Weird Music: Reading John Ireland and Arthur Machen in Tandem

Eric McElroy
Merton College, University of Oxford

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music

Faculty of Music, University of Oxford

2023

Abstract

John Ireland's music divulges a more sophisticated relationship to literary influences than has traditionally been explored. Despite broad recognition of his literary interests, this thesis argues that Ireland's enthusiasm for and engagement with the work of his professed favourite writer, Arthur Machen (1863-1947), is at best fractionally understood. This thesis submits that Ireland's music is entwined preternaturally with a literary figure whose defining characteristic, 'weirdness', grants his music and life a comparable quality, thriving off a complex and ambiguous language of interdisciplinary systems and symbols, and contributing a singular body of work to the repertoire of early twentieth-century music.

Providing contextual frames for works by both artists, this study takes as its point of departure the concept of 'weirdness' as it pertains to Machen's *post hoc* classification by S.T. Joshi as a progenitor of 'weird fiction'. Reconstructing the worldview that inspired and sustained Machen's writings through literary criticism, socio-cultural movements, and aesthetic and philosophical systems, it is demonstrated that Ireland's subsequent compositions and artist-persona emerged from an absorption of the defining principles of Machen's work with an emphasis on schematizations of weirdness. As such, it is argued that Ireland's life and work can only be properly perceived within the context of Machen's own writings; they must be read in tandem.

By placing Machen's writings within concurrent aesthetic and cultural contexts animating notions of weirdness, this thesis establishes a discourse between these elements and representative compositions by Ireland that were composed after his discovery of Machen's work in 1906. This analysis evinces that a sympathetic understanding of Ireland's work and character benefits substantially from a dissection of the intricate interaction

between his and Machen's works; between assorted cultural and aesthetic elements of English music, literature, and landscape; between the reception of his works by contemporaneous and contemporary critics; and by contemplating further the aesthetic and philosophical implications of his music for English musicology, musical ontology, and notions of weirdness in art and artists.

Contents

Abstract……...……2

Introduction……...……..6

Chapter 1
The Erotic Weird: Speaking the Unspeakable……44

Chapter 2
The Urban Weird: Transmutations of Place……...104

Chapter 3
The Pastoral Weird: A Walking *Legend*……..……186

Chapter 4
Becoming Weird: A Discourse on Biography……..232

Conclusion: The Cryptogram……..317

Bibliography……323

For Nana, always

(1927-2015)

Introduction

In summarizing John Ireland's life and work towards the end of an article for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Fiona Richards, the most comprehensive scholar of Ireland studies to date, summarises many of the contradictions that continue to characterize his critical reception:

> Both as a person and as a composer, John Ireland has always been difficult to place. Though he led a life that was in many ways uneventful, his highly individual musical style discloses an expressive, often contradictory personality…Ireland was a practising Anglican for most of his life, though as he grew older his faith was increasingly tinged with doubt, cynicism, and an attraction to paganism. He loved the English countryside, in both its most rosy and most rugged aspects, but also had a strong attachment to London, the city in which he lived for most of his life. His works are deeply personal, nearly always closely linked to a specific event or place or person in his life…It is this personal approach that makes his music so special and causes it to speak with such an individual voice.[1]

One encounters this subtly exculpatory sentiment repeatedly in Ireland studies in which the writer's words discreetly beseech the reader to excuse his or her inability to encapsulate the subject under discussion; the topic, with its idiosyncratic 'complex system of personal musical symbols and images', is simply too nebulous to capture.[2]

Richards's recourse to Ireland's dualities in demonstrating this trend is typical. It accords with the perception of Ireland as embodying the features of a so-called archetypal Romantic artist, however much of an 'epistemological bucket-with-a-hole into which any

[1] Fiona Richards, 'Ireland, John Nicholson (1879-1962)',in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/97814128.001.0001/odnb-978614128-e-34110> [accessed 23 September 2018].

[2] Though it is considered difficult to enumerate, some have considered the autobiographical element of Ireland to be a virtue of his style, rather than a weakness or an interpretive hindrance. Like Richards, Wilfrid Mellers considers Ireland 'most persuasive when most private.' Of course, the intimacy of Ireland's music, however laudable, only adds to the obfuscation of its meaning and intent. See Wilfrid Mellers, *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1989), 248.

definitions [may] be poured' that description might be.[3] The literature is full of references to Ireland's ambiguity. His stylistic fluctuations mark him anachronistically as 'an uncurable [sic] and unashamed romantic' yet nevertheless a 'modern' one. The insecurity and indulgence which some critics have however unjustly associated with romantic artists is likewise perceived as balanced in Ireland by a 'firm musical invention' that is 'clear-cut and disciplined'.[4] From the opposite extreme, Trevor Hold considered Ireland to be in fact an 'anti-romantic', only to write later in the same article that, in his attachment to a heritage of romantic poetry and his predilection for autobiographical reference, Ireland is perhaps 'the compleat [sic] romantic song-composer.'[5]

Such assessments extend back to the early years of Ireland's success, including his perception overseas. In 1919, the French critic Jean-Aubry esteemed Ireland as perhaps 'the strongest personality' in British music of his generation yet noted also his possession of a conflicting 'sceptical modesty and a philosophic irony which would put him on his guard against his admirers themselves.'[6] This depiction of Ireland as a man with a reserved, outwardly uneventful exterior at odds with a stormy interior was to become commonplace.[7] Even Ireland's classification of his own music has been called into question for its supposed contradictory elements. His *Concertino Pastorale,* for example, struck Donald Brook as 'not…being particularly pastoral', implying that the composer had perhaps misidentified his

[3] Graham Robb, *Victor Hugo* (London: Picador, 1997), 109. The notion of a twentieth-century artist embodying a Romantic spirit which is 'an ever-present, enduring principle, in the artistic temperament' that transcends the confines of any historical epoch was typical criticism during Ireland's generation. See, for example, Walter Pater, *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (New York: Wallachia Publishers, 2015), 110.
[4] Alan Frank, *Modern British Composers* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1953), 15.
[5] Trever Hold, *Parry to Finzi: 20 English Song Composers* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 209-212.
[6] G. Jean-Aubry, 'British Music Through French Eyes', *Musical Quarterly,* 5 (1919), 205.
[7] Frank, 17.

own work.[8] This question of style is again apparent in John Caldwell's portrait of the composer as 'resolutely English' yet with an 'almost Oriental improvisatory quality' about his music.[9] The discernment of contradictions extends to reminiscences of Ireland as an individual. The composer and pianist Freda Swain (1902-1985) remembered Ireland as 'a curious and complex person', alternatingly warm and petty, 'weak and aggressive', inviting and enigmatical.[10] John Longmire, one of Ireland's closest friends and a frequent correspondent, described the composer as 'a man of contradictions sufficient to puzzle his acquaintances and cause himself distress.'[11]

As Richards wrote, Ireland is indeed 'difficult to place'. The seeming contradictions between the characteristics of Ireland's life and those of his music continue to dissuade potential biographers.[12] But the prevalence of these dualities is only part of the problem. It is not merely that the critic must identify and explain Ireland's many divergent interests and influences; the critic must then confront the formidable question of how one might proceed to reconcile these contradictions.

In a pair of articles that constitute the first noteworthy attempt to enumerate Ireland's work, the English music-critic Edwin Evans (1874-1945) diagnosed this difficulty in synthesizing the seemingly contradictory aspects of Ireland's music and biography, and he proposed the use of a broader aesthetic lens with which to correct it. Evans called this

[8] Donald Brook, *Composers' Gallery: Biographical Sketches of Contemporary Composers* (London: Rockcliff, 1949), 80. Ireland was aware of the misperception of his music and the resultant effect on his public acceptance: 'Ireland's so-called ''Nature-works'',' notably *The Forgotten Rite*…and *Mai-Dun*…were generally regarded by Ireland as having less popular appeal.' See Rachel O' Higgins, *The Correspondence of Alan Bush and John Ireland, 1927-1961* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 99.
[9] John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music: Vol. II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 349-350.
[10] Freda Swain, 'Remembering John Ireland and his World', in *The John Ireland Companion*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 123.
[11] John Longmire, *John Ireland: Portrait of a Friend* (London: John Baker, 1969), 38.
[12] See Foreman (2011), xxiii.

difficulty Ireland's 'uncompromising' element in that it refuses to yield immediate understanding, engendering instead an overall 'austerity' that is not, he claimed, notable for its accessibility.[13] For Evans, Ireland's austerity produces a stylistic 'ruggedness' that Evans postulated came from the composer's Northern origin, thereby making Evans also the first critic to observe the significance of landscape for the composer's work, albeit with a landscape that Ireland was later to disavow.[14] Yet even within the realm of English pastoralism, Evans distinguished Ireland for a 'naturalistic tendency' that he considered distinct from the realism of composers 'who wax lyrical over the coming of Spring.' Ireland's nature music is instead 'esoterically lyrical', and the subtlety of his idiom conceals 'a man who feels nature too deeply' to portray it in a conventional idiom. However, even if one accepts Evan's contestable differentiation of Ireland from these unidentified strict realists, Ireland was not so removed as to be culturally irrelevant. Evans identified his *Violin Sonata No. 2* as 'a worthy expression of the times that gave it birth', an example of a music 'resulting from the underlying impulses of to-day.'[15]

One sees in Evans's articles again the difficulty of placing Ireland within a single established category. He is 'rugged' yet 'lyrical', esoteric yet topical, and an unabashed

[13] In a pre-concert lecture at London's Aeolian Hall, for which Ireland was present, Evans praised Ireland for this 'scrupulous conscientiousness', conceding that this was probably what made his music difficult to digest. See Edwin Evans, 'Mr. Edwin Evans on Eugène Goossens and John Ireland', *The Musical Times*, 59.905 (1918), 321-322.

[14] Ireland was born in Bowdon, now a suburb of Greater Manchester. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, Bowdon and neighbouring Dunham Massey are both rich in Anglo-Saxon history. The border between these towns is marked by Watch Hill Castle, and earthworks may be found throughout Bowdon Downs. One might assume these elements to have appealed to Ireland, but this landscape does not appear at all in Ireland's creative output, and it is mentioned only once in his surviving correspondence. Ireland wrote that, although he was born in 'the North Country, or near enough', he did not identify as a northerner and confessed to find the idea rather 'depressing.' See London, British Library, John Ireland: Letters to Rev. Kenneth Charles Longmire, MS. 60536 (15 April 1951), fol. 15.

[15] See Edwin Evans, 'John Ireland', *The Musical Quarterly*, 5.2 (1919), 213-220; and Edwin Evans 'Modern British Composers: V. John Ireland, *The Musical Times*, 60.918 (1919), 394-396. Evans is referring here to the events of the First World War.

reactionary yet still somehow 'a modern of the moderns.' Evans suggests that the onus is on each individual listener to grapple with these issues and to identify the 'searching and questioning of the spirit' that defines Ireland's music. In esoteric terms, this realization is only to be made available 'for those who read beyond the notes.'[16]

How to 'read beyond the notes' remains the primary challenge of Ireland studies, though few scholars since Evans have attempted to address it or have done so in terms that disregard the music's esoteric subtext. Published in mainly non-academic journals and magazines, the overwhelming majority of articles on Ireland's work written since Evans's amount to commentary rather than criticism, admittedly eloquent and insightful in their own way, that often paraphrase the opinions of previous articles.[17] Alongside these there exist a number of bibliographical studies of varying accuracy, most of which emphasize a specific sub-genre of Ireland's output rather than the whole of his oeuvre.[18]

Disconcertingly, because of the small amount of available secondary literature, problematic articles and bibliographies such as these are regularly cited in contemporary

[16] Evans's fondness for Ireland may have been intensified by this challenge as he had a special interest in a quasi-spiritual brand of music analysis. See Edwin Evans, *The Margin of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 70.

[17] Within the context of public outreach, such articles have played a vital role in the popularization, such as it is, of Ireland's music, and they are to be commended for that reason. Nevertheless, these articles do not constitute significant contributions to academic scholarship. Examples of articles whose content is largely interchangeable include, though is by no means limited to, Ralph Hill, 'John Ireland', in *British Music of Our Time*, ed. A.L. Bacharach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), 97-110; Nigel Townshend, 'The Achievement of John Ireland', *Music and Letters* 24.2 (1943), 65-74; Hugh Ottaway, 'The Piano Music of John Ireland', *Monthly Musical Record* (December 1954), 258-266; Bernard Pierce, *Creative Landscapes of the British Isles* (London: Ebury Press, 1983), 150-151; Harold Rutland, 'John Ireland', *Recorded Sound*, 50-51 (April-July 1973), 190-198, 1101; A.E.F. Dickinson, 'The Progress of John Ireland', *Music Review*, 1.4 (November 1940), 343-353; and Kathryn Eggar, 'The Pianoforte Music of John Ireland', *Music Teacher* (June 1922), 465-467.

[18] See, for example, bibliographical studies that provide summary statements on pieces which lack broader musicological context for reasons inherent to the bibliographical format by Stewart Craggs, *John Ireland: A Catalogue, Discography, and Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); P. Keir, *John Ireland: A Practical Guide to Selected Works for Piano*, (MMus Thesis: Royal College of Music, 1990); K. Leslie, *The Chamber Music of John Ireland*, (MA Thesis: University of Wales, 1976); Margaret Winifred Cooke, *John Ireland (1879-1962): A Biographical and Critical Study with Special Reference to the Work Involving Piano* (MA Thesis: University of Wales, 1972); Michael Pilkington, *Gurney, Ireland, Quilter and Warlock* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 43-75.

dissertations. The cycle of insufficient context and inaccuracy has thus become self-sustaining. Unable to proceed, critics have repeatedly directed their frustrations towards the composer himself: it is Ireland, not their sources or their methodology, who is to blame. Michael Hurd succinctly stated this attitude when he belittled Ireland as man who, having vacillated between a series of competing polarities, was 'ultimately never able to define himself to an extent that would bring conviction to the music he was able to wring from a rather confused life.'[19]

Scholarship pertaining to Ireland has accordingly reached an impasse as critics continue to address unsolved riddles with a methodology that proves continually ineffective. In the absence of properly critical scholarship, Ireland's reputation has consequently suffered. His ranking by authors of critical overviews of twentieth-century English music has never been notably high. Frank Howes condemned Ireland to the sidelines of the so-called English Musical Renaissance, declaring that Ireland's 'main contribution…was that he produced distinctive piano music', essentially dismissing the rest of his output as unworthy of further analysis.[20] Ireland was conspicuously marginalized in Merion Hughes's and Robert Stradling's sweepingly revisionist *The English Musical Renaissance: 1840-1940,* likely because they could not pigeon-hole such an elusive figure into supporting the narrative they were attempting to prove. Being inconvenient, he was painted as irrelevant. Hughes and Stradling did briefly discuss Ireland's cantata *These Things Shall Be* (1936-1937) for its political subtext, but this was done merely to prove a larger point about political subversion

[19] Michael Hurd, 'The Music of John Ireland', *Music & Letters*, 82.4 (2001), 674-675.
[20] Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 223. The present study rejects the phrase 'English Musical Renaissance' as an accurate description of early twentieth century music, and it will only be used when the movement is referred to by an external source. For a summary of the phrase's problematic elements, see Jürgen Schaarwächter, 'Chasing a Myth and a Legend: ''The British Musical Renaissance'' in a ''Land without Music'' ', *The Musical Times*, 149.1904 (Autumn 2008), 53-60.

in early twentieth-century English music; this is despite the fact that Ireland's own testimony disproves their characterization of his work. Ireland's relevance to their designated 'South Kensington' circle of English composers was never addressed. Ireland's private politics generally had little if any impact on his work, and a piece like *These Things Shall Be*, even if it did have a political subtext, must be viewed as an irregularity in the composer's output, not as convincing evidence for anything approaching political radicalism.[21]

The consensus now is that Ireland was a conservative composer of relatively modest output who produced music of sufficient value and variety to justify, for some, his status as 'more than a merely minor, though interesting, figure.'[22] Overshadowed by a late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century revival in studies of Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and others, Ireland has nevertheless remained of some interest to a very small number of specialists.[23] These critics, however, run the inverse risk of neglecting to place Ireland within a sufficiently broad context, as was apparent in the long-awaited *The John Ireland*

[21] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 214. Had Hughes and Stradling made recourse to Ireland's personal correspondence, they might have retracted or at least significantly revised their interpretation. Ireland unambiguously declared that 'The only religion I object to is communism.' See London, British Library, John Ireland: Letters to Rev. Kenneth Charles Longmire, MS. 60536 (11 April 1956), fol. 106. Ireland further explained that his musical reference to the Internationale in *These Things Shall Be* was, firstly, a symbol for him of 'the Brotherhood of Man' and 'in no sense a political slogan'. Second, his interest in the theme was purely technical: '[I] was interested with the way it can be fitted in, unobtrusively as a counterpoint, in the passage where it occurs. I never thought it would ever come to identify me with Communism!' Ibid (20 February 1951), fol. 1. For an excellent discussion of *These Things Shall Be* within this political context, see Kate Guthrie, 'Propaganda Music in Second World War Britain: John Ireland's Epic March', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 139.1 (2012), 137-175.

[22] Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music*, 349-350.

[23] See for example J.P.E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar: Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, ed. Daniel Grimley and Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Charles Edward McGuire, *Elgar's Oratorios: The Creation of an Epic Narrative* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2002); *A Special Flame: The Music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams*, ed. John Norris and Andrew Neill (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2004); *Vaughan Williams Studies*, ed. Alain Frogley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); *Let Beauty Awake: Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Literature* (London: Elgar Editions, 2010); and Matthew Riley, *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

Companion. Despite its bevy of interesting and insightful articles, this anthology failed to provide a much-needed contextual relevance to the Ireland narrative, let alone a unifying thread.

In her unprecedented overview of the complex system of personal musical symbols and images within Ireland's work, Fiona Richards has come closest to revealing the mechanisms behind Ireland's complicated façade . For Richards, what Ireland studies lacked was not only a detailed compendium of the composer's disparate influences and biographical details but also a presentation of those elements within a format that framed them in terms of what she considered his chief dualities: country versus city; love versus war; and Anglo-Catholicism versus paganism. Once this framework was applied, one might have assumed that the mystery surrounding Ireland's work would subsequently vanish. This, as reviews made clear, did not happen.[24] While Richards does an expert job in collating information, her book is perhaps best seen as a compendium. This is a consequence of the book's ambitious scale: in her efforts to survey so much of Ireland's music, Richards is limited in the amount of attention she can devote to specific pieces, and, as with *The John Ireland Companion*, a unifying thread is not always evident. While *The Music of John Ireland* is therefore a considered and valuable resource for any aspiring Ireland scholar or performer, the book does not resolve the issues of categorization, character, or meaning that have plagued Ireland studies for over a century.

Ireland studies now stand at a critical juncture: is Ireland fated to remain 'difficult to place', or does he inhabit a category that previous critics have failed to identify? This thesis

[24] In particular, see Hurd, 674-675 and David Wright, 'Dead and Gone', *Musical Times*, 142 (2001), 58-59. Wright identified several unanswered questions in Richards's book and also bemoaned the lack of a biographical backbone to give her wide-ranging study cohesion.

contends that the enigma of Ireland is not a pitfall for the researcher; rather, the enigma itself is the subject. Ireland abides between conventional categories, these gaps themselves constituting distinctive and legitimate subgenres. It is one of the most astounding ironies in British music studies that the legend with which to decode Ireland's music and consequently place him, and which has never yet been the focus of a single large-scale musicological study, was provided by the man himself: "How *can* they understand my music, if they've never read [Arthur] Machen?"[25]

The story of Ireland's first encounter with Machen's work is widely referenced:

> I first came across Machen's work some time in 1906 when I saw the first edition of *The House of Souls* as a Mackie's library 'remainder' on a bookstall at Penrith station in Cumberland. Some fate led me to pounce on it, and I have been a worshipper of Machen ever since. I did not meet him personally till 1933, when I was in my fifty-fourth year. I could say a good deal about his work, its influence on myself and my own work and something on the Master as I met him.

Ireland proceeded to praise 'the astounding qualities' of Machen's work, 'at which I never cease to marvel.' [26]

In his private correspondence, Ireland was similarly enthusiastic, describing Machen's writing as 'curious and different from anything else I have ever come across'.[27] Titles of Machen's works are littered throughout these letters, often with precise details of editions (publication dates, cost, binding-material, etc.).[28] Ireland regularly recommends Machen's books to correspondents as reading material. Socially, Ireland was always curious

[25] Quoted in Muriel Searle, *John Ireland: The Man and His Music* (Turnbridge Well: Midas Books, 1979), 30.
[26] Quoted in *The John Ireland Companion*, 126. Muriel Searle's version of this story places Ireland at Charing Cross Station. See Searle, 29-30. Norah Kirby, Ireland's housekeeper and indefatigable promoter, intimated that Ireland successively read everything Machen ever published. The inventory of Ireland's private library is no longer complete as the collection has been relocated several times since Kirby's death, but one can find copies of all of Machen's major works in the library, some of which appear in multiple editions.
[27] See London, British Library, John Ireland: Letters to Rev. Kenneth Thompson, MS. 60356 (31 December 1936), fol. 17.
[28] John Ireland: Personal Correspondence (John Longmire), MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (24 March 1950), fol. 120.

to know details about Machen from friends who had met or corresponded with the writer, and he was also quick to compare circumstances in his own life with those of Machen's.[29] But these are details common to the behaviour of many consumer enthusiasts or 'fans'. What is significant is the way in which Ireland positions Machen in relation to himself and the extent to which he credits Machen for his own accomplishments. As Ireland explained to Longmire, '[Machen] well knows of my opinion of him, and my gratitude for the revelation his works have given me. He is truly a great man, and a seer.'[30] Literature is a frequent subject of Ireland's correspondence, and other authors are periodically invoked in laudatory terms, as we shall see – but to no other artist does Ireland ever indicate this degree of an artistic debt.

Beyond these instances of praise, however, Ireland never ventures. Again, he 'could say a good deal about his work, its influence on myself and my own work and something on the Master as I met him', but he never did. The hermeneutic window is thus left open to researchers. Ireland's declaration that his work must be read in tandem with Machen's – itself a remarkable disclosure for a notoriously inscrutable man – has been largely ignored or treated lightly by previous studies, an absence which suggests a belief that Ireland may have been speaking hyperbolically or that Machen's influence is self-evident and requires no elucidation. Scholars routinely reference the composer's affection for Machen, but they do not explore precisely how this dependency manifests itself in the music or in Ireland's personal life beyond a shared interest in 'shadowy beliefs and practices' and a vague feeling that Machen and Ireland 'possessed a profound feeling for the *genius loci*' and for those 'old

[29] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (17 April 1957), fol. 99.
[30] London, British Library, MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (28 June 1938), fol. 1. This is the first letter Ireland wrote to Longmire; their friendship appears to have stemmed from a joint interest in Machen.

unhappy far-off things' which suggest 'pagan rites and Druidic sacrifices, whose memory seems still to haunt certain remote and unfrequented places in the English countryside.'[31] Machen's influence is brusquely characterized by these scholars as a sort of shared pantheistic nature mysticism. It is this, they contend, that establishes in Ireland a 'strangeness and otherness, the feeling that "Something lies beyond the scene"' as Machen's work 'hovers…[like] a winged epigraph, over all of Ireland's mature music.'[32]

The precise dynamic of this relationship has proved difficult to assess. Evans simply wrote that Machen's literary suggestions are treated 'decoratively' by the composer.[33] In a discursive essay, Colin Scott-Sutherland acknowledged that in certain pieces there was 'no question about the influence of Machen'; nevertheless, he regarded Machen as 'not so much an influence as an impact – a catalyst that brought to the surface that spirit of place which Ireland, perhaps even unconsciously, had felt from quite an early date.'[34] Machen engendered a recognition, not a revelation. Again, there is a habit in the literature of asserting Machen's influence without clarification:

> The composer, in spite of dedicating several important works to Machen, has refused to concede a direct interpretation of any actual scenes or events in the author's works. Yet, as in *Legend*, a piece for piano and orchestra and also dedicated to Machen, there is evoked an atmosphere of a very striking character. This has been observed as a musical response to Machen's texts.[35]

The author of this text, like others, did not demonstrate how this 'musical response' is manifested.[36]

---

[31] Jocelyn Brooke in Foreman (2011), 353. Such statements also denigrate the centrality of urban landscapes to both Machen's and Ireland's output.
[32] Hold, 187.
[33] Evans (1919), 215.
[34] Quoted in Foreman (2011), 126.
[35] Vernon Yenne, *Three Twentieth Century English Composers: Peter Warlock, E.J. Moeran and John Ireland* (DMA Thesis: University of Illinois, 1969), 220.
[36] Yenne boldly paints Ireland along with Peter Warlock, Arnold Bax, Cecil Gibbs, Herbert Howells, and E.J. Moeran as 'escapist composers', adding that 'What they had in common was a gentle but capable delivery of

Stephen Banfield considers the 'key point' in Machen's importance to Ireland to be stylistic rather than topical: an emulation of 'the complete subjectivity of the approach' to material. Ireland's subjectivity was expressed by 'submitting himself to the imagery in his texts and expressing in music, not the images themselves but the states of mind and feeling that they inspired.'[37] Though in some cases true, this statement speaks only to Ireland's use of poetry for explicit use in his songs; it does not consider Ireland's instrumental music, nor does it address Ireland's use of Machen's texts at all. Furthermore, none of Ireland's songs use texts by Machen; additional explanation is therefore needed to justify the evocation of his name within the context of his vocal repertoire. When Machen's words are quoted in the composer's works, it is in the form of epigraphs, and Banfield, along with others, does not address how this might reframe the discussion of Machen's interpretive relevance.

