helen, though, belongs to some entirely other reality and other way of thinking and being. Her most horrifying form, too, is beyond meaningful description. First, she reduces to

"nothing but a substance as jelly" (100), identifiable as alchemical "first matter."[101] This substance is significant not least because from it Helen develops once last time; she is an alchemical being "conceived from the *tenebrae activae* and in contact with it, who then, to the dismay and terror of her earth-bound witnesses, ascends."[102] Dr Matheson records the process with difficulty: "the ladder was ascended again . . [here the MS. is illegible] . . . for one instant I saw a Form, shaped in dimness before me, which I will not farther describe" (100-101). The elision in the middle of this quotation is in Machen's text: within it, Helen's most advanced position is attained in a form so indescribable that not only does Dr Matheson now shirk his declared duty but even ink on paper revolts. Her least knowable, most unspeakable, and most horrifying shape is not, after all, the jelly-like matter at which the ladder begins, but her most developed (and ancient) state at its top.

In Helen's death throes, progression and decline, ancient and new, past and future, awe and horror, collapse into one. Dr Matheson's inadequate report is a final indictment by Machen of the failure of science to explain the real meaning of existence, illustrating his later remarks in *Far Off Things* that the "'truth' of science […] is a figment of the brain, a non-existent monster, like dragons, griffins, and basilisks."[103] Scientific truth, as in Dr Matheson's account, is meant to be pinned down by accurate empirical observation, conveyed through the symbolic order of written or spoken language, which here fails. His problems with describing and representing Helen, however, are not his alone, but pervade the narrative (and echo the irreducibility of Hyde). Austin, for example, remarks on Helen's "strange" expression; there is "something about her face which I didn't like" and feels familiar, but which he can't identify except as "that odd feeling one sometimes has a in a dream" (76).

Austin's and Dr Matheson's language is consistent with the discourse around mystical experience. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), psychologist William James notes that mystical experience is characterised by "Ineffability," which he defines as a "negative" state. Of it, the subject "immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others."[104] The difficulty the other characters have in imparting how they experience Helen echoes Machen's own reflections on his literary efforts to "recreate those vague impressions of wonder and awe and mystery that I myself had received from the form and shape of the land of my boyhood and youth" which he saw as impossible "in a story of material incidents" but perhaps possible in "an interior tale of the soul and its emotions."[105] Both Mary and the boy Trevor met by Helen as a child are profoundly psychologically affected and have no means of attempting to impart

their knowledge, which is instead retained and silence by men: Helen's childhood playmate Rachel has her "wild story" cut off unsaid by Clarke closing the book of his memoirs (26), while in her adult life, Herbert "would not dare whisper" what Helen told him (34), and a written account of her "entertainment" is so terrible Austin cannot read it (92). Natasha Rebry understands these stallings as an inability to cognitively process the shock, and thus as further evidence for the story's relationship with contemporary debates over the physiological basis of the mind and for Machen's opposition to biological reductionism.[106] However, part of these ineffable encounters between humans and the god Pan is a corrupted form of ecstasy.

In this sense, Pan and Helen stand not for the transcendental mystery of *A Fragment of Life*, but rather for the transgressive knowledge of *The White People.* Dr Matheson's account presents his witnessing of Helen's death as enweirded and twisted, made terrible and horrifying. Although his account is partial and his experience is indirect, it is the fullest articulation the narrative contains of the distorted, corrupted mystical experience that "seeing the god Pan" might offer. Machen himself seems later to have considered the effects of *The Great God Pan* as something of a mistake, reflecting on "my real failure; I translated awe, at worst awfulness, into evil; again, I say, one dreams in fire and works in clay."[107] Hence, perhaps, the ambiguous affect of this weird tale, hovering between wonder and horror.

A different understanding of the nature of reality and a different understanding of knowledge – of the relationship between body, mind, and spirit – is demanded by *The Great God Pan*, in an illustration of Machen's own opposition to a materialist, mechanical ontology in favour of the wonder and horror of a more enchanted world. An eerie, abhistorical figure, Helen exists outwith conventional moral, philosophical, or semiotic frameworks that might otherwise to explain her. Hers is an advanced state beyond human comprehension that can barely be witnessed, let alone narrated, understood or controlled, by conventional scientific eyes. She violates the stable boundaries that are supposed to structure the world and its history for us, and, like Hyde, eludes the empirical knowing represented by direct description.