In *The Music of John Ireland*, Richards addresses Machen's influence but does not contribute substantially to our understanding of its precise manifestation in Ireland's life and work. Her discussion of Machen is largely a restatement, sometimes verbatim, of earlier writings by Jocelyn Brooke, Colin Scott-Sutherland, and Muriel Searle. In Richards's assessment, Machen appealed to Ireland because of his effective 'mixture of fantasy, horror story and mystery' with 'delicate descriptions of places and sensations [that] produce a positively physical, sensual effect…'[38] It was an aesthetic correlation made manifest through a combination of stylistic and topical elements that responded with Ireland because of their symbolist affiliations. For Richards, what unified Machen with Ireland was precisely this

---

an impassioned expression even though not based on a convincing philosophical foundation.' The dissertation includes no discussion whatsoever of any of these composers' 'philosophical foundation[s].' See Yenne, 212-213.

[37] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 164-165.

[38] Fiona Richards, *The Music of John Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 65.

shared residency in the domain of fin-de-siècle symbolism, particularly in that movement's ties to visual imagery and pagan mythology. Though a full analysis of its presence in Machen's work is lacking, Richards's discussion of the god Pan's presence in Ireland's work is outstanding, as is her placement of Pan within the context of fin-de-siècle British music. To designate Machen a symbolist, however, is not only to disregard Machen's own perspective regarding his relationship with the symbolist movement but also to overlook the variety and subtly of his literary aesthetic; this in turn limits the ways in which one might read his oeuvre in tandem with Ireland's compositions.[39]

If Ireland studies are to contribute anything of further use to our understanding of this composer and by extension to our appreciation of twentieth-century English music, it must finally grapple with the issue of what made Ireland so enamoured of writings by this distinctive writer. Literary scholarship over the past half-century has determined that Machen's true stylistic identity lies within the genre of 'weird fiction', a subgenre of late-nineteenth century Gothic fiction. It was this aspect of weirdness or strangeness, which Machen esteemed as 'the essence of beauty…the essence of truth, and the essence of the world',[40] that found parallel expression in Ireland's life and music, establishing a complex

[39] At best, Machen's role in Richards's understanding of Ireland is peripheral. At its worst, Richard's representation of Machen's worldview is problematic and, at times, demonstrably false. For example, Richards incorrectly defines Machen's notion of 'ecstasy', the central term in his aesthetic treatise, as 'often wine-induced, and disconnected from place.' See Richards (2000), 65. Likewise, Richards unfairly equates this 'ecstasy' with that of Sylvia Townsend Warner whose writings, though inspired by Machen, are starkly different from his in both style and worldview. Compare, for example, Machen's conception of the satanic, discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, with the folksy 'charm' of Townsend Warner's Devil in *Lolly Willowes* (1926): rather than embodying a Machenesque violation of the natural order in its most sinful form, Townsend Warner's Devil manifests 'the dignity of natural behaviour and untrammelled self-fulfilment.' See Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Lolly Willowes* (London: Penguin Classics, 2020), 159-160. Richards's more recent publications about Ireland reiterate her rather vague definition of what his music has in common with Machen's literature: for her, they share a 'sense of feyness' that revolves largely around a shared attraction to neolithic sites. See Fiona Richards, 'John Ireland's *Mai-Dun*: Composite Influences', in *The Symphonic Poem in Britain: 1850-1950*, ed. Michael Allis and Paul Watt (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), 278-304.

[40] Arthur Machen, *The London Adventure: Or, The Art of Wandering* (London: M. Secker, 1924), 127.

pattern of symbols and narrative structures that exalted in the 'unknowable…[and] unplumbed depth' of its subjects and of the artist himself.[41]

Defining 'The Weird'

Before this study can proceed to discuss parallels with Ireland's life and music, an overview of weird literary aesthetics and Machen's contribution to the genre of weird fiction is essential.

> The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be 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.[42]

In 1990, S.T. Joshi sought to reintroduce H.P. Lovecraft's concept of 'the weird tale' through an analytical survey of its founding constituents despite his own acknowledgement that it is probably impossible to give a satisfactory definition of the genre that would cover all of its representatives. The issue is built into the terminology, 'weirdness' being not so much a topical feature but an affect, 'a given sensation'; the weird tale, like similarly predisposed horror fiction, is defined by the emotional state it conjures within the reader.[43] This difficulty notwithstanding, Joshi proposed that perhaps the weird tale did not exist as a genre at all, at least in the conventional sense, but rather 'as *the consequence of a world view*.'[44] From this perspective, writers are to be judged not by their adherence to the formal patterns of an

[41] Ibid, 71.
[42] H.P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (London: Dover Publications, 1973), 15. The first version of this study was published in 1927.
[43] 'Atmosphere is the all-important thing, for the final criterion of authenticity is not the dovetailing of plot but the creation of a given sensation.' Ibid, 16.
[44] S.T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale: Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M.R. James, Ambrose Bierce, and H.P. Lovecraft* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 1. The emphasis is in the original.

established tradition but on an individual basis for their singular utilization of schematizations of weirdness that function '*precisely in accordance with their* [the author's] *philosophical predisposition*.' It is therefore only possible to understand the content and significance of weird writers fully once one has absorbed and elucidated their idiosyncratic world views because, Joshi contends, 'it was those world views that led them to write the sort of literature they did.'[45]

Joshi's study serves as an edifying example of the difficulties in critiquing weird fiction. The porousness, elasticity, and indeterminacy of the weird tale are part of its design; it is enigmatic. And though Joshi's definition, along with the thrust of Lovecraft's from which it is descended, has become increasingly popular amongst literary and cultural theorists, there remain as many definitions of the weird as there are readers. As such, weird fiction goes by a number of names in the critical literature, being variously referred to as 'ghost stories', 'supernatural fiction', 'fantasy', 'fin-de-siècle Gothic', or 'horror'.[46] This phenomenon arises again out of a malleability inherent within the genre: weird fiction can not only parasitically attach to pre-existing genres but may also wriggle into cracks between those genres. It 'exists in the interstices' of traditional classification systems, appearing in multiple and sometimes seemingly contradictory stylistic frameworks simultaneously.[47] In the present study, 'weird fiction' or 'the weird' serves as an umbrella term for these assorted manifestations in that it transcends their more specialist confines by emphasizing the one element that they consistently share: a preoccupation with 'weirdness'.

[45] Ibid, 10.
[46] S.T. Joshi, *The Modern Weird Tale* (London: McFarland, 2001), 1-3.
[47] Ann VanderMeer and Jeff VanderMeer, *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories* (London: Corvus, 2011), xvi.

Weirdness is a synonym for strangeness, for whatever is unusual or abnormal in comparison to a conventional system; it belies our expectations. In exploiting the weird, there is a 'fascination with darkness and irrationality', frequently embodied in 'the focus on unorthodox states of consciousness and perception', the projection of apocalypse and chaos, and above all the preoccupation with timeless 'moments' and 'visions'.[48] Weirdness ordinarily appears as an exploration of the intrusion of a principle upon its opposite and the resulting disequilibrium that arises out of this convergence: the polarization of ethical and social behaviour in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), the discrepancy between inward and outward expressions of sin in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), or Sheridan Le Fanu's pivoting of conventional and unconventional sexual desires and identities in *Carmilla* (1872), for example. In dealing with tropes of paired opposites such as pastoral versus anti-pastoral; new versus old; revelation versus delusion; purity versus corruption; real versus imagined, among many others, it is crucial to an understanding of weirdness to accept that enlightenment is not always gained from these encounters. The object of the writer who dabbles in weirdness is often merely to present the weird, even to revel in it, but not necessarily to exorcise its weirdness through explanation: 'The Weird represents a clear quest not just to understand the inexplicable; it represents a *fascination* that at times embraces the inexplicable, eschewing the terror of such a search.'[49] By feeding on unorthodox methods and materials, weirdness becomes 'an alternative path for exploration of the numinous' and

[48] Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story form Le Fanu to Blackwood* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978), 2. These may be compared to Wordsworth's 'spots of time' or Virginia Woolf's 'moments of being'. See Virginia Woolf, 'Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. J. Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002), 86.

[49] VanderMeer, xvii. Jack Sullivan considers this to be the fundamental difference between the weird tale, which he refers to out of the convention of 1970s literary scholarship as a 'ghost story', and science fiction or detective stories. These latter forms 'progress toward clarity, transparency, and explicit illumination of a puzzle or concept…[T]hey invariably explain themselves', whereas ghost stories 'sabotage the relationship between cause and effect…Instead of lighting up, the stories darken into shadowy ambiguity…' See Sullivan, 134.

a technique for experimenting in those areas where science or religion have proved ostensibly insufficient.[50]

We deduce more about the weird from its historical roots. Flourishing during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, weird fiction is both the product of and a reaction against a variety of disparate stylistic movements from fin-de-siècle literature. Its thematic tendencies and association with aspects such as the supernatural, eerie landscapes, and necromancy stemmed from nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. Here, the effectiveness of a literature's Gothic element relied directly on the ontological uncertainty of a subtle rupture between the boundary of what is real and what is imagined.[51] Characters are often uncertain how to perceive a given situation because they are unsure whether or not they perceive it at all. What chiefly distinguished the Gothic from its weird successor concerned the issue of affect, instigated by a difference in tone – to unsettle without explanation – and how this displayed itself in the imaginative devices of a story. To illustrate this difference through the example of ghosts, Jack Sullivan contrasted what he saw as 'the impotence of the largely decorative Gothic ghosts' with 'the modern actively loathsome, menacing quality' of fin-de-siècle and post-War ghosts in weird fiction.[52] It is this 'menacing' streak, implying a mounting and unassuageable tension, that chiefly distinguishes weird fiction from the Gothic not merely by its existence but by its sadistic pleasure in frightening the reader without the promise of resolution, let alone consolation.[53]

---

[50] VanderMeer, xvii.
[51] See, for example, Margaret Carter, '*Fiend, Spectre, or Delusion?': Narrative Doubt and the Supernatural in Gothic Fiction* (PhD Thesis: University of Michigan Press, 1986).
[52] Sullivan, 6.
[53] Using a term coined by J.R.R. Tolkien in his 'On Fairy Stories' (1947), Jane Stevenson has argued that English popular fiction is 'eucatastrophic' in its demand for '[the] Consolation of the Happy Ending.' Stevenson traces this demand through the English thriller in which, however unpleasant the intervening journey, a conclusion and explanation are ultimately provided. See Jane Stevenson, *Baroque Between the Wars: Alternative Style in the Arts, 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 101. The weird draws

Symbolism, a more contemporary relative, played a similarly vital role in weird fiction's formation. In its investiture of symbols with a linguistic scheme that is 'at the best but approximate, essentially but arbitrary', Symbolism provided a way for weirdness to obfuscate its subject further while at the same time revealing new avenues of perception, partaking in what Thomas Carlyle called the 'concealment and yet revelation' of metaphysical truths.[54] Subjects in weird fiction are frequently addressed through such symbols of predominantly abstract metaphor, rarely directly; things are never precisely what they seem. The resulting 'penumbra of vagueness' ensures the reader's fluctuation between degrees of uncertainty and is therefore 'intrinsically ineradicable' to the desired effect; to clarify the symbol would paradoxically be to distort its meaning.[55]

These two strands merged in a third main tributary: Decadence. Decadence was concerned not only with the understanding and appreciation of beauty but with our perception of the material world as a whole. It emerged as 'a counterpoetics of disruption and parody and stylistic derangement' which portrayed 'a belated world, a place of hesitations and contrarieties and exhaustions.'[56] Linda Dowling considers Decadence in this sense to be a post-philogical moment as language became increasingly self-referential, hence autonomous.[57] There is a constant allusion in fin-de-siècle Decadent literature to 'the total

---

together elements of the fairy tale and detective story, but it differs in its thwarting of resolution – its favouring of sustaining the anxiety of uncertainty beyond the final page.

[54] Quoted in Arthur Symons, *Symbolist Movement in Literature* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2014), 38. (Originally published 1899).

[55] Philip Wheelwright, 'The Archetypal Symbol', in *Perspectives in Literary* Symbolism, ed. Joseph Strelka (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 220. China Miévelle calls this aspect of the weird 'a radicalized sublime backwash.' The weird 'does not so much articulate the crisis [of knowledge and being] as that the crisis cannot be articulated.' See China Miévelle, 'Weird Fiction', in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould (London: Routledge, 2009), 487.

[56] Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), xi.

[57] Ibid, 5.

inadequacy of language to express what is meant.'[58] The resulting linguistic effect, often signified by an over-saturation of imagery and intense verbosity, is the medium of much of the hysteria in weird fiction which arises similarly out of language's apparent incapability.[59]

In the writings of the Anglo-Welsh writer Arthur Machen, a primary exponent of the weird in its fin-de-siècle guise, the disparate strands of weird fiction's characteristics and influences similarly merged to characterize an *oeuvre* that Lovecraft considered 'alone in its class' and signaling 'a distinct epoch in the history of supernatural horror'.[60] A prolific and diverse writer in a host of mediums, a fair summation of Machen's oeuvre may nevertheless be offered: he was demonstrably obsessed with 'the awesome and utterly unfathomable mystery of the universe.' It is this 'unfathomable mystery' underlying Machen's worldview and its consequent affect which ultimately qualify his fiction as 'weird'.[61]

Machen's study of weirdness, revolving around discrepancies between perception and actuality, played out in several primary juxtapositions: civilization versus barbarity, the modern versus the pre-historic, and progressivism versus conservatism. His fiction presents and explores these concepts not only through the employment of metaphor but also through the structural and syntactical layout of his writing. His elliptical style, in which elaborate uses of punctuation and imaginative digression blur and complicate the central plot, serves to heighten the overall sense of morbid expectation and disillusionment that characterize weird fiction. There is a scheme of 'rhetorical obfuscation', a 'refusal to name' which, rather than

[58] Ibid, 161.
[59] Walter Pater argued that these features were necessitated by the Decadent process because of what he called a 'perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves' which is the inevitable manner in which we perceive reality. See Walter Pater, *Renaissance: Studies of Art and Poetry* (The Floating Press, 2010), ProQuest EBook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=634130> (accessed 6 November 2018).
[60] Lovecraft, 88.
[61] Joshi, *The Weird Tale*, 13.

hampering our appreciation of the story, only serves to enhance its effect.[62] Machen's narratives are similarly fragmented, their episodic design allowing for expansive asides and sub-plots. Kelly Hurley has noted the reliance of weird fiction's structure on 'contingency': improbable coincidences are the premise of entire plots.[63] This establishes 'a polyphony precisely analogous to the polymorphousness of the material bodies whose actions and reactions' Machen portrays as the carriers of his themes. Characters and images blend 'almost imperceptibly' into another, providing 'points and counterpoints within the larger movement that contains (even as it is defined by) them.'[64]

Machen's settings in which these juxtapositions play out their dialogue are equally suggestive, frequently contrasting urban with rural landscapes. In his urban stories, this includes the perspectives of Machen's characters themselves who, as London denizens perceiving or imagining landscapes external to their known environment, do so from the vantage point of Londoners.[65] Robert Mighall termed this juxtaposition as one of Imperial Gothic versus 'vestigial' Gothic, a bifurcation that saw fin-de-siècle British fiction move simultaneously 'outwards to the margins of the Empire' and 'inwards to focus on the domestic ''savages'' which resided in the very heart of the civilized world.'[66]

Machen similarly transforms urban landscapes into settings for behaviour that is more commonly associated with rural archetypes. In his novel *The Three Imposters* (1895), for example, the burning to death of Joseph Walters which is executed with 'sadistic enjoyment'

---

[62] Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.
[63] Ibid, 159-160.
[64] Susan Jennifer Navarette, *Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1997), 191.
[65] Jane Aaron, *Welsh Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 75.
[66] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 136-137. Mighall is drawing heavily on the work of Arthur Conan Doyle and Joseph Conrad.

is an instance of London becoming 'much more a hell on earth, populated by torturing demons, than [the rural] Caermaen' in Wales with which it is juxtaposed. A rural practice, here implying a 'barbaric' one, takes place within an urban or 'civilized' landscape.[67] This is mirrored in Machen's descriptions of London as a labyrinth, as for instance in his story *A Fragment of Life* (1904).[68]

During an age when city and country environments underwent seismic changes on physical, social, and psychological strata, such episodes were not unusual. Machen and other writers responded to these changes by transforming the urban landscape into what James Donald called 'structures of feeling'; what is real about the cities is ironically their 'intangible qualities' – their atmospheres or personalities.[69] As such, like characters, places undergo changes; they have their own narratives. In borrowing Walter Benjamin's representation of the city as a phantasmagoria, Steve Pile explains that this term implies 'an experience of movement, of a procession of things before the eyes.'[70] In this view, the very 'structures of feeling' Donald describes arise out of the ambivalence of mutability that they suggest. This relates again to Machen's interest in the 'unfathomable'; it is impossible to know a place. This unknowability becomes place's defining feature. For Walter Benjamin, the observer in the city is 'out of place' amidst the incomprehensible motions of a somewhat inhuman city mass, provoking in him a mixture of fear, revulsion, and horror towards the strange and

[67] Jane Aaron, 79. The placename 'Caermaen' is a thinly disguised version of the Roman village near Caerleon, Machen's birthplace.
[68] Arthur Machen, *The White People and Other Weird Stories* (London: Penguin, 2011), 217. These descriptions will be addressed in Chapter 2.
[69] Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), 2-3.
[70] This practice of psychogeography is indicative of Machen's debt to symbolism because a phantasmagoria similarly evokes the importance of a further, intangible dimension existing beneath a surface structure. See Pile, 3.

suspicious comportment of this faceless monster.[71] This evokes narrative structures with a distinctive rhythm of thought and action. In this way, place becomes a character.

Machen's non-fiction writings, often through the significant use of the word 'queer', similarly attest to this conception of a local unknown. He makes repeated reference in his second memoir, *The London Adventure* (1924), to London's 'queer outland territories' and 'the general queerness' of its structures. Recalling a typical ambulation, he describes this experience in vivid detail:

> [I thought] of the streets of which I meant to write: unknown, unvisited squares of Islington, dreary byways in Holloway, places traversed by railway arches and viaducts in the regions of Camden Town…and well I remember adding how once I had some mission to execute in waste portions of the world beyond the Surrey Docks. I took an omnibus…and went, I think…into something unshapen that I had never visited before; into places that might have been the behind the scenes of the universe; bearing, indeed, much the same relation to the ordinary London view as do the back of the backcloth and the backs of the wings to the gay set that the audience admires from the stalls. Everything was shapeless, unmeaning, dreary, dismal beyond words; it was as if one were journeying past the back wall of the everlasting backyard.[72]

Even in those areas of London 'most familiar to me', Machen could find himself feeling 'disoriented' to the extent that 'north and south, east and west had no more meaning.'[73]

In his rural landscapes, Machen likewise probed the ontological disparities of place. Weirdness is an integral feature of the British conception of rural landscape during the *fin de siècle*. The notion that the countryside was 'likely to encourage the development of healthy minds and bodies' was in fitting with a host of Victorian pseudo-scientific theories. The purity of the rural was contrasted by 'the deleterious effects of urbanization and industrialization', and these contrasting worlds – 'worlds' in multiple senses, including the

[71] Benjamin reaches this conclusion in his own analysis of the *flaneur* in Baudelaire's writing. See Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essay on Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Michael William Jennings (London: Belknap, 2006), 186-190.
[72] Arthur Machen, *The London Adventure: Or, The Art of Wandering* (London: M. Secker, 1924), 11.
[73] Ibid, 140-141.

establishment of an otherness and foreignness – helped cultivate an artistic movement in multiple mediums attempting to explore the interaction between and meaning of these divergent landscapes.[74] Rural landscapes – whether through the inclusion of Gothic structures such as ruins, mythological creatures like Pan, or metaphorical symbols like Death – furthermore became settings where Machen's brand of weirdness could exploit the psychological impact of perceived ambiguities within equivocal topographies.[75]

Machen's narratives thus exploited environments which not only merged the rural with the urban but also blended elements of fiction with fantasy. The resulting frisson of contingency is a cornerstone of his weird fiction.[76] Whether in a rural or an urban landscape, Machen achieves the same effect: he de-familiarizes the familiar by making the domestic foreign.[77]

---

[74] Eric Saylor, *English Pastoral Music: From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900-1955* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 100.

[75] See Erwin Panofsky, 'Et in Arcadia Ego', in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Oxford 1936), 295-320. For a discussion of the cultivation of the Gothic school of the English picturesque – this 'shift from a universalizing pastoral' to a more nationalistic pastoral 'that treated real domestic locations as worthy subjects' – during the eighteenth century, see Stephen Groves, 'The Sound of the English Picturesque in the Age of the Landscape Garden', *Eighteenth Century Music*, 9.2 (2012), 185-212.

[76] Writers of Machen's generation were confronted with a linguistic challenge concerning how they ought to convey this sense of weirdness in pastoral settings. In detailing the exacerbating impact of the First World War on this stylistic crisis, Paul Fussell noted the insufficiency of 'high' diction as it had existed previously to describe with appropriate bluntness and 'ironic realism' the horrors of modern warfare and the resultingly altered topography of modern life. See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 23. He writes also of the ironic usefulness of English pastoralism for writers in that the ironist 'has it both ways: he marks the distance between the desirable and the actual and at the same time provides an oasis for his brief occupancy.' Drawing from Northrop Frye, Fussell is describing here the investiture of war with the 'symbolic status…of the ultimate anti-pastoral.' See Fussell, 231-239.

[77] The anxiety underlying this drive to create new landscapes stems from a deeply embedded sadness towards the curtailment of the possibility for adventure or exotic experience in a rapidly globalizing modern age. Weird fiction attempts to correct this diminution by transforming the known world into a landscape for further exploration; there is less of the world to discover, therefore we must discover more about the world we think we already know. Patrick Brantlinger, 'Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914', in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, ed. Lyn Pykett (London: Longman Addison Wesley Limited, 1996), 187. By destabilizing familiar environments, Machen and other weird writers sought consciously to make home rather than abroad into an unspoiled, quasi-imaginary landscape containing strange and newfangled happenings. As Machen wrote, '[the] unknown world is, in truth, about us everywhere', and 'the thinnest veil separates us from it; the door in the wall of the next street communicates with it.' See *The London Adventure*, 100.

What unifies the disparate strands in weird fiction's landscapes, influences, and characters is the exploitation of uncertainty in their narratives, and the 'atmosphere' which Lovecraft considered the genre's defining feature relies on this very principle. Weird fiction's propagation of the indeterminacy of truth or experience is closely aligned with that of mysticism in fin-de-siècle England. Though it may take many forms, mysticism's central claim during this time was that there exists a deeper reality beneath the surface that we see, and that the nature of this reality may not be transcribed into any form other than its own. As William James said of the mystical state in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, the 'quality must be directly experienced.' In this way, James continued, 'mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect' that cannot be imparted to others.[78]

In weird fiction, this philosophy is applied to literature itself. There is a central narrative, but the most important events take place off-stage, so to speak; the reason for the plot's existence is at most glimpsed only in periphery. This applies equally to both desirable and undesirable scenarios, to depictions of both good and evil. A well-known example may be found in Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890). This story revolves entirely around the sexual exploits of Helen Vaughan, her aberrant behavior coercing otherwise respectable men to commit suicide. However, the precise details of Helen's doings are never divulged. Her victims are unable to repeat the things they have heard or the things they have seen, but they assure their listener that they have indeed seen them. 'Yes, seen', one of them confides, 'I have seen the incredible, such horrors that even I myself sometimes stop in the middle of the

[78] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 2013), 430. For a superb overview of mysticism's origins and influence on early twentieth-century English culture, see Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 17-50.

street and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live.'[79] Later, a book is discovered containing drawings of Helen engaged by night on distant shores in acts of 'strange monstrous evil' with mythological creatures, and from such vague accounts the reader is left to intuit the sexually deviant nature of the story which is, after all, its *raison d'être*.[80]

While in some ways *The Great God Pan* was characteristic of the 'sex-inquisitiveness' that Holbrook Jackson observed in literature of the 1890s, it is this ambiguity of representation which permitted weird fiction to dabble in subjects like the sexual that were otherwise banned from acceptable discourse.[81] Decadent fiction of this decade, including several weird tales, for example, has been noted for its allegorical depiction of aberrant sexual behaviour. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick considered the attraction of this literature to middle-class adolescents to be 'its promise of initiatory shortcuts to the secret truths of adult hood [sic].' Sedgwick further esteemed the Gothic to be 'the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality', especially considering its utilization of Oedipal family dynamics and 'absolutes of license and prohibition' encompassing incest, violence, and an overall 'fascinated proscription of sexual activity.'[82] This fixation was facilitated by the representation of such activity through indirect means, allowing succeeding

[79] Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light* (London: Grant Richards, 1913), 57.
[80] See Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, ed. Lyn Pykett (London: Longman Addison Wesley Limited, 1996), 47-63. The interest in characters who shift between forms and modes may have been influenced by techniques in late Victorian drama which relied on the versatility of characters and their 'mesmerizing movement back and forth between demonism and saintliness.' See Nina Auerbach, *Private Theatricals: The Lives of the Victorians* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 77-82. It may be significant that Machen spent some years working as an actor after the death of his first wife.
[81] Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 127.
[82] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 90-91.

weird writers like Machen to overcome the 'conspiracy of silence' regarding erotic depiction that Henry James denounced in Anglo-Saxon literature.[83]

Evoking the sexual by means of illustration here is apt because transgression rests at the heart of the weird and was key to its commercial appeal. Even when Machen and other weird writers supported a culturally conservative agenda of an essentially Catholic morality, some readers were attracted to them for strikingly divergent reasons.[84] The innocents portrayed in weird tales are often, like the reader, at some level seeking corruption.[85] This unsavoury aspect of weird art led to its condemnation by *fin de siècle* critics like Max Nordau who, though they often decried it in hysterical prose, were not altogether misguided in directing concern toward the effect of 'degenerate' art on 'the impressionable young'.[86] In dealing with what cannot be named, weird fiction raises, but significantly does not answer, the moral question of whether or not those things are supposed to be named.[87]

For Nordau, the reader is therefore vulnerable because this literature, with its evasion of full disclosure, demands participation: the writer and the reader become accomplices in the realization of a weird text. 'All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.'[88] Oscar Wilde's admonition from the preface to his own foray into the weird entertains the danger

[83] Henry James, *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. James. E. Miller, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 145-147.
[84] Jackson, 127.
[85] It is often uncertain in these tales whether the corruption of one's innocence was sought and therefore self-fulfilling or the result of an external, pre-determined inevitability; this uncertainty is part of the weird design. Unsurprisingly, the innocents are often children. For instances of this polarity in decadent literature and in works advocating aestheticism while flirting with the weird, see Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).
[86] Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, trans. Reinette M. Mccrea (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), viii.
[87] An example of this common trope may be found in Machen's *The Novel of the Black Seal*, where Professor Gregg persists in his quest to uncover forgotten knowledge in spite of his acknowledgement that this may have been lost for the betterment of humanity.
[88] See Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 4.

lurking in this imaginative process, namely that the reader will discover 'something which is secretly familiar' but which has been restrained through repression, as Freud noted in his essay on the subject.[89]

The writer's own role in this venture is displayed through a pattern of equivocation in terms of self-definition that David Punter found 'inherent' in practitioners of the weird. The writer's unwillingness to explain either themselves or their work is a calculated effort.[90] This absence of evidence requires speculation. The text thereby becomes a canvas for the reader's private imagination, bolstering the belief that we discover what we desire through art, or rather art reveals to us our latent desires. [91] This explains why the establishment anxieties which arise from disparities of place and character are likewise present in the themes that weird fiction explores. What distinguishes weird writers is the ambivalence they seem to express towards the outcome of their fictional conflicts. The reader is never entirely certain what the author's moral position on a subject is. Sorcery and sanctity, for example, two notions which dominate Machen's output, ostensibly stand in direct opposition. Nevertheless, as Machen wrote in *The White People*, 'Each is an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common.' What they share is 'a transcendent effort to surpass the ordinary bound', a desire to violate the natural law. There is a moral haze undergirding the perception of evil in these forms: 'So with the sinners, as with the saints.'[92] When Ambrose, the character who speaks these words, is pressed for a more precise definition of what he means, he gives no

[89] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 245.
[90] David Punter, *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 157.
[91] In deflecting criticisms concerning the morality of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde made a pertinent observation on this point: 'Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray's sins are no one knows. He who finds them has brought them.' Quoted in Stuart Mason, *Oscar Wilde: Art and Morality – a Defence of The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Jacobs, 1908), 69-70.
[92] Machen (2011), 111-117.

direct answer. As the story proceeds, it is crucial that the reader is left unsure how they are meant to interpret the moral implications of the narrative's sentiment. The elements in Machen's story are neither praised nor vilified; the case is merely presented.

This moral ambivalence is key to the *fin de siècle* conception of weirdness and sustains its peculiar numinosity. If anything, in Machen's writing there is a tone of disappointment towards the materialism of the age which, in labouring to suppress sanctity as well as evil, seems to 'have no inclination either for ascents or descents.' In either direction, the modern age is numb to an ecstatic experience which, for Machen, it is the highest aspiration of the weird to reawaken. In its weird guise, literature at its purest returns to man his thrill of a universal mystery, of 'cosmic horror'.[93] Ecstasy, which Machen christens the 'word of the enigma', is that elusive quality in a weird work which kindles an 'ancient eternal desire of man for the unknown.'[94] Rather than attempt to disperse the text's equivocations, the reader must assume a psychological state which receives the author's work delivered through the medium of 'analogies…[which] suggest rather than prove' the substance they express.[95] Art, in its secular form, becomes the medium for a re-initiation into the 'miraculous otherness' to which modern humanity has become blinded.[96] Machen stated this view unequivocally:

> For literature, as I see it, is the art of describing the indescribable; the art of exhibiting symbols which may hint at the ineffable mysteries behind them; the art of the veil, which reveals what it conceals.[97]

---

[93] Lovecraft, 12-17.
[94] Arthur Machen, *Hieroglyphics: A Note Upon Ecstasy in Literature* (London: Unicorn Press, 1960), 45.
[95] Ibid, 23.
[96] For an introduction to the function of ecstasy in Machen's fiction, see Nicholas Freeman, 'Arthur Machen: Ecstasy and Epiphany', *Literature and Theology*, 24.3 (2010), 242-255.
[97] Arthur Machen, *Beneath the Barley: A Note on the Origins of Eleusinia* (London: printed privately, 1931), 2. The epistemological aspirations of mysticism noted by Henry James to be not only experiences by also 'states of knowledge' have a similar ring to them. See James, 533.

In Machen's fiction, holiness and evil provide an escape for humanity's mass of 'indifferent, mixed-up creatures…[who] muddle through the world without realizing the meaning and the inner sense of things.'[98] It may be the case, as Machen suggested, that one cannot survive an experience of spiritual truth in either mode untainted. In *The Great God Pan*, Mary, the subject of a medical procedure which allows her to glimpse the god Pan, was driven insane by the encounter; the lifting of the veil drew a curtain across her sanity.[99] Nevertheless, while the potential sacrosanctity of the descent exists alongside an ever-present risk of physical contamination and spiritual damnation, both outcomes share at least the possibility of a transcendent experience; they are forms of ecstasy. For Machen and other weird writers, art at least suggests if not transcribes both experiences. The discourse is circular: the weird enables revelation by being both the result and the cause of itself.

Reading Music and Literature in Tandem

Over the last half-century, a growing body of musicological research has expanded the ways in which music may be analysed through the lens of literary source material.[100]

[98] Machen (2011), 111-117.

[99] Interestingly, Max Nordau wrote disapprovingly about an experimental brain surgery which would cause an array of sensory impressions which is strikingly akin to the operation described in *The Great God Pan*. See Nordau, 46-49.

[100] See, for example, Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Michael Leslie Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music, Musical Meaning, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Peter Dayan, *Music Writing Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative, Musical Meaning, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Brad Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce, and Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Steven Paul Scher, *Verbal Music in German Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900: Representations of Music, Science, and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Helen Abbott, *Baudelaire in Song: 1880-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Stephen Benson, *Literary Music: Writing Music in Contemporary Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); and Marshall Brown, *The Tooth that Nibbles at the Soul: Essays on Music and Poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

Though their methods vary, these texts all acknowledge the 'deep-structural convergences' between music and literature, including aspects of form, subject, and style. These 'convergences' provide the ideal conditions for tandem readings.[101] Musicologists working in the field of British music have contributed to this field, and hermeneutic approaches to British repertoire of the early twentieth century now constitute a significant area of research.[102]

The premise of such hermeneutic studies is that musical meaning, if it exists, is not fixed but active; it is not reducible to any single, unequivocal proclamation but rather a process in which meaning is continuously, though never entirely, teased out.

> Music nearly always has potential meaning in an intersubjective or cultural sense, even if it rarely has meaning in a simple enunciatory sense…Musical meaning discloses what the imagetext's [sic] richness of representational content necessarily dissembles: the radically ascriptive nature of all interpretation. It embodies the recognition – the problem, the opportunity, the danger, the pleasure – that meaning is improvised, not reproduced, performed not revealed.[103]

The irresolvable ambiguity of musical meaning is a consequence of the paradox that art, in the words of Daniel Albright, is 'both a language and a not-language'. Whatever its original medium, artistic meaning necessarily manifests as language; nevertheless, art also exists in a space 'where it has no meaning – indeed where the concept of meaning has no meaning,'

---

[101] Lawrence Kramer, 'Dangerous Liaisons: The Literary Text in Musical Criticism', *19th-Century Music*, 13.2 (Autumn 1989), 161-167.

[102] See, for example, Richard Greene, 'A Musico-Rhetorical Outline of Holst's *Egdon Heath*', *Music & Letters*, 73.2 (1992), 244-267; Daniel Grimley, 'Music, Landscape, and the Sound of Place: On Hearing Delius's *Song of the High Hills*', *The Journal of Musicology*, 33.1 (Winter 2016), 11-44; Michael Allis, *British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010); *Joseph Holbrooke: Composer, Critic, and Musical Patriot*, ed. Paul Watt and Anne-Marie Forbes (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); Alain Frogley, 'Vaughan Williams and Thomas Hardy: *Tess* and the Slow Movement of the Ninth Symphony,' *Music & Letters*, 68.1 (1987), 42-59; Ceri Owen, *Vaughan Williams, Song, and the Idea of 'Englishness'* (DPhil Thesis: University of Oxford, 2014); and Michael Allis, 'Reading Music Through Literary Scholarship: Granville Bantock, Shelley, and *The Witch of Atlas*', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 36.1 (2017), 6-28.

[103] Lawrence Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Towards a Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 170.

thus rendering the artwork simultaneously 'relatable' and 'ineffable.'[104] Dancing between the knowable and unknowable is the purpose of hermeneutics. Recourse to literature for analogous aspects of form, subject, and style furnishes musicologists with rich hermeneutic windows, allowing the literary metaphor to flicker 'midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace' in order to actualise musical meaning.[105] For Ireland, Machen's work provides this archive of 'constructive descriptions' and therefore helps to tease out the potential meanings intimated by the 'not-language' of musical material.[106]

How to tease out musical meaning, even within an interdisciplinary context whose parallels appear alluringly axiomatic, is a matter of debate. As a subjective, interpretative enterprise, the link between musical and extra-musical material is never settled. For some, it defies analysis. Carl Dahlhaus, for example, asserted that there is an 'ineffable tie' between the music of Arnold Schoenberg and Gustav Mahler and the art of the Viennese Secession, but he protested that 'we cannot pinpoint it technically without doing interpretative injustice to these pieces.'[107] Dahlhaus's wariness of interdisciplinary analysis is representative of the view that hermeneutics is a process in which the artwork 'is meant to be dissolved…and restored to the elements whence it came.'[108] The fear is that the artwork's meaning will likewise disappear, either reduced to a stale pile of disassembled parts or, perhaps worse,

[104] Daniel Albright, *Panaesthetics: On the Unity and Diversity of the Arts* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), 8.
[105] Lawrence Kramer, 'Music Metaphor, and Metaphysics', *The Musical Times*, 145 (1988), 14.
[106] Lawrence Kramer, 'Subjectivity Unbound: Music, Language, and Culture', in *Song Acts: Writings on Words and Music* (Boston: Rodopi, 2017), 451-463.
[107] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 207.
[108] Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 81.

fancified into 'a mere placeholder for whatever meaning it is supposed to illustrate given the historical and interpretive framework I [the critic] am bringing to bear on it.'[109]

This thesis attempts neither of these extremes. It perceives the hermeneutic enterprise, in its Kramerian definition, as avoiding the anti-reductionist muddle while also delicately reflecting the antitheoretical predisposition that is endemic to the weird. It is the philosophical direction of this material with which we are concerned. Therefore, this thesis's interdisciplinary approach engages in a constant back-and-forth between Ireland and Machen, music and literature, in order to enact a 'ceremony of the ineffable.'[110] Between interpretative and analytical extremes, it inhabits a hermeneutical middle-ground in which the particularities of art give way to the 'mobile shape' of meaning.[111] That this meaning, being weird, manifests as ultimately unsayable is perhaps its most important and precious quality, reminding us that analysis should not merely 'unmask mystifications' but also reveal the ways 'in which music and, by extension, other art can bring us up against the limits of more discursive forms of articulation.'[112] In shuffling between disciplines and artists, this thesis harnesses these ambiguities in its attempt to generate – or, in Kramer's terms, to improvise – the musical meaning of Ireland's work.

---

[109] Tristan Garcia, quoted in Jon Cogburn, *Garcian Meditations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 13-15. Graham Harman has termed these extremes 'overmining' and 'undermining.' See Graham Harman, 'On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy', in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.Press, 2011), 21-40.

[110] Kramer (2017), 460.

[111] Susanne K. Langer, *Problems of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1957), 48.

[112] Andrew Bowie, 'What Comes After Art?', in *The New Aestheticism*, ed. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 78-79. As James Hepokoski has observed, an element of indulgence is essential to this process: literary texts may readily serve as framing devices for musical works, but only if the listener participates 'by indicating his or her willingness to play the game proposed by the composer.' See James Hepokoski, 'Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss's *Don Juan* Reinvestigated,' in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 136.

This balancing act between revelation and concealment aligns with Machen's belief that everything is ultimately 'ineffable' and that 'both the world without us…and the world within us do perpetually and necessarily transcend all our powers of utterance.'[113] The shepherding of Machen's worldview into the musical space in order to illustrate this principle could not be more appropriate because Machen considered music to be the best equipped of all artforms to express the ineffability of humankind's sacramental nature.[114]

At their best, tandem readings broaden and deepen our understanding of both parties, allowing for a form of interdisciplinary criticism that would be inconceivable if either component were to be viewed in isolation. Therefore, in addition to its contribution to Ireland scholarship, this thesis offers a new perspective of Machen. Ireland's personal reading of Machen, differing significantly from Machen's own politics in some respects, urges us to reconsider the ways in which we ourselves read this literature. Machen's influence has not previously been considered in a musical context. Therefore, Ireland's obsession furthermore widens the footprint of Machen's cultural impact and legacy, showing the extent and depth of his interdisciplinary influence. This thesis therefore rejects the idea that Machen's work, or any literary text for that matter, is 'a singular unity, closed off from other works.' Instead, this thesis seeks to 'open' Machen's texts in such a way that inspires readers to re-examine Machen and his role in British cultural history.[115]

---

[113] Machen (1922), 155.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Michael L. Klein, 'Intertextuality, Topic Theory and the Open Text', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Literature and Music*, ed. Delia da Sousa Correa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 16-17. For discussions of this reciprocal effect of tandem readings, see Steven Paul Scher, *Essays on Literature and Music: 1967-2004*, ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (New York: Rodopi, 2004); John Neubauer, 'Music and Literature: The Institutional Dimensions', in *Music and Text*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3-20; Julia Kristeva, 'The Bounded Text', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 10-36; Steven Paul Scher, 'Literature and Music,' in *Interrelations of Literature*, ed. Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1982), 225-250; and

Structural Outline

Although Ireland's oeuvre is dominated by characters, places, and texts of varyingly erotic scope, this aspect of his work is frequently submerged beneath a game of equivocation that was typical of queer aesthetics during the *fin de siècle*. Allusion and obliquity allowed Ireland, a homosexual and self-described 'pagan', to signal transgressive elements in his music while remaining, albeit begrudgingly, a member of the culturally conservative Catholic middle-class. Contrastingly, Machen was a culturally conservative Anglo-Catholic who infused his work with elements of transgressive eroticism to illustrate horror rather than appeal. The intentions of these two men therefore starkly diverged, but that did not prevent Ireland from linking Machen's texts to his own homoerotically charged compositions. What united Ireland and Machen was their fascination for how artworks, particularly in matters of eroticism, function as hieroglyphs of the unutterable – the way in which the medium of art is both pre- and post-verbal, allowing artists to convey material whose meaning, even if it is intelligible, can never be fully disentangled from its form. They practised the same game of 'saying by not saying'. Read in tandem, Ireland's music and Machen's fiction assume new erotic implications, demonstrating how they were active and intriguing participants in historical, social, and artistic movements well beyond the enclosures to which they are popularly circumscribed. Drawing on theories of eroticism by Ireland's and Machen's early contemporaries (Freud, Krafft-Ebing, Nordau) alongside later theorists of literary and musical eroticism (Barthes, Buch, Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Camille Paglia), Chapter One takes as its case study Ireland's *Decorations* (1912-13). This piano suite is read in tandem with Machen's *The White People* (1904), which supplies the epigraph to the third

Michael Allis, 'Shared Concerns: Thoughts on British Literature and British Music in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 19.1 (2005), 1-33.

movement of Ireland's score. This epigraph opens a hermeneutic window onto the complex geography of the composition's erotic subtext. Hitherto unidentified musical references in Ireland's score to works by Claude Debussy and Richard Wagner are interpreted through this new lens. As a result of this perspective, we may observe how one weird artist (mis-)reads another, exploring the ways in which Ireland exploited aspects of Machen's work to sustain his own aesthetic and a personal interest in 'aberrant' sexuality.

Chapter Two focuses on one of Ireland's most sophisticated yet most critically neglected works: *Ballade of London Nights* (1929) for solo piano. Drawing on archival materials from the British Library and exclusive access to Ireland's surviving personal library, the work's structure and critical reception are examined in relation to Ireland's *London Pieces* (1917-121) and then read in tandem with Machen's London-based, semi-autobiographical novel *The Three Imposters* (1895). Contradictory narrators, multiple and conflicting timelines, and a contentious borderline between reality and fantasy illustrate Machen's belief that cities can never be satisfactorily understood and that the nostalgia his characters feel for their urban past is founded on a series of lies. Disabused of these unreliable memories, the narrative becomes increasingly surreal and macabre as a crisis in place ignites a crisis in self-identity. Conventionally heard within the marginalized context of Ireland's own oeuvre, *Ballade of London Nights* is in fact an expressly interdisciplinary work, modelled precisely on the structure of Machen's novel which subsequently provides a hermeneutic window into the phenomenological implications of Ireland's music. This in turn reveals the extra-literary potentialities of Machen's narratological and thematic concerns within urban space. This chapter draws from critical literature in cultural geography and musico-literary aesthetics to account for the music's sense of nostalgia for an equivocal urban

space. Approaching Ireland and Machen from this perspective encourages a richer understanding of our phenomenological engagement with nostalgia, sound, and the urban environment and underscores parallels between music, literature, and contemporary developments in the perception of urban space.

Chapter Three addresses Ireland's and Machen's treatment of the weird in its pastoral context. Both men lived in London for over half a century, but their oeuvres are dominated as much by rural landscapes as urban ones. They were long-distance walkers, travelling regularly to the English countryside for relief from what they perceived as the 'strain' of urban living; upon retirement, they exchanged central London houses for remote, semi-isolated country cottages. The portrayal of rural landscape in their work, however, avoids any attempt at pastoral escapism. For Ireland and Machen, the pastoral is a landscape and medium of both physical and psychological degeneration; it is where the individual encounters survivals of pre-Christian culture and where presumed notions of self-identity and English heritage begin to fray. As walkers, they were furthermore interested in how the movement of an individual through landscape is reflective of inner subjective experience and how the artist fictionalizes lived experience in an effort to engage with the hidden 'reality' of pastoral space. This chapter sets Ireland's and Machen's depictions of rural landscape alongside one another, investigating how they merged real and fictive landscapes to position their work within a hybrid realm of 'weird geography'. Parallels between the inspiration for Ireland's *Legend for Piano and Orchestra* (1933) and a series of travel articles and short stories written by Machen in the 1920s form the case study for this analysis. This comparison allows us to perceive not only the commonalities between these two artists – in particular, their understanding of sound and movement in pastoral landscape – but also how their

depiction of the weird in its pastoral context is reflective of wider trends in rural experience and development throughout southern England between the First and Second World War.

Chapter Four addresses the relationship between biography and the weird artist. When Lewis Foreman abandoned his attempt to write a biography of Ireland in 2011, he claimed that there were simply too many 'gaps in the documentary record' to sustain a full-length study. Eleven years later, and more than half a century after Ireland's death, a biography of this composer remains non-existent. Machen, more than seventy years after his death, remains likewise without a definitive biographical treatment. Meanwhile, studies of composers like J.S. Bach, Franz Schubert, and others whose evidential records are arguably much sparser continue to appear. This suggests that there are more elements frustrating Ireland's potential biographers than mere 'gaps'. In his 2006 study of H.P. Lovecraft, the most celebrated exponent of the 'weird tale', Michel Houellebecq concluded that all attempts at 'demystification' of this author have failed, leaving Lovecraft's character suspended in 'the aura of strange pathos' typifying his stories; we cannot read Lovecraft in isolation from the Lovecraftian. Ireland, a composer whose style was rooted in literary sources characterized by the unfathomability of human experience and the inability of language to convey what is meant, echoes Houellebecq's representative summation of the weird artist and serves as an illuminating case study in the complexities of weird historiography. Drawing on theories of interpretation outlined by Machen in his literary manifesto, *Hieroglyphics* (1902), Chapter Four examines schematizations of weirdness pertaining to Ireland's and Machen's scrupulously cultivated biographical records through uses of obfuscation, fragmentation, and the resulting evidential delirium. Putting Machen's theories into practice, this chapter argues that Machen's work and persona offer a sophisticated model for artistic identity and

expression; this model demands the potential biographer's acquiescence and imaginative participation as an agent of realization to a degree far greater than that considered generally acceptable. The weird artist, through his work, becomes 'weird' and might only be approachable through a (semi-)fictional enterprise of 'weird biography'.

Chapter 1

The Erotic Weird: Speaking the Unspeakable

Introduction

In his introduction to *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892), Richard von Krafft-Ebing assured concerned readers that he had taken precautions to safeguard his study from the cravings of corrupt individuals:

> The following pages are addressed to earnest investigators in the domain of natural science and jurisprudence. In order that unqualified persons should not become readers, the author saw himself compelled to choose a title understood only by the learned, and also, where possible, to express himself in *terminis technicis*. It seemed necessary also to give certain particularly revolting portions in Latin rather than in German.[1]

One of the most widely discussed studies in the emergent *scientia sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing's text is a litany of nineteenth-century perversions, referred to by their author as 'contrary sexuality'. But deliberate obfuscation in order to thwart what Holbrook Jackson described as a 'craving for forbidden fruit' was inextricably associated with one form of transgression in particular: homosexuality.[2]

This practice extended outside the confines of scientific intelligentsia. It appeared in nineteenth-century literature as 'the visibility of outward appearances' verses 'the invisibility of inner relations.'[3] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick charted the process by which 'knowledge meant sexual knowledge' and 'secrets [meant] sexual secrets'. Secrecy in literature became 'integrally infused' with homosexuality, supplanting its previous application as a broad

[1] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct, a Medico-Legal Study*, trans. Charles Chaddock (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1892), v.
[2] Holbrook Jackson (1922), 127.
[3] See Elisa Glick, 'The Dialectics of Dandyism', *Cultural Critique*, 48 (2001), 129-163. Glick's essay focuses primarily on her reading of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

metaphor for sexuality 'as a whole'. Outside of the fictional universe, Sedgwick went so far as to say that homosexuality 'was distinctly constituted *as* secrecy'. It was as much an epistemological identity as a sexual one, with this nineteenth-century principle of 'to conceal is to confide' extending well-into the lives and work of twentieth-century people.[4]

Just as queer culture often embraced the secrecy imposed on it as a defining feature, so did the rest of society, however unwittingly, participate in this central facet of queer identity: a refusal to name. Krafft-Ebing's wary discretion, exemplified by his description of homosexuality as an 'enigmatical' phenomenon that remains 'inexplicable', is itself a manifestation of queer practice.[5] In her analysis of Oscar Wilde's 1895 trial, Jane Stevenson notes how reportage on acts of sodomy resorted to 'inarticulate references' and innuendo which 'ensured that, to many, Wilde's crimes were as vague as they were awful'.[6] For different reasons, one for survival and one for disgust or fear, persons of all sexual and social identities assumed a similar vocabulary of evasiveness.

Michel Foucault argued that the belief that such repression diminished erotic prevalence was actually an illusion, showing instead how silence itself ('the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name') was a leading agent in Victorian sexual discourse, working 'alongside the things said' to empower vast cultural and political systems.[7]

---

[4] Sedgwick relates this to Lord Alfred Douglas's pronouncement 'I *am* the love that dares not speak its name' [her emphasis]. Douglas is not masking his sexuality but rather giving a literal definition of it; homosexuality *is* nameless sexuality. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 73-75. Michel Foucault proposed that the 'discretion' surrounding homosexuality paradoxically enabled a kind of social 'tolerance' towards it. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 101.

[5] Krafft-Ebing, 187. In English musicology, this is most frequently discussed in the context of Elgar, signifying both sexual ambiguities and a tension between Catholic morality and Anglo-Catholic decadent aesthetics. See Byron Adams, 'The ''Dark Saying'' of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox', *19th-Century Music*, 23.3 (2000), 218-235.