Yet if Helen can't be held in place by a scientific grid of intelligibility, it is only fair to reflect that she can't be pinned down by a literary critical one either. Like *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Pan* offers a multivalent, polysemic plurality at the levels of plot, character, narration, and meaning which ensures its lingering influence in later weird fiction and the fascination of current criticism. If for Machen "the whole matter of imaginative literature depends upon this faculty of seeing the universe from the aeonian pebble of the wayside to the raw suburban street as something new, unheard of, marvellous, finally, miraculous" then readers also must acquire that new way of seeing the world, accepting the co-existence of ecstasy and horror in

the miraculous numinous of Machen's weird tales.[108]

Conclusion

Jekyll and Hyde helped to pioneer the weird tale by exploiting certain fractures and debates in contemporary science; it found the weird already present within the innovations of 1880s efforts to rethink psychology, and thus already part of the *fin-de-siècle* world in which the novella is rooted. The multiplicity and indeterminacy of reality and consciousness and their implications for relationship between body and mind are all explored in Stevenson's novella, as is the almost blasphemous alarm, horror, and perturbation experienced during the encounter with the unknown and unknowable (Hyde) which characterises the weird tale.

In Machen's weird tales, too, pure materialism is challenged as the defining relation of body to spirit becomes more fluid and uncertain. Hyde and Helen Vaughan figure as amorphous monstrous shapeless things, unknown weird beings of shapes and textures that don't belong in the known natural order of physical existence. Ideas of the multiplicity of human consciousness or soul in Machen's work take the form of connections with lost, ancient, pagan worlds, abhistories that trouble the dominant narratives about modern civilisation. Machen's weird tales refuse a single, knowable construction of the world, but insist on other realms, too mysterious and sometimes too evil for human beings to cope with. When a scientific framework of knowledge or investigation is applied to the world beyond the veil, particular trouble ensues – for the characters but also for dominant positivist assumptions about the nature of reality. Machen's anti-science takes the form of a call for a new, truer kind of knowledge. He objects to science in its particular materialist positivist form, relabelling and reducing old knowledge instead of broadening its modern state.

Ways and failures of *knowing* weird realities is the subject of chapter 3, but for Machen, the real world beyond the veil exists outwith and regardless of science; Dr Raymond does not attempt to explain its existence – his concern is how to interact with it. Machen does not need science to validate the more-than-visible world. Chapter 3 returns to Jekyll's experiment to show how the weird reality constructed by the novella depends upon an equally enweirded epistemology: a revised understanding of how this reality can be known (and the limits to knowing it). In different ways, the stories discussed next also interrogate the nature of reality as conventionally understood: from a single stable entity it becomes something expanded or multiple. They also participate in reconfiguring ways of knowing that reality, emphasising the

value of direct experience, sensation, and spiritual or emotional feeling alongside the conventional empirics of scientific experiment.

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[2] James Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain, 1880-1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 14.

[3] Ronald R. Thomas, "The Strange Voices in the Strange Case: Dr. Jekyll, Myr. Hyde, and the Voices of Modern Fiction," in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years*, ed. William Veeder, and Gordon Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 76.

[4] Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater, 2016), 31.

[5] Michael Davis, "Incongruous Compounds: Re-Reading Jekyll and Hyde and Late-Victorian Psychology," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 11, no. 2 (2006), 2011.

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[7] Davis, "Incongruous Compounds: Re-Readingjekyll and Hyde and Late-Victorian Psychology."

[8] Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

[9] Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, 21.

[10] Annie Besant, *Theosophy* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1912), 14.

[11] See Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 247, and Srdjan Smajìc, *Ghost Seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).183-5, for discussions of Myers' ideas about consciousness.

[12] Henri Bergson, and F. L. Pogson (trans), *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1910), 231, italics original

[13] David F. Lindenfeld, *The Transformation of Positivism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 87.

[14] Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 203.

[15] Garrett, "Cries and Voices: Reading *Jekyll and Hyde*," 61.

[16] Paul Maixner, ed. *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1995); Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin De Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

[17] Frederic W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death, Vol. 1* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), 34.

[18] Myers, *Human Personality, Vol. 1*, 15.

[19] Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin De Siècle*, 6; Reid also notes that Stevenson's letters and notes reveal his long-term interest in scientists such as Spencer and Darwin, and he was latterly a member of the Society for Psychical Research from the distance of the South Seas (4).

[20] Gish, "Jekyll and Hyde: The Psychology of Dissociation," 3.

[21] See Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10, 20.

[22] Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*, ed. Robert Mighall (London: Penguin, 2003), 55. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in brackets in the text.

[23] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*; Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles*.

[24] Martin Tropp, *Images of Fear: How Horror Stories Helped Shape Modern Culture (1818-1918)* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1990), 104; William Veeder, "Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy," in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years*, ed. William Veeder, and Gordon Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[25] Garrett, "Cries and Voices," 61.