[6] Stevenson (2018), 39.

[7] Foucault (1978), 27.

> What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret.[8]

However inadvertently, the obliquity of fin-de-siècle artists is precisely what fostered their erotic tone. For Roland Barthes, explicit eroticism resulted invariably in a 'disappointment, [a] deflation'. It is the expectation of the erotic that baits a reader's appetite, not the scene itself.[9] 'Is not the most erotic portion of the body', Barthes contended, '*where the garment gapes?*'[10] Such perspectives are indebted to Freud's belief that 'the progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake'. This was integral to Freud's theory of sublimation: 'sexual curiosity' may be 'diverted' into art, resulting in the containment of erotic impulse by transforming an artwork into a corresponding sex-object.[11]

But containment is not the same as negation, and sublimation, repression, and secrecy all served as potential escalators of erotic discourse through imaginative exercise. Foucault referred to Victorian *scientia sexualis* itself as 'but an extraordinarily subtle form of *ars erotica*', and it was certainly consumed as such by some readers. The eroticism of text extends from the 'exposing' of its hidden elements as the author both evades and coaxes the reader into discovery. This process is defined by Foucault as 'the specific pleasure of the true discourse on pleasure.'[12]

---

[8] Ibid, 35.
[9] Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Miller, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1975), 58. Barthes makes this comment in his distinction between the respectively high and low erotic value of 'books of Desire' versus 'books of Pleasure'.
[10] Ibid, 9. Barthes's emphasis.
[11] Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume VII*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 156.
[12] Foucault (1978), 70-71. In light of Krafft-Ebing's concerns that his work might contain 'accidental exciting causes', Havelock Ellis's account of a man's induction into sexual degeneracy is especially ironic: though the man gave prominent place to Oscar Wilde's life and works, he identified *Psychopathia Sexualis* as the thing

Rather than expel through explanation or sublimate through art, masks of transgression may subversively encourage the very things they were intended to frustrate. In his essay on homosexual readership during the *fin de siecle*, Wayne Koestenbaum explains how what he calls 'the gay reader' reads texts 'resistantly', meaning that he interprets a text not through the intentions of its author but for confirmation of his own condition, however illusory. Sexual identity in texts is thus constructed through the act of investigative and, if necessary, manipulative reading. The result is the sensation in the gay reader that these queer elements were already latent in the text, and all that was needed was for him to read them into the foreground. In Koestenbaum's words, for the gay reader 'certain styles of reading… *are* writing.'[13]

Peter Keating recounted a case against the publisher Henry Vizetelly, for whom Machen once worked, for publishing 'an obscene libel': an English translation of Émile Zola's *La Terre*. Vizetelly's transgression was not selling the book *per se* but that he provided it in unabridged English translation; there was 'no attempt to prevent the free circulation of the same books in their original language.'[14] Vizetelly rendered purported depravities of

---

that ultimately prompted him to act on his latent homosexuality. See Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915), 173-179. Freud anticipated Foucault by relating the artist's 'joy in creating' to the joy of 'giving his phantasies body', noting further the 'special quality' (i.e. sublimatory technique) of a scientist's satisfaction 'in solving problems or discovering truths'. See Sigmund Freud, 'Civilization and its Discontents (1905)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XXI*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 79-80.

[13] Wayne Koestenbaum, 'Wilde's Hard Labor and the Birth of Gay Reading', in *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*, ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden (New York: Routledge, 1990), 176-179.

[14] Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), 244-250. The case was brought forward twice (1888 and 1889) by William Coote, secretary of the moralist National Vigilance Association. Machen refers to this episode in his memoirs, remembering that he was 'cataloguing books on magic and alchemy and the secret arts in general' in a 'cock-loft…over the Vizetellys' publishing office…' 'We [i.e., English society] "larned" [sic] him to publish a translation of *La Terre* by sending him…to gaol for three months. He died soon afterwards; I forget whether his death took place before or after the very handsome and official and "respectable" reception and entertainment that were given to Zola on his visiting England.' See Machen (1922), 42-43.

French realism legible to a non-French public, and his infraction was made clear: intelligible dissipation is a 'crime against morality', but smut in another language is an *objet d'art*. In this sense, transgression exists in two forms: as an act and as a concept. Speaking the unspeakable, even indirectly, was therefore flirtation with censure or worse for fin-de-siècle artists. The ensuing game was one of calculated equivocation – of saying by not saying. It is to the equations of equivocation in Ireland's music to which we now turn.

Hieroglyphs: Masks of Eroticism

Ireland's music is occupied by characters and places of varyingly erotic scope. His most frequent dedicatees were adolescent boys; his songs and piano music include depictions of angelic choristers and street urchins; sensualized landscapes position works in eroticized pastorals of both exuberant and dark potentialities; his choice and use of poetry displays a preference for homoerotic narratives; and the sentiment of his music, vacillating between bitter frigidity and intimate care, is often couched in an obsessive and delicate musical language of erotic fixation – of journeys that never arrive, recapitulations whose distorted memories bear the stain of their developments, climaxes whose apogees are simultaneously points of collapse, long codas and postludes that chronicle the slow disintegration of unsullied beginnings, and everywhere the presence of something that promises fulfillment but settles for sublimation.

As with Machen, the artwork for Ireland may be viewed as a hieroglyph of erotic transgression that permits one to intimate otherwise unspeakable knowledge. A hieroglyph is at once pre- and post-verbal. Its meaning cannot be disentangled from its form, transmitting instead 'an instantaneous grasp of meaning, defying the division between the pictorial and

the linguistic, between space and time.'[15] For Machen, the term 'hieroglyph' represented the 'word of the enigma' which communicated an untranslatable form of 'ecstasy' by means of artistic 'analogies' that 'suggest rather than prove'.[16] Likewise, music provided Ireland with the ambiguous means to play a lifelong scheme of evasive disclosure; his musical works constitute a 'cryptic diary' of 'an innate homosexuality' that allowed him to approximate states of erotic fulfillment.[17]

One of Ireland's most straightforward declarations of music's transformative representational power within a sensual context appears in his 1928 setting of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *During Music*, a poem that contains the word 'hieroglyph'.[18] Equivocal harmonies dominate the song. The first cadence occurs in bar 19 in G-major (Figure 1).



Figure 1 ('During Music', bb. 14-22)

[15] Albright (2000), 37.
[16] Machen (1960), 23 & 45.
[17] Fiona Richards in Foreman (2011), 43.
[18] Ireland may have been aware of Arthur Symons's poem *During Music*, published in his collection *Amoris victima* (1897) and dealing identically with 'a passion that no words can reach' that is communicated by music which 'spoke for us'. See *Decadent Verse: An Anthology of Late-Victorian Poetry – 1872-1900*, ed. Caroline Blyth (London: Anthem Press, 2009), 788.

This moment coincides with Rossetti's confession that the music on the page eludes his understanding:

> What though I lean o'er thee to scan
> The written music cramped and stiff;
> 'Tis dark to me, as hieroglyph
> On those weird bulks Egyptian.

Upon the setting of 'those weird bulks Egyptian', not only is this first cadence achieved but the quaver-driven propulsion of the accompaniment ceases, the timbre changes as the left-hand migrates to the piano's lowest register, and the already ambiguous tonality is subjected to a rapid sequence of modulations which subtly contain between them a chromatic interplay between D-flat (C-sharp) and D-natural resolving to C-natural that characterized the song's initial ostinato. Further stressing Rosetti's bewilderment, Ireland interjects a fermata of silence. Rossetti continues:

> But as from those, dumb now and strange,
> A glory wanders on the earth,
> Even so thy tones can call a birth
> From these to shake my soul with change.

The encounter with the hieroglyph returns Ireland's setting to the opening harmonies and figurations, only this time the progression leads triumphantly to the song's firm resolution in Eb-major rather than the earlier implied G-major, suggesting that the hieroglyph has not been solved but sublimated, or rather that the hieroglyph telegraphed a secret and liberating knowledge. This scene recalls Edward Darnell's interaction with his wife in Machen's *A Fragment of Life* (1906):

> He only dimly understood, but could see the charm of her figure, the delight of the brown curls clustering about her neck, and he again felt that sense of the scholar confronted by the hieroglyphic. He could not have expressed his emotion, but he wondered whether he would ever find the key, and something told him that before she could speak to him his own lips must be unclosed.

By solving the entwined musical and poetic riddle posed by its opening bars – by 'find[ing] the key' – *During Music* is a candid portrayal of Ireland's corresponding belief in the heuristic ability of art to unlock (unclose) and translate experiential encryptions.

Eroticism in Machen

Because love and the erotic are primary themes in Ireland's music, one turns to Machen in search of further correspondences. For a culturally conservative writer who professed an emphatic revulsion towards its more aberrant manifestations, Machen's fiction is saturated in sex. It is one of his primary themes. His characters frequently bear the burden of untoward desires or the scars of erotic victimization. Helen Vaughan, the temptress of *The Great God Pan* (1890), wantonly exploits and drives men to commit suicide out of shame. Lucian Taylor, the deliriously romantic protagonist of *The Hill of Dreams* (1907), enacts strange masochistic rituals while fantasizing about the charms of a farmer's daughter. Foreswearing the soft prurience of his bachelorhood, Darnell in *A Fragment of Life* finds himself locked in a marriage whose insipidity, despite mutual affection, stems partly from her timidity, his confusion, and their shared inability to say the thoughts they both conceal while laying nervously in bed. In *The Novel of the White Powder* (1895), Miss Leicester observes the physical transformation of her brother into a lurid 'lover of pleasure' who partakes in all the excesses of city nightlife, succumbing to the effects of a tainted medicine, possibly a cipher for syphilis or opium, and conveying with his eyes 'the symbol and presence of all evil and all hideous corruption.'[19]

[19] Machen (2011), 69-75.

Sex-crazed figures are by no means exclusive to Machen's fiction. They are hallmarks of fin-de-siècle culture, appearing throughout decadent, symbolist, gothic, and weird literature in the form of prostitutes, bohemians, rogues, roués, virgins, vampires, and others. Helen, for example, is, among other things, representative of a broad attempt in fin-de-siècle literature to grapple with the fear of the New Woman, whose sexual rebellion was seen as an attempt at social anarchy. She signalled a plot to destroy the natural order of things by reinterpreting male and female sexual dynamics, something which Max Beerbohm conceded was 'one of the chief planks in the decadent platform'.[20] Lucian and Francis are likewise archetypal figures of the young innocent who perceives himself as a cultural anachronism grappling with the malevolent forces of a corruptive modernity.

But it is not merely Machen's characters who elicit their creator's erotic fixation. It is also the environments in which they live and the landscapes through which they move. London, the hub of Machen's literary world, is christened a city of sin, a web of endless temptation whose fleshly delights torment the country boy with conflicting desire and revulsion. It is unsurprising that Soho, the epicenter of London's sex industry after the demise of Holywell Street, recurs like a talisman in Machen's London tales. It is a topographical symbol of atavistic vice inherited from Robert Louis Stevenson ('this district of some city in a nightmare'), Oscar Wilde ('gaunt, black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses'), and others.[21] Soho is the den of Helen Vaughan where she is seen 'entering a house in one of the meanest and most disreputable streets.'[22] It is the stomping ground of lust-ridden Lucian,

[20] Dowling (1996), 55.
[21] For a concise history of Soho's bohemian reputation which contextualizes descriptions by various fin-de-siècle figures, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 17-43.
[22] Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 44.

and it is from an acquisition at an occult shop in Soho that Dyson, in *The Inmost Light* (1894), learns the eerie tale of a doctor whose wife consented to his unspecified experiments, transforming her into a creature possessed 'of a lust that cannot be satiated and of a fire that is unquenchable'.[23]

When the landscape surrounding a character is devoid of socio-sexual interaction, Machen transmogrifies it into a zone of personified sexual images, a geography of imagined yet visceral eroticism. Symbolism was Machen's nearest and most influential predecessor in this respect, and its associated movements doubly saw landscape as a catalyst for either ecstatic visions and experiences or as a portal to the realm of sin.[24] It is a pastoral background against which Man may reenact The Fall. Arthur Symons (1865-1945), a practitioner of this mode within a British context who influenced both Machen and Ireland, representatively anthropomorphized the feminine into the natural, describing a girl whose 'flesh is lilies' and whose bosom's 'wavering slope' is like a bed of flowers. That these descriptions are taken from a poem entitled *Morbidezza*, a word which refers to the 'life-like delicacy' in flesh-tints, is significant because it asserts the hallucinatory value of such metaphors for the artist.[25] Poetic metaphors in this context are not evidence of fantasy but of insight. The imagined virtues of the desired object are verified by their affinity with the natural. One accedes to the illusion.

[23] Machen (2011), 6.
[24] This perception of nature as a sexual being, emblematic of fin-de-siècle art, is of course traceable to antiquity. But the style in which the anthropomorphizing takes place varies according to both time and place, and it is consequently more extreme in certain epochs. This includes that of nineteenth-century French and British symbolism. See Kathleen Lubey, *Excitable Imaginations: Eroticism and Reading in Britain, 1660-1760* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012) and C.C. Barfoot, *'And Never Know the Joy': Sex and the Erotic in English Poetry* (New York: Brill, 2006).
[25] 'morbidezza, n.' *Oxford English Dictionary: Volume IX* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 1075.

Machen was prone to suggestive sketches of 'the scent of the good earth, lying as it were with arms stretched forth, and smiling lips.'[26] A striking episode of nature-eroticism from *The Hill of Dreams* is worth recounting at some length. Towards the beginning of the novel, Lucian wanders to the ruin of a Roman fort that lures him with a strange fascination. He hallucinates a flaming halo over the hill on which the fort is set, a celestial ring that mirrors trees encircling the earthworks. Dripping with sweat, he is driven onward by the foliage of the hill which 'promised coolness'. Crawling upward and grasping at roots 'that had burst through the red earth', Lucian arrives at the summit, 'panting with deep breaths', and enters the brim of oaks which enclose the 'dusky and cool and hollow' ruin.

Here, amidst the fort, Lucian discovers less tender but nonetheless tempting attributes of the landscape. The sting of nettles burns his fingers; his feet stumble on hewed stones which display 'the leprosy of age'; he breathes the 'poisonous' smell of unknown herbs. The ground itself shifts into something sinister: 'The earth was black and unctuous, and bubbling under the feet…From it, in the darkest places where the shadow was thickest, swelled the growth of an abominable fungus, making the air sick with its corrupt odour, and he shuddered as he felt the horrible thing pulped beneath his feet'.[27]

> And then he began to dream, to let his fancies stray over half-imagined, delicious things, indulging a virgin mind in its wanderings. The hot air seemed to beat upon him in palpable waves, and the nettle sting tingled and itched intolerably; and he was alone upon the fairy hill, within the green mounds, within the ring of oaks, deep in the heart of the matted thicket. Slowly and timidly he began to untie his boots, fumbling with the laces, and glancing all the while on every side at the ugly misshapen trees that hedged the lawn. Not a branch was straight, not one was free, but all were interlaced and grew one about another; and just above ground, where the

[26] Machen (2018), 13.

[27] Camille Paglia has argued for the association of gynophobia with a Dionysian 'female chthonian swamp'. The resemblance of certain objects to the 'primitive shapelessness' of nature's 'lukewarm matrix…teeming with algae and bacteria' may provide 'sensuous access to some archaic swamp-experience'. See Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*: *Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 92.

> cankered stems joined the protuberant roots, there were forms that imitated the human shape, and faces and twining limbs that amazed him. Green mosses were hair, and tresses were stark in grey lichen; a twisted root swelled into a limb; in the hollows of the rotted bark he saw the masks of men. His eyes were fixed and fascinated by the simulacra of the wood, and could not see his hands, and so at last, and suddenly, it seemed he lay in the sunlight, beautiful with his olive skin, dark haired, dark eyed, the gleaming bodily vision of a strayed faun.[28]

Through such evocative imagery, nature in this scene becomes an allegory for sexual awakening that marks the start of what Mark Valentine calls Lucian's 'fevered nightmare of depravity' that will play out over the rest of the novel.[29] The connotations of the fort's shape, Lucian's instinctive impulse to penetrate it, the assurance of satiation awaiting his exertion, the sinuous writhing of boughs, the engorgement of roots into limbs – these symbols require no further explanation for a discerning reader.[30]

Lucian is permanently transformed by the experience, and the rest of the book may be interpreted as his unsuccessful attempt to regain innocence or at least to reconcile himself to the consequences or indeed the meaning of this initiatory vision.[31] His mind and body become increasingly linked with the spirit of the fort. Even when viewing the hill from a distance and attempting to expunge the intoxication of his 'boyhood fancies', Lucian recognizes with fright that something of the experience remains permanently fixed in his

[28] Machen (2010), 6-9.

[29] Valentine notes parallels between Lucian's hillfort and Richard Jeffries's memory of Liddington Hill in Wiltshire as described in *The Story of My Heart* (1883), with which Machen was familiar. Some of the smaller phrases are exactly the same. As Valentine comments, the difference between the episodes is that Jeffries's experience marks the beginning of a spiritual awakening, rather than a descent. See Mark Valentine, *Arthur Machen* (Seren: mid Glamorgan, Wales, 1995), 50-53. Sam Wiseman has noted further similarities between Lucian's awakening and Grant Allen's story 'Pallinghurst Barrow' (1892) in Sam Wiseman, *Locating the Gothic in British Modernity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 77.

[30] The summiting of a hill is a recurring erotic technique in Machen's work. Roland Barthes fittingly compared erotic excitation in literary narrative to an 'ascent'. See Barthes, 58.

[31] For a discussion of the archetypal Romantic artist who has to suffer the cost of Pateresque vision, see Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London and New York: Routledge, 1957), 3-36.

heart, 'something that glowed like the red glint of a gypsy's fire seen from afar across the hills and mists of the night, and known to be burning in a wild land.'[32]

From this point, the novel may be read as an allegory for the Fall of Man. Its vivid opening sentence ('There was a glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened') already lurched the novel into Biblical territory by mirroring the imagery of Genesis: 'Then the Lord rained upon Sodom brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven…and, behold, the smoke went up from the Land as the smoke from a furnace.'[33] The image recurs in the New Testament: 'And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of the great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.'[34] Compare this to a passage towards the end of *The Hill of Dreams* where Lucian, envisaging a misted and gloomy twilight that appears to emerge 'from the black depths of the forest', seems to witness the apocalypse:

> And as the water mirrored the afterglow and sent ripples and gouts of blood against the shuddering reeds, there came suddenly the piercing trumpet call, the loud reiterated summons that rose and fell, that called and recalled, echoing through all the valley, crying to the dead as the last note rang. It summoned the legion from the river and the graves and the battlefield, the host floated up from the sea, the centuries swarmed about the eagles, the array was set for the last great battle, behind the leaguer of the mist.[35]

From Fall to Apocalypse, Lucian's sexual awakening engenders it all. Again, as in Symons's *Morbidezza*, the verity of this vision is irrelevant. What matters is the transformation it enacts on the character. Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), the cautionary tale that Machen's

[32] Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2010), 19. Dennis Denissof has referred to this section of the novel as an example of 'eco-piquerism' within a decadent context. See Dennis Denisoff, *Decadent Ecology in British Literature and Art, 1860-1910: Decay, Desire, and the Pagan Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 194-205.
[33] *The King James Bible*, Genesis 19.24-28.
[34] Ibid, The Book of Revelation 9.1-2.
[35] Machen (2010), 113-114.

novel relays is that the artist, in treating the world as an extension of his fanciful and degenerate mind, becomes the victim of his own unconsecrated fantasy.[36] It is only after his vision that Lucian begins to write. Art affords the sublimation of Lucian's desire and of his fear towards a destabilizing threat foreboded by the awakening or rather re-awakening of these erotic urges.

Eroticized Landscape

Whether real or imagined, the geography of Machen's erotic episodes is domestic. This deviated from the popular belief that aberrant sexuality was, by definition, foreign. Richard Burton (1821-1890), the English colonial explorer, expressed a mainstream view when he deemed homosexuality and pederasty 'geographical and climatic' rather than racial.[37] Burton went so far as to delineate a 'Sotadic Zone' of sexual deviancy that, apart from the northern fringe of the Mediterranean, was a conspicuously non-European region. Havelock Ellis noted how this theory failed to explain the presence of homosexuality in Northern Europe, but he adhered nevertheless to the belief that strains of homosexuality differed according to regions, writing that such phenomena in England 'do not present themselves in the same way as they do in southern Italy today, or in ancient Greece'.[38] Ellis and others reproached Burton for being 'wholly unacquainted' with experienced psychology, but Dane Kennedy provided a more sympathetic explanation for this pioneering sexologist's

[36] Shelley's influence on Machen's work may be gleaned not only from some of his gothic imagery but especially from the role of scientific experimentation in his plots. *The Great God Pan*, *The Inmost Light*, and *The Three Imposters* all hinge on unorthodox practices by men of science. See Natasha Rebry, '"A Slight Lesion in the Grey Matter": The Gothic Brain in Arthur Machen's The Great God Pan', *Horror Studies* 7.1 (2016), 9-24; and Stefania Forlini, 'Modern Narratives and Decadent Things in Arthur Machen's *The Three Imposters*', *English Literature in Transition: 1880-1920*, 55.4 (2012), 479-498.
[37] Richard F. Burton, *Terminal Essay upon the History of The Nights* (Printed by the Kamashastra Society for Private Subscribers Only, 1885), 206-207.
[38] Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915), 58.

strange assertion: in designating the Sotadic Zone as foreign, Burton may have intentionally allowed his readers 'to maintain some psychic distance from pederasty by presenting it as an Oriental phenomenon'. Although these categories were often conflated in nineteenth-century discourse, this distance permitted readers to also evaluate sexuality from a more objective, almost anthropological perspective rather than an invested moral one while also allowing ideas to pass moral censure under the guise of anthropological objectivity within a deeply essentializing colonial framework.[39]

Part of Machen's shock was that he exposed the heart of the British Empire to degeneracy by showing that foreignness and otherness could originate locally; like Freud's theory of an innate sexuality, they transcend cultural differences. Ireland's geography parrots this approach: none of his works are set outside of the British Isles. As in *The Hill of Dreams*, Ireland favours local environments where nature participates in erotic games. On the 'debateable [sic] borders of the year' in Ireland's 1917 song 'Youth's Spring-Tribute', Spring herself hesitates ('half falters'), unable to distinguish 'the leafless blackthorn-blossom from the snow'. In response, the lover entreats his beloved to succumb to the erotic possibilities of such equivocation by somatically fusing with nature:

> So shut your eyes upturned and feel my kiss
> Creep, as the Spring now thrills through every spray,
> Up your warm throat to your warm lips…

[39] Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 239. This is by no means a solely British phenomenon. In their studies of criminal anthropology, degeneration theorists like Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) similarly sought to define behaviour in terms of geography, though for motives which diverged from Burton's. Lombroso and his followers wanted to ensure that 'body' had been 'transposed into a map of the nation'. In this way, 'maps serve…as a short-hand illustration of how Lombroso's *oeuvre* endeavoured to link the body of the nation and the history'. See Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 141.

Blindness is submission. The liquid kiss of Rossetti's 'spray' demands his beloved's complicity in nature's violative play. Ireland marries this image to the earliest appearance in his music of what previous commentators have called the 'passion motif' (Figure 2).[40]

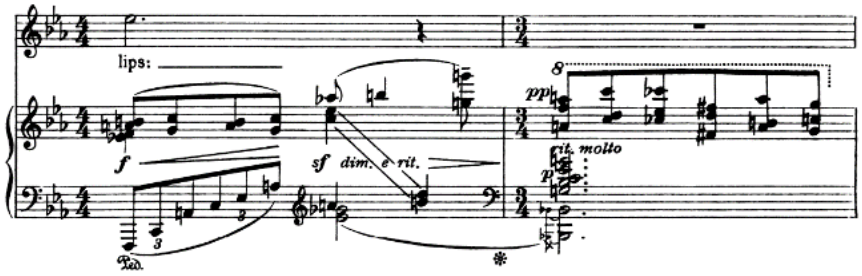


Figure 2 ('Youth's Spring-Tribute', bb. 49-50)

This motif, in various alterations, is often paired with moments of erotic nature-imagery, memorably punctuating the first stanza in Ireland's setting of Aldous Huxley's *The Trellis* (1920) (Figure 3):

> Thick-flowered is the trellis
> That hides our joys
> From prying eyes of malice
> And all annoys
> And we lie rosily bowered.



(Figure 3) John Ireland: The Trellis, bars 15-16 © Copyright 1920 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission, All rights reserved.

[40] See Banfield (1985), 188. My own reading of the motif within its various contexts, including here, interprets it more as a 'submission' than an 'ecstasy' symbol. It always occurs at moments of seduction within a text or, as in 'My True Love Hath My Heart', at the outset to signify possession.

These covert lovers are both enclosed and embraced by a nature that enables and voyeuristically consumes their 'silent kisses' and 'white caresses'. Like Machen, Ireland casts nature as the enclave of forbidden pleasures.

That so many of Machen's and Ireland's scenes flirt with unattained, imagined desires sharpens their shared sense of melancholy. Machen bookends *A Fragment of Life* with mirrored images. In the beginning, Darnell awakes 'from a dream of an ancient wood, and of a clear well rising into grey film and vapour beneath a misty, glimmering heat' into the cityscape.[41] At the end, he awakes 'from a dream of a London suburb…[into] an ancient wood, where a clear well rose into grey film and vapour beneath a misty, glimmering heat.' Besides the literal mirror-reversal of image and transit, the difference between these episodes is that the first ushers him into the realness of an erotic predicament while the second convenes a serene reconciliation: 'And a form came towards me from the hidden places of the wood, and my love and I were united by the well.'[42] It has become impossible to say which of these images is real – whether Darnell was waking from a dream or falling into one. Darnell's erotic fulfillment is indefinite and therefore unverifiable.

Notwithstanding *The Trellis*, Ireland's beloveds are predominately distant even when regarded at an arm's length. Even *Earth's Call: A Sylvan Rhapsody* (1918), one of Ireland's most ecstatic nature pieces, includes no verifiable consummation. A descending figure begins the piece, leading to scripted tremolos that characterize the piano writing throughout (Figure 4).

[41] Machen (2011), 148.
[42] Ibid, 221.



Figure 4 ('Earth's Call', bb. 1-6)

In Harold Monro's text, nature again partakes in seduction:

> The fresh air moves like water round a boat.
> The white clouds wander. Let us wander too.

Elements blurring, the lover is asking for submission through fusion with nature as in 'Youth's Spring Tribute'. He communes with the forest ('What are the great Trees calling?') in a moment whose sudden textural change and unexpected cadence recalls the parallel passage from *During Music* (Figure 5).



Figure 5 ('Earth's Call' bb. 32-34)

It is unclear whether the succeeding lines belong to the speaker or to the voice of nature channelled through him, but in either form the beloved is urged further into the labyrinth:

> Just come a little farther, by that edge
> Of green, to where the stormy ploughland, falling
> Wave upon wave, is lapping to the hedge.
> Oh, what a lovely bank! Give me your hand.
> Lie down and press your heart against the ground.
> Let us both listen till we understand,
> Each through the other, every natural sound…

Submissively prostrate, the beloved is both physically and spiritually in contact with nature's equivocally eroticized features. But the ensuing climax of *Earth's Call* is textless, occurring solely in the piano's extended interlude. On the one hand, this is a hieroglyph, alluding to impropriety or to the inadequacy of language to capture and convey what transpires ('Let us both listen…Each through the other'). On the other, Ireland's sudden textless indistinctness leaves so much to the imagination that it is impossible to substantiate. Adding to our uncertainty is the closing question:

> I can't hear anything to-day, can you,
> But, far and near: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"?

What is unusual about this question is that it follows such an elaborate interlude during which we assumed we were hearing 'every natural sound'. But the speaker withdraws from the edge, and the opening tremolos which descended into the vision here ascend into increasingly improvisatory arabesques (Figure 6). Eroticism resides in the sound of nature (everywhere) or imagination (nowhere).



Figure 6 ('Earth's Call' bb. 97-103)

Like Darnell's dream, the beginning and the end mirror one another, giving the sense not only of disorientation but of having witnessed something that was perhaps not altogether real. It exists in a fallen space, if indeed it existed at all. In such pieces, the loved one will always be elsewhere, always suppressed and supposed. Sublimatory removal into artistic representation renders the beloved simultaneously visible and untouchable, smothering the lover with desires which, being unquenchable, are imperishable. Desire ends with fulfillment, and so the lover sees his condition as that of a severed being in perpetual dialogue with itself – a bonded unity, 'fused from its separateness by ecstasy.'[43]

[43] Thomas Hardy, 'She to Him, IV', in *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy, With a Portrait* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), 13.

Indirectness

What unites Machen's treatment of sex in his characters and landscapes is the indirectness of approach. It would be indecorous for a respectable writer of conservatively Catholic upbringing to address crudities of the flesh explicitly. His handling, therefore, is marked by constant equivocation – of saying but not saying, or rather saying *by* not saying. There are no sex scenes in Machen's output, but there are *sexual* scenes. Everything is implied. Even the prostitute that Lucian Taylor encounters in Soho is identified not through the direct naming of her trade but by her mannerisms. Noticing her standing alone on the sidewalk, Lucian admires her 'flushed cheeks' and the 'urgent gleam' of her dark brown eyes. The woman rejects a number of men who proposition her for a walk, explaining that she is expecting a friend.

> 'Suddenly she turned to him [Lucian] as he was about to pass on, and said in a low voice: 'I'll go for a walk with you if you like; you just go on, and I'll follow in a minute.'
>
> For a moment he looked steadily at her. He saw the first glance has [sic] misled him; her face was not flushed with drink as he had supposed, but it was radiant with the most exquisite colour, a red flame glowed and died on her cheek, and seemed to palpitate as she spoke…She was smiling and waiting for his answer.[44]

Disconcerted and self-loathing, Lucian flees, and the reader is left to ascertain the thinly masked irritant of his puritan sensibilities.

Indeterminacy is key, and so is Machen's neo-platonic belief that the veiled truth of things extends to the sexual. Lucian initially thinks the prostitute is a beautiful woman standing apart from the orgy of street life, only to realize that she is actually party to it. His realization recalls the narrator of James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874), a

[44] Machen (2010), 100.

popular text of phantasmagoric London, whose encounter with a street woman in red-tinted light of dual qualities

> O desolation moving with such grace!
> O anguish with such beauty in thy face!

similarly divides the narrator's perception. He is paralyzed by dread and indecision:

> …I was in twain,
> Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
> One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
> And watched the other stark and swoon and her;
> And she came on, and never turned aside,
> Between such sun and moon and roaring tide:
> And as she came more near
> My soul grew mad with fear.

Lucian too is cleft by 'a desire for her that was a madness' and a fear that the woman had somehow sensed in him an equally degenerate being ('her perfect companion'). He is caught in 'the mesh of her net.'[45]

Gynophobia

Implicit in these scenes is a gynophobia that Ireland and Machen shared. Jocelyn Brooke suspected that this was the reason why the composer took so long to suggest that they meet in-person after a long correspondence:

> Perhaps John was afraid I should bring my wife: he was not particularly keen on the female sex, and much as he enjoyed meeting younger composers and writers, he dreaded meeting their wives.[46]

Ireland claimed his music to be 'seldom understood by women performers'.[47] He had a special dislike of female landladies, usually referring to them in some variation of the phrase

[45] Ibid, 101. Machen appears to make a thinly veiled reference to Thomson's work in *The Great God Pan* when he refers to nocturnal London as 'this dreadful city'. See Machen (2018), 22.
[46] Jocelyn Brooke in *The John Ireland Companion*, 351.
[47] MS. Mus. 60356 (15 May 1955), fol. 1.

'this bloody bitch'.[48] In 1953, reading an unidentified book by André Gide, Ireland confessed to finding the stories 'repulsive, rather quite horrid in places where the sensuality of the females is described.'[49]

It is interesting to observe the Mephistophelian terms or character Ireland sometimes adopted to express his aversion. He once reproached a trio of ladies at the Royal College of Music for being 'insufficiently acquainted with the devil' to play his music.[50] Elsewhere, the role of the devil in Ireland's imagery shifts from a musical descriptor to something external – a malicious enchantment – as when, according to Muriel Searle, he admonished the devil for his impulse to marry Dorothy Phillips:

> Then the *Devil* told me what I could do. That was, to give her my name, as Mrs. Ireland. I'd be her legal protector. No-one [else] would have any legal control over her…I must have been MAD![51]

On 31 March 1928, shortly after Ireland's separation, Sylvia Townsend Warner described an unsettling evening with the composer in her diary which paints a vivid picture of Ireland's mental instability and sensitivity, testifying to a source of his hostile attitude towards women more generally.

> A most surprising evening with John Ireland, an evening out of D.H. Lawrence. He was ordinary and conversible [sic] at dinner…Then to his studio, where I admired his taste in pictures. He was about to play me his sonatina when he suddenly went off into what a devil of a time he'd had. First a boy growing up and marrying, then his own reaction of marrying a girl of seventeen. They quarreled horribly; and with a ghastly exactitude he recalled one quarrel, the girl sitting on the piano and swinging her legs, and singing a rag-time – he stopped, musicianly [sic], to give a rather incorrect musician's rendering of 'I want to be happy', and how he had wanted to strangle her. He raged across the room strangling a ghost, and then when I jumped up and told him to have done with such tormenting nonsense, he stood quite still and dazed. Afterwards…[he spoke] like an automaton, and saying the same thing over

[48] MS. 1749/2/4, fols. 32, 36, and 37.
[49] MS. Mus. 60356 (24 March 1953), fol. 41.
[50] Quoted by Alan Rowland in Foreman (2011), 29.
[51] Quoted in Searle (1979), 72. The reference to legal protection here concerns the often told yet un-substantiated story that Ireland married Phillips in order to free her from the control of an overbearing father.

> and over again. Perhaps he was a little drunk, I tried to think so, for if he were not, it was creepier still to be alone with this demented stranger.[52]

Townsend Warner's choice of words – 'strangling a ghost', 'demented stranger' – supports an interpretation of Ireland not only as a creator of weird art but also, as we shall see, as someone who exhibited weird characteristics himself. For the present, these various accounts establish a pattern of not only misogyny but also *horror feminae*.

For Ireland and Machen, the satanic is both a malicious pre-Christian force of nature and a post-Christian manifestation of Fallen Man that is unavoidably erotic. Sex concedes the animality of man. This is a Freudian belief that pre-civilized sexual urges skulk beneath a thin surface-level purity. As Clarke writes in *The Great God Pan*: 'ET DIABOLUS INCARNATE EST. ET HOMO FACTUS EST' – 'The devil is incarnate. He is in man.' Helen, the femme fatale of this story, is the projection of man's repressed desire. She *is* man, and through her sex itself becomes an act of degeneration. Like the hieroglyph whose meaning cannot be disentangled from its form, she remains a mystery to all except those who submit to her. To be possessed by her is to be reawakened.

As a middle-aged man, Ireland's feelings in this area were reawakened by the demise of his friendship with the pianist Helen Perkin (1909-1996) in the 1930s, the cause of which remains unclear. Lewis Foreman wrote of Ireland's 'attraction' to Perkin, and Fiona Richards suspected that, from Ireland's perspective, the friendship was 'more than just a professional concern'.[53] But it is important to note that this there is no evidence to suggest that this relationship was in any way sexual.[54] It seems to have been nothing more than what Hugh

[52] Warner, Sylvia Townsend, ed. Claire Harman, *The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 15-16. Townsend Warner was Machen's cousin by marriage.
[53] See Foreman (2011), 205 and Richards (2000), 160.
[54] Foreman (2011), 205.

Ottaway assessed as an intense friendship 'of particular interest'.[55] Ireland was shocked and devasted by Helen's marriage in 1935, and their association came to an abrupt halt. A resuscitated correspondence soon devolved into a series of harshly-worded letters from Ireland criticizing Helen's musicianship. In the absence of any other explanation, it may simply be that, for Ireland, Helen's crime was that she became a woman.[56]

The other woman in Ireland's life is an odder case: Norah Kirby, his housekeeper. There is no record of Norah's sexual identity. She appears in Ireland's biography as a sexless creature – a 'rather mannish' woman in the eyes of Alan Rowlands. She struck Rowlands as being particularly well-read, with a special interest in literature of the 1890s, of which he cites *The Yellow Book* and Aubrey Beardsley as examples. Her surviving library supports this observation. She was familiar with Decadent literature of the New Woman variety. This loyal, possessive, indignant Mrs. Danvers unflaggingly guarded her employer's reputation, but she sometimes went further. Rowlands was one of several to observe Norah's uncanny resemblance to Ireland following his death.

> She would take on his views and even his way of talking. After she had had her stroke her face began to sag in a way that made her almost look like him – it was quite weird. She wrote me letters in which she referred to Him or His works with the capital H. At one of the London concerts she came to, Lawrence Norcross whispered to me, 'Isn't she wearing Ireland's corduroy trousers?'[57]

---

[55] Hugh Ottaway, 'Ireland, John' in *Grove Music Online* <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:10246/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000013905> [Retrieved 10 October 2019 from]. Trumpeting Perkin as the inspiration for the *Piano Concerto* may be seen as an effort by the British classical mainstream to 'straighten' Ireland. Despite its musical merits, it is curious that the only large-scale work of Ireland's to be accepted into the orchestral repertoire is also the only one with a tenuous female muse.

[56] Ireland continued to express hatred for Perkin in later years, describing her to John Longmire as 'a bloody dangerous bitch'. See MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (17 June 1943), fol. 30.

[57] Foreman (2011), 39.

Tolerated Norah was not the exception to Ireland's lifelong enmity towards women. She was not perceived as a woman. She was an androgynous figure and therefore posed no threat to the curated homocentricity of Ireland's worldview.

Full of portraits of transgressive and degenerate women, it is unsurprising that Machen's prose appealed to Ireland. In some ways, fear of women in fin-de-siècle literature may be read as fear of homosexuals; the New Woman was defined as much by her individual qualities as she was by her association with decadence and her 'emergent homosexual identities'.[58] The stoking of fears towards over-sexed women as wanton or animalistic paradoxically encouraged the ascension of homoerotic male love as something comparatively pure and innocent.[59] Thus, though his own identity and social politics were otherwise, Machen may easily be read as a homoerotic writer.[60]

Ireland's Re-Framing of Texts

Ireland's re-framing of texts to suit his homosexuality was habitual. The curated homo-centricity of his songs is a case in point. There are no women in Ireland's music. This is not to say that his settings of homosexual poets dominate the repertoire, nor that his poets are exclusively male. But in light of Ireland's own homosexuality, the equivocal identity of the beloved in a plurality of his chosen texts lends itself to a re-contextualization of those texts as expressions of queer affection.

---

[58] Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 4-12.

[59] Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 28-29.

[60] The difficulty of reading Machen extended to his person. Though they were very different characters otherwise, Townsend Warner wrote that Ralph Vaughan Williams 'reminded me so much of Arthur Machen' as an androgynous 'cross between an old woman & an old mountain.' See Townsend Warner (1994), 249.

Beloveds of unspecified and therefore easily appropriable gender are supplied by Dante Gabriel Rosetti (*During Music* and *Youth's Spring-Tribute*), Arthur Symons (*Tryst* and *The Adoration*), Aldous Huxley (*The Trellis*), Harold Monro (*Earth's Call*), Shakespeare (*When daffodils begin to peer*), Ernest Dowson (*When I am old* and *If we must part*), and others. Thomas Hardy's *Her Song* is written from a heterosexual female perspective, meaning that the beloved is conveniently male. The 'clear young eyes' and 'shy sweet lures' of James Joyce's *Tutto é sciolto* belong to an ambiguous androgyne, as do the unripe, pre-pubescent 'sacred cherries' of Thomas Campion's *There is a garden in her face*. In Blake's *Cupid*, woman is neither loving nor nurturing – she is not even present. Observed from a distance, she is the cause of man's misery, the being whose piercing eye wounds him 'with arrowy smarts' which he endeavours to remove. He cleanses and abjures himself from the female gash by picking out those priapic 'heads of the darts.' Even in Hardy's *Without, not within her*, it is not the woman's gender but her transferable femininity, 'that strange freshness', which entices the speaker:

> It was what you bore with you, woman,
> Not inly were,
> That throned you from all else human,
> However fair!

This pattern extends to Ireland's settings of heterosexual female poets. Here too, poems by Alice Meynell (*My Fair*), Mary Coleridge (*The Sacred Flame*), and Christina Rossetti (*When I am dead, my dearest*) notably address a genderless beloved. They are feminine but not necessarily female. Others, such as Emily Brontë's *Love and Friendship*, are more subtle. Once one adopts Ireland's perspective as a homosexual reader, Brontë's text enables a queer reading by the promotion in its closing stanza of a homosocial discourse – friendship is given a masculine 'He' – over the waywardness of romance. It is true that Ireland also set three

poems by the bisexual Sylvia Townsend Warner, but these are not directed towards a female beloved; they deal respectively with images of the child, the soldier, and the scape-goat, all in erotic terms, as we shall see.[61]

Several exceptions to this rule might be raised. W.B. Yeats's *The Salley Gardens* reads as a purely heterosexual text, as does Hardy's *Beckon to me to come*, Dowson's *I Was Not Sorrowful*, and Dante Gabriel Rosetti's *Penumbra*, and in the minds of these poets they probably were. However, such poems are in the minority. When combined with awareness of Ireland's sexuality, this disproportionate ratio suggests that, for Ireland, the women in these poems are no more female than Shakespeare's 'master-mistress' or Housman's 'rose-lipt girls' who sleep 'In fields where roses fade', their sex smearing androgynously with that of the 'lightfoot boys.'

The overwhelming majority of Ireland's songs suggest a pattern of 'queering' heterosexual texts for private purposes. He feeds on equivocation. But even in the case of Ireland's textless literary-inspired works there is often occasion for queering the source material. If anything, the increased indeterminacy of a textless composition serves to embolden a queer interpretation. If saying-while-not-saying is integral to queer discourse, then music, being wordless gesture, is perhaps the consummate queer artform.[62]

[61] Gender issues extend to the performance of Ireland's songs. In 1954, he wrote that 'very few of my 70-odd songs are suitable for female singers.' Quoted in Richards (2002), 173.
[62] For an introduction to the role of music in Decadent literature that places strong emphasis on its relationship with queer aesthetics, see Emma Sutton, 'Restless Mystical Ardours: Decadence and Music', *Decadence: A Literary History*, ed. Alex Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 218-233.

Decorations: A Case Study in Eroticism

Ireland's earliest extended exercise in musico-literary aesthetics occurs in *Decorations* (1911-13) where each of the three movements ('The Island Spell', 'Moon-Glade', and 'The Scarlet Ceremonies') bears a literary epigraph: two from poems in Arthur Symons's *Images of Good and Evil* (1899), and one from Machen's short-story *The White People* (1904). Although it is not made apparent until the third movement, it is clear from Ireland's choice of epigraphs and the corresponding inter-movement dialogue within the music that Ireland formulated *Decorations* not as a set of independent miniatures but as a single multi-movement work rooted in the imagery and aesthetic of Machen's fiction. By recourse to the epigraphs and the scheme they suggest, *Decorations* recommends itself to re-contextualization as a musico-literary depiction of erotic desire and transgression presented furtively as a set of individual tone-poems. The progression outlined in the following analysis is in three parts: in 'The Island Spell', the real is spurned; in 'Moon-Glade', the weird is sought; and in 'The Scarlet Ceremonies', it is attained. If, as S.T. Joshi claimed, *The White People* is a cautionary tale whose 'underlying theme' is the horror of sex, then the framing of Ireland's epigraphs in *Decorations* as a progression towards increasingly transgressive sublimation displays the discrepancy between writer and reader that Krafft-Ebing hoped to circumvent.[63]

The cryptic nature of Ireland's titles and epigraphs in *Decorations* has allowed the work's erotic undertones to go unnoticed. A 1915 review differs little from interpretations offered by ensuing commentators. It commended the evocative success of the music, praising Ireland's 'pictorial writing', cursorily noted its literary connections, and associated these

[63] Joshi (1990), 22.

elements vaguely with the influence of French musical culture. The music was dubbed 'pure impression' by a composer who 'evidently possesses peculiar magic powers in the world of sound'.[64]

An initial objection might be raised that Ireland often selected titles for his compositions after they were completed. In the case of *Decorations*, this was also true of the epigraphs. For Edwin Evans, their *ex post facto* status indicated that these epigraphs should be treated as 'kindred suggestions and not as subjects to be illustrated musically.' Though he conceded that all three movements bore 'an inherent relation to the literary movement of the later 'nineties', Evans maintained that it would 'be quite wrong to regard them as literary music.'[65]

The timing of an epigraph's inclusion may indeed affect our reading of a work, but retroactive application should not exclude material so readily from the realm of interpretive possibilities. Even if the notes have already been written, the subsequent selection of titles and epigraphs should not consequently be understood as a separate activity; it is as much a part of the composition process as are the 'pre-musical' stages of interpersonal or environmental inspiration. A meticulous craftsman with an at times debilitatingly perfectionist strain, it is unlikely that Ireland applied his epigraphs in a frivolous manner or with the expectation that their presence would prove inoperative. An artwork conforms to its frame.

Fiona Richards accepted the literary fixtures of *Decorations* as legitimate evidence to underpin her classification of the music as essentially 'Symbolist' and 'decadent', adjectives which, in her assessment, are buttressed by the Frenchness of the piano writing: pentatonic

[64] *Monthly Music Record*, 45 (2 August 1915), 227.
[65] Quoted in Foreman (2011), 379.

figurations, whole-tone scales, ample use of the pedal, a 'chime-like melody', and an overall 'limpid' texture.[66] This Franco-centric analysis expanded on W. Donald Rankin's earlier comparison of *Decorations* with Maurice Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* (1906) and Claude Debussy's *Préludes* (1909-1913) which drew attention to the use of epigraphs by all three composers. Ravel's protracted 'epigraphs' are perhaps better described as literary prologues, whereas Debussy's, appearing after the final bars of each piece, less conspicuously serve to make the music a prelude to literary reflection, or at least something deliberately ambiguous. Ravel adumbrates the music while Debussy whets our literary appetite. Though Ireland is closer to Ravel than to Debussy in the prominence he gave to his epigraphs, Rankin discerningly placed him 'between the two Frenchmen' for publishing 'more than a title but much less than a full page.'[67]

Richards pays tribute to the aesthetic effect of Symons's poetry on 'The Island Spell', decreeing it 'an attempt to pin down the essence of the music, or at least the spirit behind it.'[68] She does not comment specifically on the effect of Symons's poetry on 'Moon-Glade'. In the case of 'The Scarlet Ceremonies', though her discussion follows a synopsis of *The White People* and a summary of Pan's influence on twentieth-century British culture, Richards does not link these components with the music beyond its classification as 'ritualistic', 'Pan-inspired', and generically harbouring 'literary associations.'[69] This disconnection is probably inevitable given Richards's reading of *Decorations* as a set of three independent miniatures; she even places her review of the third movement in a different

[66] Richards (2000), 99-101.
[67] Rankin, W. Donald, *The Solo Piano Music of John Ireland* (DMA Thesis: Boston University, 1970), 36.
[68] Richards (2000), 100.
[69] Ibid, 66-70. Richards's synopsis of *The White People* does not mention the story's sexual nature. See also Fiona Richards, 'The Goat-God in England: A Musical Context for Lawrence's Fascination with Pan', *The D.H. Lawrence Review*, 40.1 (2015), 90-106.

chapter from the other two. The meaning of Machen's epigraph, an arcane snippet culled from an already recherché text, is obfuscated when Ireland's third movement is divorced from its contextualizing predecessors.

The Island Spell

Symons's three-line epigraph for 'The Island Spell' is extracted from the poem *In the Wood of Finvara*, the fifth poem in a sequence called *In Ireland*:

> I would wash the dust of the world in a soft green flood:
> Here, between sea and sea, in the fairy wood,
> I have found a delicate, wave-green solitude…

Finvara, an anglicized form of 'Finnbheara', is the king of the Connacht fairies, associated with Tuam near County Galway, and believed to possess the power to inaugurate spring.[70] In the full twelve-line text, Symons depicts a speaker, who may or may not be Finvara himself, as a melancholic spirit 'grown tired of sorrow and human tears.' In the wood, he seeks and finds an escape from misery. Reality is dismissed. Life is perceived not only as insubstantial but also dark and hostile for the speaker who, vulnerable as a 'naked runner', feels assaulted and lost in a sexually charged 'storm of spears.' But as lines 4-6 make clear, even the erotic impulse has faded as a consequence of its own excess:

> I have grown tired of rapture and love's desire;
> Love is a flaming heart, and its flames aspire
> Till they cloud the soul in the smoke of a windy fire.

It is his own ardency, likened to an asphyxiating 'dust of the world', that the speaker wishes to cleanse – those fuliginous, self-polluted passions which 'aspire' but never attain. Symons

[70] James MacKillop, 'Finnbheara', in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:10012/view/10.1093/acref/974.001.0001/acref-9780198609674-e-2349> [accessed 3 September 2019]. The poem's Celtic strain is undeniable, but the influence of Celticism on Ireland and Machen will be dealt with separately.

may have intended this as a reference to Proverbs 8 where Wisdom describes herself as created when God 'had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.'[71] She is a pre-oceanic being ('there were no depths…[and] no fountains abounding with water'), and though it wishes for a sanitizing flood, *In the Wood of Finvara* seems paradoxically to desire both this prelapsarian innocence and postlapsarian carnality – knowing while not knowing. It is sorrowful banality rather than joyful desire that fuels the speaker's enervated release of spring's 'soft green flood', and he does so in self-enforced seclusion: 'in a fairy wood, between sea and sea…[where] the peace that is not in the world has flown to me.' Sequestered, Finvara, or Finvara's counterpart, imagines what he desires while in a space which vacillates between the sea's twofold imagery of creation and memory.