[26] On readings of this moment in Jekyll's "Statement," see Peter K. Garrett, "Cries and Voices" and *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 108; Gish, "Jekyll and Hyde: The Psychology of Dissociation," 3.

[27] Garrett, "Cries and Voices," 63.

[28] Linda Dryden, "Robert Louis Stevenson and Popular Culture," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 3 (2010).

[29] Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, 114.

[30] Utterson alludes to Hyde's "evil influence" on Jekyll (31), and identifies the Jekyll-Hyde "connection" as "evil" (43) but only Jekyll uses the word to describe Hyde.

[31] Gish, "Jekyll and Hyde: The Psychology of Dissociation," 6.

[32] Jerrold E. Hogle, "The Struggle for a Dichotomy: Abjection in Jekyll and His Interpreters," in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years*, ed. William Veeder, and Gordon Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[33] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, 194.

[34] Arthur Machen, "The Great God Pan," in *The Great God Pan and the Inmost Light* (London: John Lane, 1894), 66.

[35] Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10.

[36] Tropp, *Images of Fear*, 102.. See also Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic At the Fin De Siècle*, 39, on Hyde's resistance of medical interpretation.

[37] Garrett, "Cries and Voices," 65.

[38] Stiles, *Popular Fiction and Brain Science*, 30.

[39] Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration At the Fin De Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012).

[40] Timothy Jarvis, "The Weird, the Posthuman, and the Abjected World-in-itself: Fidelity to the 'Lovecraft Event' in the Work of Caitlín R. Kiernan and Laird Barron," *Textual Practice* 31, no. 6 (2017), 1145.

[41] *Borderland* 2, no. vii (1895), 24.

[42] Frederic W. H. Myers, "Multiplex Personality," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* IV (1886), 502, 496.

[43] Arthur Machen, *Far Off Things* (London: Martin Secker, 1922), 11.

[44] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 24-25.

[45] See Nick Freeman, "Arthur Machen: Ecstasy and Epiphany," *Literature and Theology* 24, no. 3 (2010); Machen, *Far Off Things*, 27; Susan Johnston Graf, *Talking to the Gods: Occultism in the Work of W. B. Yeats, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and Dion Fortune* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (SUNY, 2015).

[46] Aidan Reynolds, and William E Charlton, *Arthur Machen: A Short Account of His Life and Work* (London, Baker, 1963).

[47] Mark Valentine, and Roger Dobson, "Introduction," in *Arthur Machen: Artist and Mystic*, ed. Mark Valentine, and Roger Dobson (Oxford and Northampton: Carmaen Books, 1986), viii; Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: from Le Fanu to James* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[48] S. T. Joshi, "Introduction," in *The White People and Other Weird Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2011), xv; David Trotter, "Introduction," in *The Three Impostors* (London: Everyman, 1995), xviii; Worth, "Introduction."

[49] H. P. Lovecraft, "The Dunwich Horror," in *H. P. Lovecraft Omnibus 3: The Haunter of the Dark* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 120.

[50] See, for example, Aaron Worth, "Introduction," in *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Mark Valentine, *Arthur Machen* (Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan: seren, 1995); Jessica Webb, "What Lies Beneath: Orthodoxy and the Occult in Victorian Literature," diss., Cardiff University, 2010); Machen, *Far Off Things*.

[51] Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain, 1880-1939*, 146.

[52] Quoted inValentine, *Arthur Machen*, 26.

[53] Arthur Machen, *The London Adventure* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), 21-22.

[54] Vincent Starrett, *Arthur Machen: A Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin* (Tartarus Press and the Arthur Machen Society, 1996), 11-13.

[55] Machen, *Hieroglyphics*, 34.

[56] Machen, *London Adventure*, 14.

[57] Arthur Machen, "A Fragment of Life," in *The White People and Other Weird Stories*, ed. S. T. Joshi (New York: Penguin, 2011), 215.

[58] Freeman, "Arthur Machen: Ecstasy and Epiphany," 248.

[59] Christine Ferguson, "Reading With the Occultists: Arthur Machen, A. E. Waite, and the Ecstasies of Popular Fiction," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 21, no. 1 (2016), 54.

[60] Machen, *Hieroglyphics*, 11.

[61] Lehmann Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 44; Machen, *Hieroglyphics*, 39.

[62] Lehmann Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 44.

[63] Lehmann Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 51.

[64] Kimberly Jackson, "Non-Evolutionary Degeneration in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 41, no. 1 (2013), 124.

[65] Machen, "The White People," 114.

[66] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 125.

[67] Freeman, "Arthur Machen: Ecstasy and Epiphany"; see also Freeman's *Conceiving the City: London, Literature, and Art 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for discussion of Machen's representations of London.

[68] Arthur Machen, "The Idealist," in *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Presenting the city of London as a weird and mystical space or borderland is recurrent in weird fiction: see Lord Dunsany, "'The Hashish Man' 'the Beggars' 'the Field'," in *A Dreamer's Tales* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910); Tim Earnshaw, "Strange Magic," in *Arthur Machen: Artist and Mystic*, ed. Mark Valentine, and Roger Dobson (Oxford and Northampton: Carmaen Books, 1986).

[69] Machen, "A Fragment of Life," 215.

[70] Similar epiphanies happen in some of Blackwood's stories, such as "May Day Eve" and The Centaur where "false" scientific or materialist knowledge is discarded in favour of true awareness. See S. T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale: Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M. R. James, Ambrose Bierce, H. P. Lovecraft* (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1990), 88-90, for comparison of Machen's and Blackwood's worldviews.

[71] Machen, "A Fragment of Life," 217, 200.

[72] Machen, "A Fragment of Life," 220.

[73] Lehmann Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 58.

[74] Lehmann Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 71.

[75] Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 61.

[76] Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 63.

[77] China Miéville, "On Monsters: Or, Nine or More (Monstrous) Not Cannies," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23, no. 3 (2012), 381.

[78] Joshi, "Introduction," xiv.

[79] Arthur Machen, "The Shining Pyramid," in *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 236.

[80] Aaron Worth, "Arthur Machen and the Horrors of Deep History," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40, no. 01 (2012), 220.

[81] Worth, "Arthur Machen and the Horrors of Deep History," 223.

[82] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 95, 97.

[83] Jackson, "Non-Evolutionary Degeneration in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales," 130.

[84] Hurley, *Gothic Body*. Hurley links Hodgson's "abhumans" from The Night Land to Julia Kristeva's notion of the "abject."

[85] Miéville, "On Monsters," 381; China Miéville, "Weird Fiction," in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould, *et al.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 113.

[86] Worth, "Introduction," xiv.

[87] Worth, "Introduction," xiv.

[88] Machen, "The Great God Pan," 7. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and page numbers are given in brackets in the text.

[89] Eckersley, "A Theme in the Early Work of Arthur Machen," 283.

[90] See, e.g., William Crookes, *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (London: J. Burns, 1874).

[91] Jake Poller, "The Transmutations of Arthur Machen: Alchemy in 'the Great God Pan' and *the Three Impostors*," *Literature & Theology* 29, no. 1 (2013).

[92] Machen, "The White People," 115; Machen's biographers and critics point to his dislike not only of scientific materialism, but also of many forms of occultism and Christianity; see, e.g., Freeman, "Arthur Machen: Ecstasy and Epiphany," 252; and Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, 203.

[93] Anne Stiles, "Introduction," in *Neurology and Literature, 1860-1920*, ed. Anne Stiles (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3; See also Rylance, *Victorian Psychology;* Oppenheim, *Other World*, 266, on *fin-de-siècle* psychology's "stark choice between determinism and free will" in explanations of how the brain works.

[94] Natasha Rebry, "'A Slight Lesion in the Grey Matter': The Gothic Brain," *Horror Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016), 13.

[95] Jeffrey Michael Renye, "Panic on the British Borderlands: The Great God Pan, Victorian Sexuality, and Sacred Space in the Works of Arthur Machen," diss., Temple University Libraries, 2013), 15.

[96] Stiles, "Introduction," 13.

[97] Eckersley, "A Theme in the Early Work of Arthur Machen"; Mark De Cicco, "'More Than Human': The Queer Occult Explorer of the *Fin de Siècle*," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23, no. 1 (2012); Machen's reputed sexual anxiety is critically discussed in Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain*, 149.

[98] Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain*, 147.

[99] Eckersley, "A Theme in the Early Work of Arthur Machen," 283.

[100] Jones, "Borderlands: Spiritualism and the Occult in *Fin-de-Siècle* and Edwardian Welsh and Irish Horror," 37.

[101] Poller, "The Transmutations of Arthur Machen"; Ron Weighall, "Sorcery and Sanctity: The Spagyric Quest of Arthur Machen," in *Arthur Machen: Artist and Mystic*, ed. Mark Valentine, and Roger Dobson (Oxford and Northampton: Carmaen Books, 1986); Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain*, 147-48.

[102] Renye, "Panic on the British Borderlands," 149.

[103] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 155.

[104] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 302.

[105] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 20.

[106] Rebry, "'A Slight Lesion in the Grey Matter'."

[107] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 123.

[108] Machen, *Far Off Things*, 124.