This is also a Pan-like tale, sharing more than the goat god's rural geography. The second poem from *In Ireland* deals specifically with 'the sighing of the reeds', but here also Symons's 'soft green flood' recalls his allusion to Syrinx's transformation into a reed during her flight from Pan's advances. Unable to consummate his desire, Pan constructed pipes out of the reeds and used them to reenact his longing wherever he went.[72] Music became his instrument for sublimated desire.[73]

As becomes apparent as the work unfolds, the greenness, too, is more than incidental. Colour is present in all three of *Decorations*' epigraphs and is integral to both their imagery

[71] *The King James Bible*, Proverbs 8: 22-26.
[72] In his reflection on Edward Elgar's self-portrait as a lifelong child 'longing for something very great – source, texture & all else unknown', Matthew Riley makes a similar connection to the Pan myth. Pan is ubiquitous in British musical culture from this time. See Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85-92. In 'A Musical Instrument' from her *Last Poems* (1862), Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes of 'the cost and pain' that the formation of this instrument entails; the poem contains an early usage of the phrase 'the great god Pan'.
[73] For a case study of music as a product of 'solitary exotic male fantasy', though in a heterosexual context that differs from Ireland's in its emphasis on female orgasm, see Esteban Buch, 'Climax as Orgasm: On Debussy's *'L'Isle joyeuse*', *Music & Letters*, 100.1 (2019), 24-60.

and meaning. In this poem, green is the murkiness of an opaque and impenetrable sea. It is also the fertilizing force of nature's renewal. This colour is utilized by Symons elsewhere to similarly represent the lugubriousness of place and mind.[74] In *By Lough-na-Gar (Green Light)* (1899), Symons bathes an 'ancient place of peace' like that of Finvara's in an 'earth-green light' that recalls 'old sorrows' and ages the landscape into something 'old as the earth is old.' In *At Dieppe*, the first of *Colour Studies* from the collection *London Nights* (1898), the 'indefinitely desolate' grey-green of the shore's sandy grass is harnessed by the speaker's insistently 'listless' mind so that it infects and transforms even the monotonous white of a hotel's stone into the same colour in his eyes. The mood of this overcast grey-green horizon confirms the 'indifferent moment' the speaker shares with a beloved whose presence within the scene is unconfirmed.[75] In a review of Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), Symons described the call of the sea as 'the desire of more abundant life, of unlimited freedom, of an unknown ecstasy', noting that it takes the form of a stranger whose eyes have 'the green changes of the sea'.[76] Throughout these texts, what prevails is the cyclical, self-sufficient magic of the sea which lurks at the core of maritime mystery – its power to both cleanse and rekindle. The enchantment of the sea is that it generates its own changes. The island's spell is thus brewed in water, and this turn to the sea is an invocation of the elemental juices of self-sustaining life.[77]

---

[74] The watery greenness of melancholy and desire is addressed in Debussy's setting of Paul Verlaine's 'Green' and 'Spleen' from *Ariettes oubliées* (L60), the latter of which is the same text mentioned earlier in this chapter that Ireland set in his *Marigold* after a paraphrased version by Ernest Dowson.

[75] Arthur Symons, *Selected Writings*, ed. Roger Holdsworth (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1974), 42-43. Incidentally, in *The Great God Pan* the phial containing the sedative for Helen's mother prior to her departure first from reality and then from life itself is green. As he is drawn further into the ambience of the glade, the previously quoted passage from *The Hill of Dreams* has Lucian observe that 'the sunshine really seemed to become green'.

[76] Arthur Symons, *Plays, Acting, and Music* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1903), 129.

[77] Elsewhere, Ireland's choice of maritime texts reproduces this inward pivot. The speaker of John Masefield's *Sea Fever* asks for a 'fellow-rover' not for his company but for the 'merry yarn' he would tell. The ringing in

In Ireland's first movement, we find an analogous depiction of desire and withdrawal, explored in the ordering of material and its effect of timelessness. 'The Island Spell' begins in 2/4 but with a semi-quaver rest, allowing the listener to swim in three full bars of metric uncertainty until the clarion entry of an A-flat ('as if a chime') in the right-hand confirms the downbeat. Persisting unchanged and under the same pedal for sixteen bars, the opening ostinato, despite its inverted fall, establishes the movement's tonality in D-flat major while foregrounding the diatonic scale's pentatonic cousin. An added second to the arpeggiated tonic triad carries shades of the pentatonicism that also define the melody. With each iteration, the melody receives an increasingly elaborate arpeggiated accompaniment in wave-like comings and goings – but as in Debussy, the circularity of the harmonic and melodic ideas persists. This establishes what David Kopp calls the 'in-the-moment' aspect of static and order-independent harmonies.[78] Michael Klein calls it 'the intransitive IS' of music, a tense that gives no indication that the repetition will complete what it has left open, lending the music a sense of musical timelessness – it is a ceaseless 'becoming' music in which repetition and the static sustain moods of both 'multiplicity' and 'desire'.[79]

An unprepared modulation from Db-major to C-major marks the architectural centre (b. 71). Here, parallel triads (bb. 75-78) correspond to a later passage in 'The Scarlet Ceremonies', and in both cases the triads emerge unexpectedly and, after a brief flourish, quickly subside. Gesturally, the arpeggiated swell is here transposed into a dynamic undulation as Ireland meticulously notates a *fff* that decrescendos to *f*, only to crescendo

---

Masefield's *The Bells of San Marie* is heard from a distance, and the speaker only supposes the identity of the men who ring them.

[78] David Kopp, 'Pentatonic Organization in Two Piano Pieces of Debussy', *Journal of Musical Theory*, 41.2 (Autumn 1997), 261.

[79] See Michael Klein, '*L'Isle joyeuse* as Territorial Assemblage', *19th-Century Music*, 31.1 (Summer 2007), 46-52. Nordau described the degenerate in music as that which is 'continually promised, but never perform[ed].' Such music is always on the verge of disclosing 'some great secret.' See Nordau, 13.

immediately to *ff* and arrive one bar later again at a *ff* which, reinforced by a *sforzando* and a change of pedal, renews the arpeggiation with vigour (Figure 7).



(Figure 7) John Ireland: The Island Spell, bb. 74-80 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This is the work's centerpiece: a sudden textural and dynamic change – a kind of bell apocalypse – devoid of arpeggios which inhabits only these four bars. The overall loudness of Ireland's dynamic markings in this passage might suggest that it is a burst of exultation (a 'soft green flood'), but the abrupt oscillations – the instability of the dynamic apex – suggest that the emphasis is appropriately on softness, transmitted through the unresolving brevity of this depiction. 'Softness' is understood here not as quietness but as instability or climactic equivocation. It is a flood that fails to 'cleanse.' Just as Symons's speaker states but does not actualize his fantasy, so is there no moment of dramatic repose in Ireland's score – no sustained release of accumulated harmonic and rhythmic tension. It is a wave that does not break. It only swells, establishing a cyclical screen of regenerative sound that 'clouds the soul.'

Collapsing from an ornamental excess which can only add to itself – can only accrue without becoming – the piece dissolves from this point; a long entropic sigh with each stage of dynamic decline specified by the composer along with expressive marks of increasing delicacy and distance: *ben marcato* loosens into *tranquillo*, then *tranquillo e lontano*, and finally *smorzando*. The wave recedes as the speaker withdraws both into the wood and into himself. The six-note semiquaver rhythmic figuration with which the piece began is metrically transposed into sextuplets for the left-hand in the piano's lowest register as a six-bar ostinato of open fifths (bb. 96-101) (Figure 8). As at the beginning, the pulse is obscured, this time by fitting a five-note figure into a six-note grouping. This muffled undertow backgrounds a slow ascent in pentatonic; these whole-tone harmonies, and these three elements combined recall Debussy's *La cathédrale engloutie* (from b. 72). Both composers were attempting to colour with 'Celtic' tones, but they did so with non-Celtic techniques: Debussy turned to gamelan-inspired pentatonicism, while Ireland's own orientalism was filtered through Debussy's Frenchness. One foreign style was adopted to represent another, harnessing foreignness (elsewhereness) as a larger concept to indicate the fantastical.[80]

[80] Ralph Locke commented on 'the exotic mask, under which much that was otherwise repressed could be smuggled into the art gallery and opera house.' See Ralph P. Locke, 'Constructing the Oriental "Other": Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Delilah*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 3.3 (1991), 271; see also Ralph P. Locke, 'Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theater', *The Opera Quarterly*, 10.1 (Autumn 1993), 48-64. Ireland's repetition of his pentatonic figures is both exotic and incantatory. Writing about Orientalism in Albert Roussel's *Evocations*, Jann Pasler stated that 'the charm of such music is not erotic but almost shamanistic, for, with the magic of repetition, it lures the listener to initiate transformation.' See *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 98.



(Figure 8) The Island Spell, bb. 96-105 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This interpretation of 'The Island Spell' rests on the perception that the work's second half is a terraced fall from a crestless wave. When seen from this perspective, the movement's last note gains further connotations. There is a final A-flat in the right-hand, marked suddenly *tre corde, piano*, and with a staccato-accent. In a piece which features a gradual heightening in both tensional and registral senses, this is the highest note in the piece. The reading of bars 75-78 as a tenuous climax is bolstered here by a superposition: this after-thought is the work's actual apogee. The failure of the movement's chaperoned rise and fall to fulfill the speaker's desire is here subtly undercut, and what the sea could not provide the solitary note does for itself: a single instant of clear, unfettered delivery, unprepared and unresolved, jolted out of a muted *pianissimo* texture and drifting through sustained pedal into a bar of fermata rest. This is the insularity of desire. It achieves itself, existing self-sufficiently in isolated repose. Likewise, the peace that has 'flown' to Symons's speaker is abstracted from the surrounding

elements. The 'fairy wood' and 'fairy bird' imply that the flight of peace itself – its method of transmission – is also a 'fairy' flight. It has no progression but rather appears transnaturally by having 'attained' desire through becoming.[81]

Moon-Glade

Beyond its ability to function as a closed miniature, within the wider context of *Decorations* Ireland allows 'The Island Spell' to establish the imaginative landscape of his subsequent movements. Its retreat into the fantastic, a place for the weird, positions 'Moon-Glade' within that same enchanted space. 'Moon-Glade' also takes its epigraph from Symons:

> Why are you so sorrowful in dreams?
> I am sad in the night;
> The hours till the morning are white,
> I hear the hours' flight
> All night in dreams…

Symons's *Airs for the Lute* from which these lines are lifted focuses likewise on a distraught lover. The poem's four sections are provoked by the 'uncapturable strains' of a lute which the speaker envies for its ability to 'declare' that which for his own voice remains 'mute'. Three separate meditations follow on time, dreams, and pain, with the final section briefly recalling the lute's transcendent powers.

The poem is hazily fragmented. The second section loosely connects with the first through its invocation of another instrument, viols, but the third and most of the fourth depart

[81] My use of the word 'transnatural' accords with Samuel Coleridge's 1812 definition where the experience of knowing (gnosis) 'quickens physiological as well as psychological change', explored at-length in Gregory Leadbetter, *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). This somatic element is widespread in visionary literature. In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), present in Ireland's library, Walt Whitman states that 'Writing and talk do not prove me, I carry the plenum of proof and everything else in my face…'

from the poem's expectantly musical backbone. Symons's inconsistent use of colour reflects this dissolution. Whereas the green of *In the Wood of Finvara* is, whatever its actual physical form, unambiguously melancholic, the white in *Airs for the Lute* wavers between sadness and joy. It swivels between conflicting moods painted in the same colour. The whiteness of night, during which the speaker is sorrowful, is contradicted by the 'white winds' of the poem's closing lines which herald 'joy in the air', presumably but not necessarily representing the lute's 'uncapturable strains.'

A further ambiguity glosses the five lines selected by Ireland: the identity of 'you' is inconclusive. In the preceding passage, the speaker has personified both time (female) and the lute (genderless). Having observed time's power to assume the 'lawless laws of turn and shake' that typify the lute's airs, the speaker asks of the lute directly:

> How should I doubt then
> Love, being tuned unto your mood,
> Should bring about then
> True time and measure of your blood?

It may be that the epigraph therefore addresses the same subject and that the text recounts the strains of music heard in dreams. But the inhalation afforded by Symons's decision to begin the poem's third section between these two images draws visual, lyrical, and thematic space between them. Alternatively, it may be time itself that the speaker addresses, having only just assigned it sonic abilities ('I *hear* the hours' flight'). Or thirdly, the 'you' may be read as a moment of introspection – of frustration and self-pity. Ambiguity exists between competing certainties. 'Moon-Glade' is a transitionary sequence – a metamorphic episode ferrying between the pensively introverted wistfulness of 'The Island Spell' and the exuberant outburst of 'The Scarlet Ceremonies'. Its imagery is therefore necessarily indeterminate and contradictory.

Though its chords are triadic and it at times seems to favour Eb as tonic, what diatonicism that 'Moon-Glade' does imply is so obscured by unconventional progressions and so densely overlaid with chromaticism that it thwarts immediate comprehension.[82]



(Figure 9) John Ireland: Moon-Glade, bb. 1-7 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Ireland begins again with a rest to promote metric volatility. The lute's airs are personified by arpeggiated triads, predominately minor, which slink chromatically up and down. This figure establishes the movement's two primary intervallic relationships: half-steps and the interplay between major-minor thirds. The appoggiaturas in the right-hand mirror the

[82] In his discussion of musical decadence, Richard Taruskin referenced instances in music by Richard Strauss and Tchaikovsky that are 'unclassifiable' according to harmonic theory. For Taruskin, the unclassifiable mannerisms of decadence may be repeated in a composition 'until it sounds normal'. Taruskin's definition of musical decadence thus has correlations with Freud's uncanny. See Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music, Vol. 4: Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 84-97. Of course, these issue plague analysis of post-tonal diatonic music well-beyond the *fin de siècle*. See Arthur Berger, 'Problems of Pitch Organization in Stravinsky', *Perspectives of New Music*, 2.1 (1963), 11-42; Neil Newton, 'An Aspect of Functional Harmony in Schoenberg's Early Post-Tonal Music', *Music Analysis*, 33.1 (2014), 1-31; and Matthew Santa, 'Analysing Post-Tonal Diatonic Music: A Modulo 7 Perspective', *Music Analysis*, 19.2 (2000), 167-201.

accompaniment's chromatic undulations, and together these evoke Symons's plaintive tone. The indistinctness of the dreamscape is established by the wandering harmonies which move always according to half-step relations and by the pedal indication which, along with ties specified throughout, enhances the cumulative effect of Ireland's writing: a harmonic and tonal ambiguity that uses discordant screens of sound. One of the consequences of these techniques is that a number of harmonies are implied by 'left-over' notes caught by the pedal. For example, the interpretation of the first three quavers in bar 3 as Ab^7 is made possible by the continued resonance of the Ab from the penultimate quaver of bar 2. The same applies to the first three quavers of bar 5 where an Eb^9 arises from the arpeggiation of the previous bar (Figure 9). But in addition to these more distinguishable harmonies, there are moments when the hands, separated by an interval of a major sixth, outline minor triads in a recurring sequence of bitonal smears (bars 10-13). By its frequent interruptions, this figure recalls 'the hours' flight' in its vertical drift and mimics the loose poetic structure of Symons's text (Figure 10).



(Figure 10) John Ireland: Moon-Glade, bb. 10-13 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Ireland's 'melody' is best interpreted as an antecedent phrase lacking its consequent response. Tonal motion leading to points of rest is implied, but the result is invariably a transposed restatement of the material that 'goes' nowhere. This is most apparent in the movement's dynamic apex (bars 20-22) where an otherwise unexceptional progression 'resolves' to an arpeggiated bitonal Eb-major and Eb-minor seventh chord decorated by chromatic passing tones (Figure 11). There is no decisive cadence in the entire movement. Instead, Ireland produces a series of paraphrases on a melodic fragment.

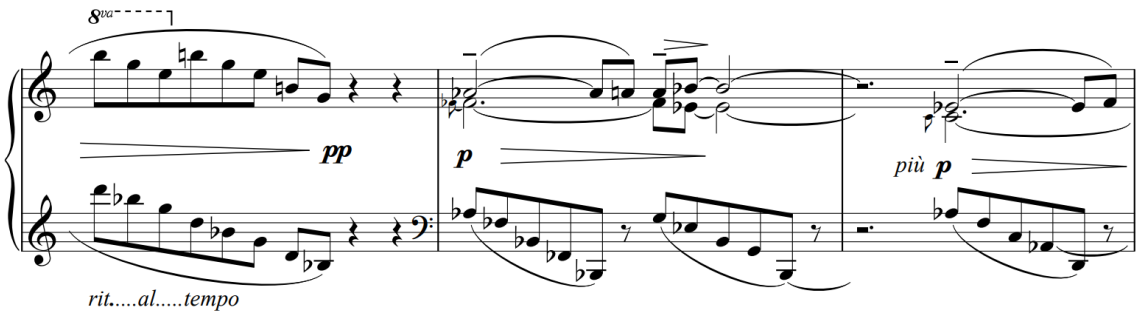


(Figure 11) John Ireland: Moon-Glade, bb. 20-22 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

An extension of this fragment alludes to the Tristan chord (b. 28) (Figure 12). By the 1910s, homoerotic interpretations of Richard Wagner's music had been widely circulated, and Ireland's allusion cannot discount them, however much they may have mellowed in the intervening years.[83] In an 1880 essay on *Tannhäuser*, Joris-Karl Huysmans considered Wagner's Venus to be an 'allegory of Evil struggling against Good, [a] symbol of our interior

[83] The frequent references to the Tristan chord in Bax's music alone suggests otherwise. See Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 175-218; Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 75-104; and Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898) is a link between these three figures: he designed frontispieces for Machen, produced *The Wagnerites* (1894), and featured on Ireland's shelves as the illustrator of several volumes, including an anthology of *The Yellow Book*. See Dennis Denisoff, 'Introduction', in *Arthur Machen: Decadent and Occult Works*, ed. Dennis Denisoff (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2018), 5-7. Fraser Riddell refers to Aubrey Beardsley in his discussion of 'shameful listening', meaning instances where a subject is 'forced to painfully confront' the queer elements that he or she 'would rather repudiate'. See Fraser Riddell, *Music and the Queer Body in English Literature at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 44-47.

hell opposed to our internal heaven…[which] attracts and captures like the most dangerous of the deities of Prudence whose name this writer can scarcely write down without trembling: *Sodomita Libido*.'[84] In an 1860 programme note, Wagner himself described the erotic subtexts of *Tristan and Isolde* whose unconsummated impulses ('longing insatiable, desire forever, reborn, yearning, languishing') align with Ireland's and Symons's own frustrated fantasies.[85] Hector Berlioz's description of the Tristan chord as 'a kind of chromatic moan…whose cruel effect is reinforced by long suspensions which appear in place of proper harmonic resolutions' applies equally to the chord's function in 'Moon-Glade'.[86] The difference is that the four-note chromatic rise of Wagner's motif is here abbreviated to three. Ireland frustrates the archetype of erotic frustration.



(Figure 12) John Ireland: Moon-Glade, bb. 27-29 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

In its last iteration, the upward turn of this figure instigates a final strum of the lute, gradually outlining through sustained pedal a bitonal sonority of G-major and Ab-minor and dissolving the chord into a chromatic juxtaposition that mirrors the initial arpeggiations of the lute's airs (Figure 13).

[84] Joris-Karl Huysmans, 'L'Ouverture de Tannhäuser' (1880), in *Parisian Sketches: A translation of Croquis Parisiens*, trans. Richard Griffiths (London: Fortune Press, 1960).
[85] Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen, Vol. X* (Leipzig: Fritzsch, 1887-1888), 104-5. My translation.
[86] Quoted in D. Kern Holoman, *Berlioz* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 543-544.



(Figure 13) John Ireland: Moon-Glade, bb. 30-31 *© Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

'[S]o like the stuff of dreams are made of,' is how a 1915 review described it. But this is more than a 'wonderful piece of tone-artistry'.[87] Ireland's sonic question mark punctuates the query to which this movement provides no answer: 'Why are you so sorrowful in dreams?' If all dreams are wish-fulfilments, then even dreams of a sorrowful nature must have some self-serving psychological function.

> Distressing moods during sleep can become the motive force of a dream by arousing energetic wishes which the dream is supposed to fulfil. The material to which moods are attached is worked over until it can be used to express the fulfilment of a wish. The more intense and dominating a part is played in the dream-thoughts by the distressing mood, the more certain it becomes that the most strongly suppressed wishful impulses will make use of the opportunity in order to achieve representation.[88]

Again, this movement is the second part of a three-part sequence, hence Ireland's title, 'Moon-Glade', which not only acknowledges the whiteness of Symons's vision but simultaneously transplants the epigraph into Finvara's woodland sanctuary. By declining to unscramble its harmonic ambiguities or provide its melody's consequent phrase (i.e., by escalating the 'distressing mood'), 'Moon-Glade' both reaffirms the equivocal dream-scape

[87] *Monthly Musical Record*, 45.2 (August, 1915), 227.
[88] Sigmund Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams (1900-1901)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume V*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 487.

and reinforces the need for a counterbalancing release of tension. It prepares a revelation in which the suppressed impulses may achieve representation.

The Scarlet Ceremonies

'The Scarlet Ceremonies' integrates the propositions of its predecessors, but it also recontextualizes them, providing the release and imaginative conclusion for earlier scenarios. It lifts them out of an erotic stasis. Ireland's score sources his epigraph from Machen's *The House of Souls* (1906), though within that anthology it appears in the short-story *The White People* (1904):

> …Then there are the Ceremonies, which are all of them important, but some are more delightful than others – there are the White Ceremonies, and the Green Ceremonies, and the Scarlet Ceremonies. The Scarlet Ceremonies are the best, …[89]

The centrality of colours links this epigraph to the preceding movements: green and white culminate in scarlet.[90] Ireland has retrospectively reframed Symons's words in his response to eroticized weird elements in Machen's tale. The fact that these ceremonies are Machen's inventions does not exempt them from real-world connotations.[91] Shades of red were often used during the *fin de siècle* as allusions to sexual transgression. It is a colour that silhouettes introversion and designates otherness. Hester Prynne's scarlet letter has the 'effect of a spell', removing her 'out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself' like the speaker in Symons's first epigraph.[92] Aleister Crowley dubbed his sex-magic

[89] Machen (2011), 119.
[90] Scarlet here serves a similar function to that of red in Arthur Bliss's *A Colour Symphony* (1921-22).
[91] Lovecraft wrote of the 'enormous power' that extends from this fanciful 'stream of innocent childish prattle'. See Lovecraft (1973), 91.
[92] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 2014), 54. In touching the letter, Hester perceives the realness of 'the infant and the shame' it signifies: 'Yes these were her realities – all else had vanished!' The parallels between *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The White People* are intriguing. The use of colour is, within the context of Machen's story, an admittedly minor detail, but similarities between Machen's and Hawthorne's portrayal of the embodiment of sin and its relation to the image of a child might

partners ‘scarlet women’.[93] Citing a correspondent who called red a well-known ‘synonym for sexual inversion’, Havelock Ellis wrote that inverts don ‘a red tie’ to signal status.[94] Max Nordau commented on a ‘predilection’ for red shown by ‘the hysterical’, finding the colour dangerously ‘dynamogenous’ in character.[95]

Like ‘The Scarlet Ceremonies’, *The White People*’s three sections are in dialogue with one another. It is structured as a tale within a tale. A conversation between two men, Ambrose and Cotgrave, on the nature of evil is interrupted by an excerpt from a girl’s diary. This diary, ‘The Green Book’, is offered as a concrete example of pure evil when words fail to convey an adequate definition. The nameless girl relates innominate rituals of sexual suggestiveness as part of her indoctrination into a witch-cult. Besides recalling practices of sex-magic which Crowley and others gave infamous expression, *The White People* emerges out of a rich tradition of saliently child-erotic tales of the late nineteenth-century ranging from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) to Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898).[96] The story’s emphasis on whiteness, in particular in relation to the girl, is further

not be wholly coincidental. Take for instance Pearl’s unintentionally blasphemous exclamation concerning her origin: ‘I have no Heavenly Father!’ Hester is either unable or unwilling to tell her daughter where she comes from, allowing Pearl to see herself as godless. She recalls the efforts of the townspeople to cast Pearl as ‘a demon offspring’ of the kind that ‘promote some foul and wicked purpose’. In a way, ‘The Green Book’ in *The White People* is written by the sort of corrupt child that the townspeople in *The Scarlet Letter* assume Pearl to be.

[93] See Hugh B. Urban, *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 109-139.

[94] Ellis, 299-300.

[95] Nordau, 28. Redness was also associated by some fin-de-siècle movements with anger and violence. In *Thought-Forms* (1905), a popular theosophic text, Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater reiterated the characterization of red as representing ‘animal passion and sensual desire of various kinds’, but they also defined it through ‘anger’, with scarlet specifically denoting ‘the anger of “noble indignation”’. See Annie Besant and Charles Leadbetter, *Thought-Forms* (Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1969), 22. In Machen’s tale, transgressive and aggressive overtones of redness coalesce in the erotic. Ireland’s possession of *An Outline of Modern Occultism* (1935) by Cyril Scott suggests that he was aware of occult theories of colour and sound.

[96] The double-readings that such texts enable requires almost no explanation. ‘To make the dream-story from which [*Alice in*] *Wonderland* was elaborated seem Freudian one has only to tell it.’ See William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 216-221.

representative of numerous works during the *fin de siècle*, both literary and pictorial, that used the figure of a 'white girl' as a young object of desire.[97]

Machen's focus on the exploits of a child holds significance for Ireland as a self-professed Uranian.[98] As noted above, 'knowledge' in fin-de-siècle literature was often code for 'sexual knowledge'. The girl loses innocence as she undergoes initiation. In this context, innocence is not an affect but a negation – it is the absence of knowledge. This formula resulted from the nineteenth century's reappraisal of sexuality in relation to 'the child'. In this binary system, it was impossible to define the child without pairing it with what it was not. Therefore, Victorians made their conception of the child 'depend' on notions of eroticism.[99] Freud further complicated this interdependency in claiming that children *already* possess sexual instincts which are only temporarily masked. By depicting innocence as a façade cloaking dormant sex drives, Freud helped foster a 'cultural-double speak' whose ontological and taxonomical contradictions compelled people 'to eroticize children by denouncing their eroticization, constituting their allure by proclaiming their innocence'.[100]

---

[97] Karl Beckson: *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 268-269.

[98] Ireland makes this claim in a letter to Kenneth Thompson. See Richards (2002), 245. The essence of the Uranus myth from which the term 'Uranian' is derived is the self-sufficiency of male-on-male lust, the self-sufficiency of the male's creative and regenerative capacity. The myth is about Chronus severing the genitals of his father, Uranus: out of the resulting sea froth of blood and semen springs Aphrodite. The male engenders (i.e., is superior to) the female and also creates life and contains the life-giving force without the need of a female counterpart. Uranian literature was a movement of fin-de-siècle writers whose paederastic fetish manifested itself in tales of 'boy-love', some of which survived Norah Kirby's sanitization of Ireland's library. There is a copy of Andre Gide's *If It Die* in Ireland's library which, like most Uranian literature, was originally published privately and noncommercially; the book includes Gide's description of discovering pederasty in Algiers at the invitation of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas. For an anthology of examples from Uranian literature, see Timothy D'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1970).

[99] James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 52-57. I do not endorse Kincaid's political or ethical perspective on this subject, but his analysis of the role of the child in Victorian *scientia sexualis* is useful.

[100] Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 6-7. Innocence 'became a fulcrum for the post-Romantic ambiguous construction of sexuality and sexual behavior'. See Kincaid, 14-15.

For weird fiction, this was a useful entanglement. The child becomes a vessel for 'the secrets of the secrets of the secrets' that can only be experienced, not imparted.[101] Not only did this technique expose western society's paragon of innocence to corruption, but it also permitted speculation that perhaps there was no such thing as erotic innocence; there were only the corrupted and the corruptible. The child became an erotic hieroglyph.

In addition to its role in *Decorations*, such a worldview allows fresh readings of Ireland's many child-inspired works, including *On a Birthday Morning* (1922), 'In a May Morning' from *Sarnia* (1939-41), *The Holy Boy* (1913), and *Ragamuffin* (1917). These last two vividly present Romanticism's dual image of the 'natural' child: one primitive, the other savage, but both in need of erotically motivated domestication. Stripped of any context, *The Holy Boy* might be misconstrued as a celebration of impenetrable purity and *Ragamuffin* as a Dickensian caricature. But each miniature, as do Ireland's other child-inspired works, portrays the child as an object of fixation. *The Holy Boy* is surrounded by preludes whose titles alone – *The Undertone*, *Obsession*, and *Fire of Spring* – clarify its intentions. *Ragamuffin* is the second movement of *London Pieces* (1917-1920), making the child's intrusion upon the scene, between the geography of Chelsea and Soho, suggest an erotic urban subtext. As in *The White People* and 'The Scarlet Ceremonies', the association in so much fin-de-siècle art of purity with erotic passivity and of 'middle-class imps' with 'the erotic strangeness of the poor, who are imbued in sexual fantasy with raw power and helplessness' cannot be disregarded.[102]

---

[101] Machen (2011), 119.

[102] See Kincaid, 52-72. In the case of *Ragamuffin*, transgression is inherent in the title. 'Ragamuffin' may refer not only to a 'disreputable man or boy', but also to 'the name of a demon', and 'ragamuffinery' defines 'depraved actions or conduct'. See 'ragamuffin, n.' *Oxford English Dictionary: Volume XIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 116.

Just as Ireland's preceding epigraphs have established the erotic setting of his third miniature, the landscape through which the child wanders in *The White People* is highly sexualized. The girl recounts fantastic legends and visionary encounters with anthropomorphized objects, forces of nature, and magical creatures. Her induction into this weird pantheon occurs during a solitary ramble. Like Lucian, the girl summits a hill where she experiences an awakening. She mounts the stone that crowns the hill and views the landscape, perceiving the surrounding rocks which had previously been unintelligible as now 'arranged into patterns, and shapes, and figures.'

> …and the more I looked, the more I saw great big rings of rocks, getting bigger and bigger, and I stared so long that it felt as if they were all moving and turning, like a great wheel, and I was turning, too, in the middle. I got quite dizzy and queer in the head, and everything began to be hazy and not clear, and I saw little sparks of blue light, and the stones looked as if they were springing and dancing and twisting as they went round and round and round.[103]

The girl's communion with these mystic elements grants her vision – it is what enables her to experience the ecstatic. Submission is requisite. She 'knows' by becoming. Overwhelmed and 'frightened' by this vision, she descends dancing from the hill until she enters a thicket, 'a little secret place like a dark passage'. There, she kneels by the stream:

> I drank the water with my hand, and it tasted like bright, yellow wine, and it sparkled and bubbled as it ran down over beautiful red and yellow and green stones, so that it seemed alive and all colours at once. I drank it, and I drank more with my hand, but I couldn't drink enough, so I lay down and bent my head and sucked the water up with my lips. It tasted much better, drinking it that way, and a ripple would come up to my mouth and give me a kiss, and I laughed, and drank again, and pretended there was a nymph, like the one in the old picture at home, who lived in the water and was kissing me. So I bent low down to the water, and put my lips softly to it, and whispered to the nymph that I would come again.[104]

---

[103] Machen (2011), 123.

[104] Ibid, 123-124.This episode is reminiscent of 'The Turanians' from Machen's *Ornaments in Jade* where a girl, Mary, likewise wanders deep into the wood and discovers a well. She 'dared to make the dark water her mirror', and by so doing saw 'wonders in a glass as she leaned over the shadowed mysteries pool, and smiled at the smiling nymph, whose Lips parted as if to whisper secrets.' See Machen (2018), 242-244.

Here we see the convergence of Ireland's epigraphic elements and the destination of their cumulative narrative: within a designated *temenos,* sensualized elements become ritualized into a transgressive 'ceremony' for numinous and erotic interface.

Ireland's third movement emerges from a tremolo, and the entirety of the movement relies on the juxtaposition of an aggressive and relatively unvarnished melody set against this rhythmically palpitating background (Figure 14). Weird motion is as central to Ireland's setting as it is to Machen's imagery. A tremolo is a sonic paradox: stillness in motion. Likewise, Machen's rocks may actually move, or they may move only in the girl's imagination. Either way, a static object is perceived as an animated one, and their patterns are circular. Like tremolos, they revolve around themselves.[105]



(Figure 13) John Ireland: The Scarlet Ceremonies, bb. 1-14 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[105] This recalls the circularity of wind winding round the boat in *Earth's Call*, where Ireland employs a similar figure.

The scripted tremolo is one of the musical fingerprints of Ireland's piano writing, particularly in works with nature-ecstasy features. It appears in larval form in *Violin Sonata No. 1* (1908-9) and is used variously in *Violin Sonata No. 2* (1915-17), *Earth's Call: A Silvan Rhapsody* (1918), *Piano Sonata* (1918-20), *Fantasy-Sonata* (1943), and elsewhere. It is closely associated with Ireland's depictions of memory. In his setting of Dowson's 'I was not sorrowful' from *Songs of a Wayfarer* (1912), Ireland sketches 'memories that could not sleep' as ascending scripted tremolos that decrescendo from a sonority that is already *ppp e lontano* (Figure 15).



Figure 14 ('I was not sorrowful' bb. 41-47)

One year later, Ireland again gave the word 'memory' in his song 'Penumbra' from *Marigold: An Impression* an evaporating figure (Figure 16).



Figure 15 ('Penumbra' bb. 93-97)

One recalls the similar connotations of the tremolos in *Earth's Call* discussed above. For Ireland, the tremolo thus represents a thing not only ecstatic but also aloof and uncapturable – something increasingly distant. Its presence signifies an incident occurring in an uncanny elsewhere.[106]

Ireland is careful to impress upon the performer the rhythmic exactitude of his notation. A footnote to the second bar admonishes pianists to play the right-hand figure 'throughout as indicated in the first bar, not as a rhythmically indefinite tremolando'; arpeggiated grace notes (bars 72-3) are to be executed *a tempo*; and a glissando (bars 96-8) in another footnote 'must occupy the time of seven quaver beats, as indicated.' This ceremony is understood as the systemization of a spontaneous, wild thing, hence the precision attached to the quivering exaltation of the tremolos. It packages without unravelling in the

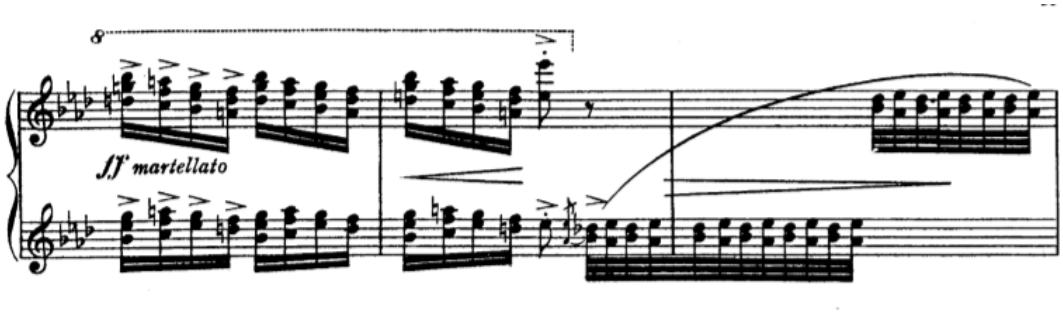
[106] As both nature and erotic imagery, they may also be considered as a descendent of Wagner's *Waldweben* ('Forest Murmurs') from Act II of *Siegfried*.

same way that Machen's narrator intimates what she has seen without fully disclosing its nature. In both Ireland's music and Machen's prose, what ensues is the impression of an experience that transcribes the psychological experience of an act but not the act itself. Repetition is insistence – or, in Esteban Buch's phrase about the musical erotic, 'urgency is enthusiasm'.[107]

Equivocation persists. Like the preceding movements, the initial downbeat of 'The Scarlet Ceremonies' is offset, in this case by the precision of a *sforzando* over the acciaccatura. The duration and directional impetus of this open fifth, left to the discretion of the performer, opens the possibility to the listener that it is itself a strong-beat. This acciaccatura begins a tremolo between a minor third (B-flat and D-flat) and an open fifth (A-flat and E-flat) which not only establishes an initial metric ambiguity but also an ambivalent tonal centre. Ireland's discombobulation of metre is further enhanced by the melody's accented entrance on the second quaver of bar 2. It is not until bar 10 that any of these accents coincide with a downbeat, though even this moment is offset by a moment of unprepared harmonic modulation and registral change.

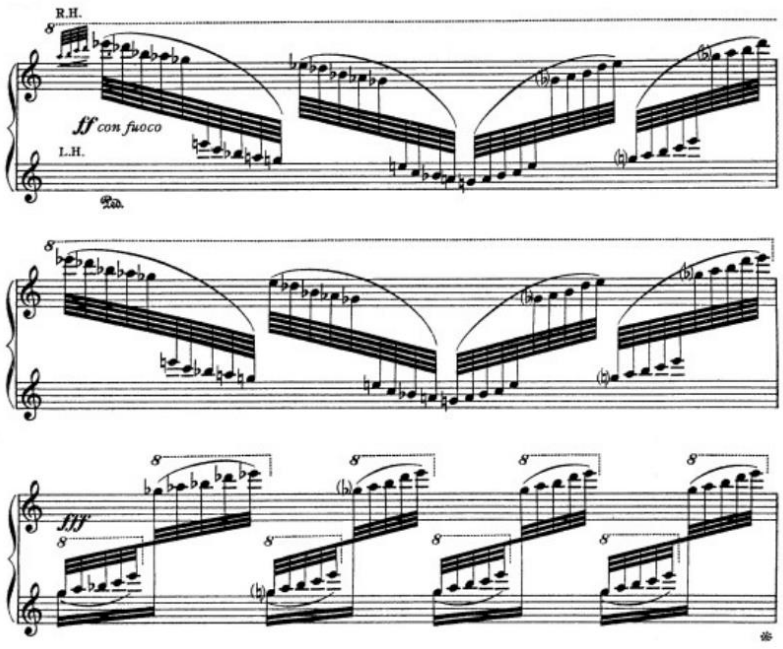
The decisive passage of this movement's erotic symbolism is the material that closes Ireland's A section. This passage appears three times, and rather than cadencing, Ireland writes three different 'conclusions' that become gradually more musically and gesturally transgressive. First, in bars 20-21 he recalls the parallel triads of 'The Island Spell'; here, their ascent is again impeded, and Ireland returns to a reiteration of his opening material (Figure 17).

[107] Buch (2019), 57.



(Figure 16) John Ireland: The Scarlet Ceremonies, bb. 20-22 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

In its second attempt (bars 39-41), the hands pass between them arpeggiated bitonal figures in squirts of arrhythmic adrenalin that destabilize the already twisted tonal spine of the piece. The energy is becoming increasingly unmanageable. The influence of Debussy's 'Jardins sous la pluie' from *Estampes* (1903) is unmistakable, both in the bitonal conversation between the hands and in the depiction of an uncontrollable nature-ecstasy in sound (Figures 18 and 19).



(Figure 17) John Ireland: The Scarlet Ceremonies, bb. 39-41 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

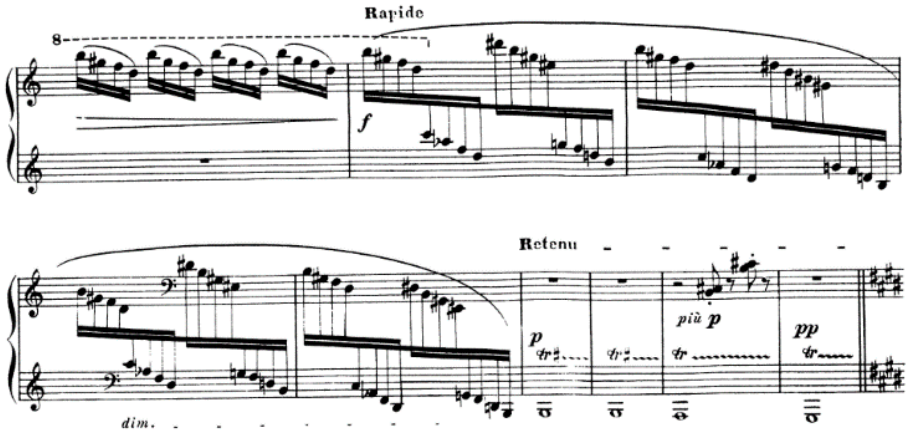
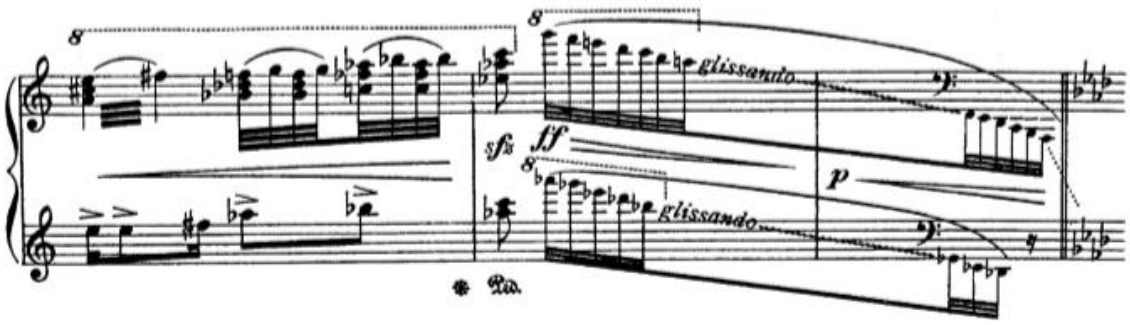


Figure 18 ('Jardins sous la pluie' bb. 118-126)

For Debussy and Ireland, this is as much a physical and visual technique as an aural one. But whereas Debussy's use of this technique inaugurates the coda, Ireland again subsides and eases his tremolo into an ostinato that accompanies the movement's lyrical middle section. In Ireland's third and final close to his A material, we find the transgressive climax of *Decorations* in the form of a descending double glissando. This is the first appearance of this effect in the British piano repertoire (Figure 20).



(Figure 19) John Ireland: The Scarlet Ceremonies, bb. 95-97 © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

As in Debussy's *Feux d'artifice* (1912-13), a piece which also depicts the smearing of colours, the glissando for Ireland 'becomes the only way out' of his accumulated energy. In

Ireland's case, however, the influence of Machen enables a more uncanny reading than what Paul Roberts has ambiguously called Debussy's 'audacious theatrical gesture that appears to negate all musical intention.'[108] The double glissando is an aural, visual, and tactile representation of blurred realities. Even on the page the effect is violative. It is a hieroglyph of the erotic-weird. It is a submission in which the sublimated vagaries of 'The Island Spell' and 'Moon-Glade', representing structure (civilization), have given way to impulse. In *The White People*, the girl's diary ends abruptly, and an epilogue informs us that she was found dead, 'lying on the ground before the image', referring to the thicket and the 'wild, lonely country' that she so graphically described.

> A child's imagination always makes the heights higher and the depths deeper than they really are; and she had, unfortunately for herself, something more than imagination. One might say, perhaps, that the picture in her mind which she succeeded in a measure in putting into words, was the scene as it would have appeared to an imaginative artist. But it is a strange, desolate land.[109]

It is this intensity of experience that attracted Ireland to Machen's epigraph – the 'heights' and the 'depths' of imaginative exercise that impose the machinations of an inner desire on an external reality. For Ireland, in his 'misreading' of Machen's narrative, the encounter with 'the image' derails content but nevertheless cumulates in a triumphant finish. Transgression is not desolation but revivification.

Conclusion

[108] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 185. 'The Scarlet Ceremonies' was completed in June 1913, making it unlikely that Ireland had already encountered Debussy's second book of preludes.
[109] Machen (2011), 146.

In erotic terms, knowingness can masquerade as ignorance. Paradoxicality is perversity.[110]

> So with the sinner, as with the saints. If you met a very evil man, and recognised his evil; he would, no doubt, fill you with horror and awe; but there is no reason why you should 'dislike' him. On the contrary, it is quite possible that if you could succeed in putting the sin out of your mind you might find the sinner capital company, and in a little while you might have to reason yourself back into the horror.[111]

A microcosm of this principle may be found in Ireland's setting of Townsend Warner's 'The Scapegoat'. Here, he again repositions an already erotically transgressive text. By assuming the sins of others, the scapegoat finds that his own 'personal sin[s]' have been 'released', leaving him free to dance 'with a careless heart' in the desert.[112] Like Finvara, the scapegoat is removed from the known (civilized) world; like *Airs of the Lute*, his characterization hinges on the juxtaposition of traditionally conflicting moods (joy versus sorrow, happiness versus sin); and like *The White People*, he enacts a ritual (dancing) to express and sustain his ecstasy. Ireland's piano writing cleverly depicts the buoyancy of the scapegoat with grace-notes and left-handed strides, but he symbolically deviates from this mood for two lines:

> In the town, from sin made free,
> Righteous men hold jubilee.

In Townsend Warner's text, these lines imply that both saint and sinner are equally joyful, but Ireland refigures them into something even more transgressive. He directs the performer to sing these words *molto legato* and *In Parody*. With his change in both texture and delivery, Ireland manipulates the text into implying that the 'jubilee' of the 'righteous' townspeople is a less elating thing than the openly transgressive scapegoat. He appends this parody with

---

[110] 'Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion.' See Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 44. Ireland's library includes an edition of *De Profundis*.
[111] Machen (2011), 117.
[112] For the biblical passage that Townsend Warner is satirizing, see *The King James Bible*, Leviticus 16.7-10.

another anarchic smear (Figure 21), like those in 'The Scarlet Ceremonies', which returns to the image of the scapegoat reveling in guiltless sin. Submission to sin, like the previously discussed submission to nature, liberates the individual into an amoral hedonism.



Figure 20 ('The Scapegoat' bb. 31-34)

Ireland does the same thing to Machen's words in 'The Scarlet Ceremonies'. He recasts erotic horror, or at least erotic equivocation, as erotic fulfillment. The moral ambivalence that Machen and other weird writers exude allows their work to be seen from almost any position. It encourages 'misinterpretation'. This Heraclitean notion of the way up and the way down being the same, like Darnell's dream, extends to Ireland's own weirdness. *Decorations* may be read both ways, as is confirmed by the appearance of Machen's epigraph before the final movement even though it is a text that recommends a retrospective reinterpretation of everything one has previously heard. The discomfiture of ambiguity is a weird ambivalence too, extending from Edmund Burke: part of pleasure is the pursuit of pain, and 'whatever is on any sort terrible … is a source of the sublime'.[113] What unites Ireland

[113] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 36.

and Machen is their shared belief in the centrality of art to this pursuit. Overcome by what she has experienced, the girl's impulse to dance in *The White People* as she leaves the summit of the hill is not incidental. Machen is implying that art is both our response to and our embodiment of the ecstatically incomprehensible that Lovecraft would later call 'cosmic horror'.[114] Art is the scapegoat.

> As proof of the existence of true evil, Ambrose does not enact some ancient ritual of sacrifice nor does he attempt to conjure the devil. Instead, he offers Cotgrave a little green book, the writings of a young girl who was apparently very evil indeed in the true sense, though she never committed a crime against anyone. What this suggests is that such literature is itself a form of sorcery; it conjures up figures of the unknown, of the formless and shapeless deep out of which all things emerge. Machen suggests that through such figures we can experience these mysteries and in so doing gain access to the world of true sin, a world of transgression and transcendence always present beneath the known and the civilized.[115]

Ireland's *Decorations*, whose title and content encapsulate every 'fleeting formless shadowy thought' and all the 'tribulations and impulsions' that Nordau and others ascribed to 'the mystically degenerate mind', asserts this same principle.[116] However problematic its message, art is the hieroglyph with which we reason ourselves 'back into the horror'.

[114] See Lovecraft, 12-17.
[115] Kimberley Jackson, 'Non-Evolutionary Degeneration in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 41.1 (2013), 134.
[116] Nordau, 300.

Chapter 2

The Urban Weird: Transmutations of Place

Introduction

London was the primary residence of both Ireland and Machen for the bulk of their adult lives, though it was considerably more than a mere address. London was a central fixture of their respective imaginative universes. Their distinctive, fictional realization of the city expanded through vivid personification upon a complex real-life relationship that they each maintained with place; their public spaces were manifestations of interior ones.[1] Their urban-themed works were nuanced socio-cultural dialogues enacted through elaborate contrasts. Most prominently, they couched urban depictions within an overarching juxtaposition of the weird amidst the banal. By addressing the same environment across multiple works, Ireland and Machen added to this dialogue elements of memory and phenomenological layering as later works became commentaries on earlier ones. Previous scholars have recognized this shared fascination with a laminated city beneath a city, but this chapter is the first to engage with correlations between Ireland's and Machen's weird London works in pursuit of broader aesthetic and philosophical implications. In doing so, it proposes that they were both skillful proponents of the urban weird who conceptualized the city as a weird, unknowable landscape.

[1] I am referring to Walter Benjamin's appreciation of Baudelaire in Benjamin (2006), 68.

Ireland's oeuvre, like Machen's, may be said to revolve around a relatively narrow range of ideas. Both men curated an art of fixation rather than expansion. Consequently, the difficulties one encounters in attempting to classify Ireland arise not necessarily from any bewildering stylistic diversity across his output but from the diverse manner in which he repeatedly addresses the same subjects. This is nowhere more apparent than in Ireland's multifaceted treatment of landscape, both rural and urban. This chapter focuses on Ireland's London-based compositions, taking as its case study two of the composer's major works for solo piano: *London Pieces* ('Chelsea Reach', 'Ragamuffin', and 'Soho Forenoons') (1917-1920) and *Ballade of London Nights* (1930, posth.). Separated as they are by roughly a decade and standing at opposite ends of Ireland's stylistic spectrum, these two compositions provide a convenient means of tracing the maturation and plurality of their composer's varied urban aesthetic.

Understanding the Urban Weird

The weird mantle that peculiarized Ireland's and Machen's London works originated long before their generation. A venerable tradition of visionary urban writing may be traced through some of Machen's favourite authors including William Blake, Thomas De Quincey, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Various though their treatment of urban material was, these writers shared a perception of the city as visionary territory, meaning generally that the city was a mutable space, constantly reinvigorating itself and resisting definition. Theirs was a myriadfold London that encompassed the sacred, the profane, the familiar, the obscure, and other similarly opposing binaries. The discrepancies or conflicts between these aspects constitutes an assault on the senses for the visionary writer,

an overabundance of detail as increasingly dubious evidence emanates from the landscape until the only clearly defining feature of a city might be said to be its unknowability. The visionary writer embraces what others are more likely to dismiss as the antagonism of the irreconcilable.

This last point is a hallmark of London's weird canon, especially in the equivocation of identity and tone throughout the city's fictional and non-fictional historiography. As Peter Ackroyd has explained, London is an intuited experience that is 'felt rather than seen'.[2] It is transrational. Ford Maddox Ford (1873-1939) representatively assessed London to be an 'illimitable' microcosmos of which it is impossible to form 'any impression…as a whole.'[3] Julian Wolfreys's classification of London as a 'hyperreality' echoes the sentiments of these and other anecdotes from an inestimable catalogue of equivalently quasi-reverential statements to which, as we shall see, Machen and Ireland also belong: London is 'not a place as such' but rather '*takes place*', particularly in literary accounts.[4]

Machen's favourite writers all elicit this imaginative and interactive approach to the urban environment. When De Quincey described his 1821 opium-eating self as having encountered 'such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphynx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares', he was threading the same multi-dimensional labyrinthine London that Machen later idolized in *The Three Imposters* (1895) or *A London Adventure* (1924) and which both Machen and Ireland delighted in exploring.[5]

---

[2] Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (New York & London: Anchor Books, 2000), 452.
[3] Ford Maddox Ford, *The Soul of London* (London: Everyman, 1905), 6.
[4] Julien Wolfreys, *Writing London: The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 4. Alternatively, Efraim Sicher argues that in fact Dickens shows one how an accurate representation of the cityscape can be rendered by an 'alternative theory of representation' that does not rely on the visual. See Efraim Sicher, 'The "Attraction of Repulsion": Dickens, Modernity, and Representation', in *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke*, ed. Lawrence Phillips (New York: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007), 35-60.
[5] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1910), 231. H.P. Lovecraft referenced these confessions in *The Crawling Chaos* (1921), praising the 'ecstasies and horrors' of

In the manner of De Quincey, fin-de-siècle writers cast the developed and pedestrian metropolitan centre as a counterintuitively mysterious and threatening environment. Unknowable and uncompromising, the city is partitioned into areas and atmospheres of extreme juxtaposition. Jamieson Ridenhour considers the whole of Gothic London, in the way that writers such as Machen portrayed it, as a De Quincean labyrinth through which characters, in an anxious perversion of the ordinarily blasé air surrounding Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur,* wander through a segregated London of 'light' and 'dark' spaces with a constant sense of 'being lost and threatened' by the inhabitants of those spaces as well as by the spaces themselves.[6] Judith R. Walkowitz further suggested that this perception was the product of literary exploits as, 'in the last decades of the nineteenth century, journalistic exposés highlighted this geographic segregation, impressing on Londoners the perception that they lived in a city of contrasts, a class and geographically divided metropolis of hovels and palaces.'[7]

Like his Parisian counterpart, the London *flâneur* in these tales is a creature of customarily melancholic disposition who aimlessly explores the cityscape. He – the nineteenth-century *flâneur* is always male though not necessarily masculine – observes, catalogues, and sometimes critiques the features of modernity while also registering with conspicuous detachment the effect of these on the street-flow of humanity.[8] An aura of aloofness is sustained by the distance of the observer, by the distinction between the watcher

---

De Quincey's ability to convey opium's power to transform mind and urban space: '…the world knows well the beauty, the terror, and the mystery of those obscure realms into which the inspired dreamer is transported.' See H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Crawling Chaos' in *The Doom that Came to Sarnath* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), 132.

[6] Jamieson Ridenhour, *In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape in Victorian Literature* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 85-98.

[7] Walkowitz (1992), 26.

[8] 'Flâneur' may also refer to the sort of semi-journalistic writer which Machen sometimes was.

and the watched. In disagreement with Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin believed the *flâneur* to be distinguishable from the so-called 'man of the crowd'. The *flâneur*, he wrote, can 'indulge in the perambulations [of his métier] only if as such he is already out of place. He is as much out of place in an atmosphere of complete leisure as in the feverish turmoil of the city.'[9]

And so, for all his other aspects, the *flâneur* is ultimately a man set apart from humanity. He stays in a given place only long enough to find that he does not belong, and this melancholic scar is precisely what grants him the power to observe. The wound is a perceptual opening. Always partial to walking, Machen's *flâneur* protagonists are both literal and metaphorical wanderers. They are introverted, anomic, and often isolated figures. They lose themselves, again both literally and metaphorically, in the hazardous complexity of urban landscape, conforming also to Benjamin's discrimination between crowd and *flaneur*, between 'they' and 'I'.

All of Machen's London narratives employ some variation on this archetype. This ranges from Edward Darnell (*A Fragment of Life*) to Lucian (*The Hill of Dreams*), Phillips and Dyson on multiple occasions (*The Three Imposters, The Red Hand* and *The Great God Pan*), Charles Symonds (*The Idealist*), as well as various characters, both named and unnamed in other short stories – they are all *flâneurs*. It is impossible to ignore the autobiographical origins of the prevalence of this character type in Machen's fiction. Though he lived in London for the whole of his adult life, Machen came to the city from outside. Born and raised in Monmouthshire, Machen first visited London in 1880 with his father at the age of seventeen. In 1882, he moved to the city, initially living at Turnham Green and

[9] Benjamin (2006), 188. Benjamin writes at length about Edgar Allan Poe's short-story 'The Man of the Crowd' in which a man sits in a London café and watches the masses pass by, gradually peeling away more and more layers as he examines in meticulous detail the characters of the city and hypothesizes as to their profession, nature, etc. The man fictionalizes the scene before him to a schizophrenic degree.

then 23 Clarendon Road, Bayswater. A complete recount of Machen's many residences, not all of which are even known, is not essential to this study, though a partial listing is suggestive. From 1888-1889, he lived in Great Russell Street. In 1890, he moved to 12 Soho Street and then 90 Guildford Street, Bloomsbury. From 1892 until 1895, he lived at Northend house, Tunville in Buckinghamshire before relocating to 4 Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn.[10] Upon his marriage to Dorothie Purefoy Hudleston in 1903, Machen lived in 5 and then 6 Cosway Street, Marylebone. The family moved to Edward House, Lisson Grove seven years later. In 1919, they moved to 12 Melina Place, St. John's Wood and then in 1927 to 28 Loudon Road. Machen's final residence was Lynwood, Old Amersham, Bucks, where he remained from 1929 until his death.[11]

Even though his geography was centred around London, within the city itself Machen was constantly moving. This instability was the unsurprising result of long periods of financial uncertainty, but it was also an indicator of Machen's rootlessness. Machen was an urban-bound provincial. Even through the eyes of others after decades of living in London, Machen never truly belonged in the urban scene. He referred to himself as 'a dweller in the tents of London', explaining that Londoners, unlike the countryside people of his Welsh childhood, 'have no homes.'[12]

In a 1924 article from *Welsh Outlook*, a populist periodical, Geoffrey H. Wells described Machen as 'essentially Welsh', a classification that the article proceeded to apply to all of Machen's fictions, even those set outside of Wales. Machen's non-Welsh stories,

[10] The three years in Northend House bordering the Chilterns constituted Machen's only residence outside of central London between 1882 and 1929. Mark Valentine proposes that Machen may have moved there for the sake of his wife's health. Valentine (1995), 37.
[11] This chronology is reconstructed from David Trotter's useful introduction to Arthur Machen, *The Three Imposters* (London: Everyman, 1995), xiii-xv.
[12] Arthur Machen, *The Autobiography of Arthur Machen* (London: The Richards Press, 1951), 65.

Wells contended, 'derive' from his childhood in Gwent, and even 'after all these years in London he remains provincial, a countryman at heart.'[13] This is borne out by Machen's own writings on identity. He frequently described himself as Welsh and claimed that 'I shall always esteem it as the greatest piece of fortune that has fallen to me, that I was born in that noble, fallen Caerleon-on-Usk, in the heart of Gwent', adding that his origins there coloured everything he subsequently did.[14] While the admittedly nationalist agenda of *Welsh Outlook* ought to be taken into account, Wells's article offers a justifiable interpretation of Machen's itinerant status. It is a view which Machen's own memoir seems to endorse for both the urbanite and the provincial:

> And, as I think that the pure provincial can never understand the quiddity or essence of London, so I believe that for the born Londoner the country ever remains as incredible mystery. He knows that it is there – somewhere – but he has no true vision of it. In spite of himself he Londonises it, suburbanises it…[15]

This is a perspective deeply relevant to the present chapter in its decentralization of any univocal London narrative. Machen spent a lifetime in the metropolis but never fully lived there; like that of many others, his work is likewise seen as existing both within and without the urban centre.

Robert Louis Stevenson, one of Machen's first literary idols, is also central to an understanding of this weird and paradoxical perception of London as a space that is both unknowable yet also curiously self-manufactured. Machen so admired Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* (1882) and *More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter* (1885) that, in a habitual instance of excessive modesty, he dismissed *The Three Imposters* as 'an imitation'

[13] Wells was an English writer, biographer, and bibliographer who is best-known for his biography of H.G. Wells (W.W. Norton, 1930) which he wrote under the pseudonym 'Geoffrey West'.
[14] Machen (1922), 9. Machen's contentious relationship with Welshness and Celticism is addressed in Chapter 3.
[15] Machen (1951) 16.

of those two collections, adding that he intentionally imitated 'this "Arabian" manner of Stevenson's as well as I could.'[16] However much one might consider the derivative elements of Machen's writing to be a negative quality, Robert Mighall has examined the forceful and compelling ways in which Machen's descriptive imagery recalls Stevenson's blend of the topographical with the somatic; specifically, the human body and the urban body politic are 'mapped out on the geography of the city'.[17] This is perhaps the most important element of Stevenson's London writings for our understanding of Machen in the present context: the self is projected onto or written into the landscape, just as De Quincey's urban perambulations may be read as an inner mythic journey of the soul crafted in the Freudian sense onto a dense, layered, and entangled cityscape.

In a foreshadowing of later developments in literary post-modernism, Stevenson's and Machen's characters carry out acts of secondary authorship, illustrating what Julian Wolfreys calls our experience of the city as 'a performance' in which we 'overwrite a past onto what has always been a city in the act of becoming, a city always in the process of self-transformation.'[18] This self-transformation may again refer to both the city and to the citizen. Thus, Holbrook Jackson could claim that London was more a happening or 'incident' than a

[16] Quoted in Henry Danielson, *Arthur Machen: A Bibliography with Notes, Biographical and Critical, by Arthur Machen* (Henry Danielson: London, 1923), 27. Similarities between the books did not escape reviewers. See 'The Three Imposters' in *The Athenaeum*, 3562 (February 1, 1896), 146 and 'The Three Imposters', *The Saturday Review*, 81.2098 (11 January 1896), 48-49.

[17] Mighall cites Stevenson's careful placement of the 'anthropologically "low" Mr Hyde' in Soho, a correspondingly 'low' area of the city. Soho, which Stevenson describes as the 'district of some city in a nightmare', is the natural habit for Jekyll's 'atavistic alibi'. As Mighall explains, Stevenson's topographical and physical imagery 'reinforce each other'. See Mighall (2003), 150-151. The parallels between Machen's and Stevenson's sensational London tales did not escape a contemporary reviewer in the *Glasgow Herald* who considered the two men to share a similar technique of 'restraint': 'Northing more striking or more skilful [sic] than this book [*The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light*] has been produced in the way of what one may call Borderland fiction since Mr Stevenson's indefatigable Brownies gave the world "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde."' See 'The Great God Pan and the Inmost Light (London: John Lane)', *Glasgow Herald*, 298 (13 December 1894).

[18] Wolfreys, 7.

pinpointable entity.[19] Maddox Ford likewise described London as 'essentially a background' against which man plays out some eloquent drama.[20] The essential point is that, retrospectively, the individual does not necessarily remember or even conceive of place as an external thing – he remembers or conceives of *himself* in a place. Everything is filtered through the subjective lens of self-authoring. Thus, a place is defined not in terms of location but by the experience that it contains.[21]

This contentious relationship between experience (through being) and knowledge (of place) is central to Machen's worldview. In *A Fragment of Life* (1906), for example, Edward Darnell symbolically declines to take a guided tour of London after relocating to the city. He even refuses to buy a map, fearing that it 'would have spoilt it, somehow; to see everything plotted out, and named, and measured.'[22] Darnell is perceiving the city as a visionary space. His attitude aligns with William James's definition of mystical states as some quality that 'must be directly experienced' and 'cannot be imparted or transferred to others' because no precise or even adequate report of its contents can be given in words.[23] The mystical is not only non-representational; representation is toxic to the mystical. Because the urban real, whatever that may be, resists noetic models of understanding, it can only be accessed or approximated after one has paradoxically acknowledged that it is forever beyond comprehension – once one has recognized, as Machen often did, 'the distinction between

[19] Holbrook Jackson (1922), 106.
[20] Maddox Ford, 10.
[21] This distinction between non-human 'space' and humanized 'place' is made in Tilley (1994), 59. Peter Ackroyd concludes as much with his query, 'Is London, then just a state of mind?' He wonders if the 'nebulous' boundaries and 'protean' identity of the city have made the city itself 'an attitude or a set of predilections'. See Ackroyd (2000), 750.
[22] Machen (2011), 179.
[23] James (2013), 430.

truth & accurate (or scientific) information'.[24] And so Darnell elects to undertake a personalized unfolding of the cityscape through his own solitary walks, intentionally deluding himself into feeling as though he were 'going where nobody had been before' and discovering or rather creating London for himself.[25] The city is rewritten in terms of the self; in Machen's patois, it is 'transmuted'. The public space becomes a private possession as the Londoner remembers 'his London, his intimate London' which is defined by 'the little bits of it that witnessed the great moments, the poignant moods of his life; it will be what happened to be the backgrounds of his more intense emotions'.[26] As Darnell says, 'I *made* a map'.[27]

But even a self-made map or a map-of-the-self still resists complete rationalization. Through his writings, Machen repeatedly portrayed London as flitting just beyond the reach of understanding let alone of explication:

> The Science of the great city; the physiology of London; literally and metaphysically the greatest subject that the mind can conceive…Yet I feel sometimes positively overwhelmed with the thought of the vastness and complexity of London. Paris a man may get to understand thoroughly with a reasonable amount of study; but London is always a mystery.[28]

Two important points are conveyed by such passages. First, Machen conceives of the city as a conscious *thing*. His personification of it is present everywhere. The city exhales a peculiar

[24] Quoted in Danielson (1923), 18. Machen called this phenomenon, for which science fails to provide a formula and leaves us 'forced to believe in a miracle which we cannot understand', the central 'paradox' of literature, though he added that 'it is a paradox that must be steadfastly believed.' Arthur Machen, 'The Paradox of Literature' in *The Academy*, 2108 (28 September 1912), 409-410. This will be readdressed in Chapter 4.
[25] There are shades of De Quincey in this sense of adventure – of imagining oneself as the first to discover an urban centre: 'I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these terra incognitae, and doubted whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London.' See De Quincey, 231.
[26] Maddox Ford, 26-27.
[27] Machen (2011), 179. Emphasis mine. Compare with Peter Ackroyd's statement that 'It may be that each citizen has created a London in his or her own head, so that at the same moment there may exist seven million different cities.' See *London: A Biography*, 772.
[28] From 'The Inmost Light' in Machen (2011), 2.

'fainting breath', and its inhabitants collectively form a 'movement of life' belonging to some strange superior anatomy.[29] The city is also given its own sounds which are carefully distinguished from the manmade 'hurrying traffic', 'ringing bells', or 'cries of the newsboys'. Heard 'beneath these louder noises' is something else entirely: 'the deep far murmur of London surging up ever and again.'[30] In his memoir, Machen reflected how as a young man 'London began to call to me'; it 'began to summon.'[31] Given the seismic changes in architectural, structural, social, and psychological strata for both rural and urban environments that dominated the age, it is unsurprising that such personifications attesting to an inherent instability and strangeness in London's landscape were widespread amongst fin-de-siècle writers.[32] The modern city was increasingly perceived as more than a place. It was sentient. Maddox Ford compared the capital to a 'Personality', his capitalization of the improper noun further intensifying the promotion from aspect to essence.[33] Thomas Hardy's 1879 description of the Lord Mayor's Show which depicts the populous as components of a larger 'organic whole, a molluscous black creature' that takes the shape of city streets and alleyways like a creature whose voice 'exudes from its scaly coat and who has an eye in every pore of its body' is striking and emblematic.[34] Weird London is not a space but a sort of monster – an organism brought to life by the kinetics of lesser, oblivious bodies. The political and social repercussions of such a perception are manifold, but essential to the doctrine of

[29] Machen (2018) 91.
[30] Machen (2011), 8.
[31] Machen (1951), 64 and 67.
[32] These transformations are beyond the scope of this study. For an introduction, see Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), 3-16 and 17-36; and David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones, *Metropolis – London: Histories and Representations Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1989). See Haewon Hwang, *London's Underground Spaces: Representing The Victorian City, 1840-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) for a fascinating account of how developments in a rather niche area ensured the perception of London as Gothic space well into the twentieth century.
[33] Maddox Ford, xi.
[34] Quoted in Williams (1985), 216.

the weird is the degree of agency that this imagery confers upon the city. Place becomes character. Particularly in Machen's fictional and non-fictional works, London exerts a level of influence so critical to human participants that one is obliged to suspect an element of conscious force. Machen's London is itself a participant – an active agent that engages with narrative, facilitating encounters and supplying revelations to the plot which as so numerous and so conveniently serendipitous that they beg to be judged as more than mere coincidences. The city is not a stage but a stage manager.

The second crucial point glimpsed in the above excerpt is that Machen's London is a landscape that is discernible yet indeterminate. This perspective resulted from a suspicion that efforts to capture the city are ultimately futile. Thus, Machen turned to techniques of dispersion in which subject, plot, and space were made to reflect the impenetrable plurality of urban experience. The use of multiple and contradictory narrators in *The Three Imposters*; a fractious relationship between dream and waking in *A Fragment of Life*; the pliant chronology of *The Great God Pan*; Lucian's psychological disequilibrium in *The Hill of Dreams* as he shifts between the half-corporeal urban present and the half-fantastic rural past – these are all epistemological compromises that feed on the abiding elusiveness of a verifiable known.

J. Hillis Miller described as 'atopical' those places that are both 'everywhere and nowhere' and for which the attempt to map is 'interrupted by an encounter with the unmappable.' The mind blanks at an epistemological glare as topography and toponymy conspire to 'hide an unplaceable place'.[35] In the following passage, Machen's city is actively circumventing any would-be perceiver:

[35] J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995),

> London…does not lie open and undefended; it is a fortified place, fossed and double-moated with curious intricacies. As must always happen in large towns, the conditions of life have become hugely artificial; no mere simple palisade is run up to oppose the man or woman who would take the place by storm, but serried lines of subtle contrivances, mines, and pitfalls which it needs a strange skill to overcome.[36]

In Miller's terms, the ensuing function of an atopical landscape such as this is to serve as a 'locus' for 'strange event[s] that took place without taking place'. Miller's paradoxical assertion allows him to classify atopical events such as Edward Darnell's mapmaking as 'performative'. They resist cognition. Miller did not evoke the weird or the uncanny in his study, but his determined equivocation of boundary lines, transnatural framework, and his invocation of the Baudelairean strange make the weird implications of his observation unignorable. The atopical is concerned, by Miller's own admission, with 'the preoriginal ground of the ground, something other to any activity of mapping.[37]

Of course, the scenario Miller constructs is really a complicated distinction between 'event' and 'happening' and whether occurrences happen or happenings occur, however slight that distinction may be. It is another way of phrasing what Henri Lefebvre called 'the urban situation' where things in urban landscape 'occur' *as a result of* the abstraction between themselves and place, just as the city 'centralizes creation' without itself creating anything.[38]

In a chapter on Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836), a work that Machen considered to be one of the greatest achievements of western literature, Miller comments on a 'topographical circumstantiality' regarding the cityscape. In both this book and others, Dickens is careful to precisely name the locations within his narrative – streets, intersections,

[36] See 'Novel of the Black Seal' in Machen (2011), 33.
[37] J. Hillis Miller, 7.
[38] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis & London, 2003), 117.

hotels, and other details are all specified. But the precision of a place-name is offset by its inevitable compression. A place-name is more than a location. It is shorthand for everything that a location may contain; it is an oblique reference to a potentially vast sphere of social, cultural, economic, or comedic heritage which may be of vital importance to our full appreciation of the narrative. Dickens 'assumes' his readers are already familiar with the landscape his characters inhabit. Therefore, the brief mention of a name is considered sufficient to awaken within the reader 'a shared topographical inner space' of London and all that it implies; and because the place-name is shorthand for all that it contains, Dickens expected his reader to follow all of his urban detail 'as a presupposition of the action'. These are places where *things* happen, with *things* understood in its uncanny sense of the familiar made unfamiliar. This is partially how, Miller explains, 'meanings are elliptically conveyed just through toponymy.'[39]

In Machen's oeuvre, 'London' becomes shorthand for the weird. It is of course common for stories to begin with descriptions of setting, but with Machen there is a further and not coincidental significance to the fact that the majority of his London tales commence with strange invocations of the cityscape, whether elaborate or brief. *N* (1936) begins with three men reminiscing about the London of their childhood. *The Inmost Light* (1894) immediately places Mr. Charles Salisbury on Rupert Street on a morning of spectral light and mist. Edward Darnell starts *A Fragment of Life* by awakening from his dream of the Welsh countryside into the city. *The Three Imposters*, as we shall see in further detail later on, sets its highly embellished opening scene in a London suburb. Perhaps most strikingly, the prologue of *The White People*, with its discourse on the nature of sin, is set in a non-descript

[39] Hillis Miller, 105-106.

'northern suburb'; but the transition from this Socratic scrutiny to neopagan witchcraft in the form of a girl's diary is heralded by Cotgrave's view toward the 'broad red band in the east' from a hill overlooking 'that awful spectacle of London in a dream.'[40] London serves in this subtle transition as a symbolic bridge from collected rational discourse to unbridled prehistoric terror. In all of these cases, Machen lets his readers know at the outset of a tale that they will be confronted with the weird because, in Machen's world, London is a landscape where an encounter with the weird is bound to happen. Machen's London – both descriptions of the cityscape and the name itself – is a talisman of weird experience.

Therefore, though Machen is less pedantic than Dickens in naming quite so many avenues or intersections as his characters wander through the city, he shares with Dickens this phenomenological interplay between the elliptical and the direct. In this sense, the weirdness of Machen's London extends from the indeterminacy of space itself, played out with particular vividness in the debatable boundary between city and country – a bifurcation that became, in the writing of the time, a frequent metaphor for the blurred and consequently porous or permeable distinction between civilization and barbarity.

There is an urban fringe in Machen's writings that serves in many ways as a regional, southern English equivalent to the northern and western Celtic Fringe. An example of this interplay may be found in *The Inmost Light*. Here, Dyson begins the exposition of his unusual story with particular emphasis on the story's geography. He immediately refers to the strange occurrence by its place, the 'Harlesden case', insinuating that the geography of the story is somehow integral to its horror. Place facilitates the unfolding of weirdness. Dyson describes Harlesden as 'quite on the out-quarters of London', contrasting it with Norwood or

[40] See Machen (2011), 118.

Hampstead in that, being relatively new, it 'is a place of no character'. He walks through the area and records his impression of the 'physiognomy' of the quarter:

> There are the rows of red houses and the rows of white houses and the bright green Venetians, and the blistering doorways, and the little backyards they call gardens, and a few feeble shops, and then, just as you think you're going to grasp the physiognomy of the settlement, it all melts away….Harlesden as an entity disappears. Your street turns into a quiet lane, and your staring houses into elm trees, and the back-gardens into green meadows. You pass instantly from town to country; there is no transition as in a small country town, no soft gradations of wider lawns and orchards, with houses gradually becoming less dense, but a dead stop.[41]

This is an unstable landscape of indefinable character. The transition 'from town to country' is impossible for Dyson to quantify. It just happens. Dyson's ambulation resembles those of Machen, an inveterate walker, who recalled how in his youth he would venture through London on long excursions 'chiefly in the western borders' of the city. Walking alone, he would suddenly find himself 'in something like a country road' after having only just been in the familiarity of Brentford.[42] Machen's deliberation ('something like') is key as again the distinction between city and country remains unclear. But whatever that distinction may be, the transition from one to the other is disconcertingly sudden. In an instant, 'here' becomes 'there' or vice versa.

Machen professed an insistent disdain for these ambivalent urban-rural spaces. The inspiration for the above passage from *The Inmost Light* is recounted in Machen's autobiography. Passing from city to country, Machen deplored the intervening 'sad zone of destruction and disgrace that always lies just beyond the furthest points of the suburb.' This is a place of malformed half-breeds, where 'hedges are half ruined [sic], half remaining [sic],

[41] See 'The Inmost Light' in Machen (2011), 3-4. This urban fringe is also a feature of Arthur Conan Doyle's writing. See Alex Owen, 'Borderland Forms: Arthur Conan Doyle, Albion's Daughters, and the Politics of the Cottingley Fairies', *History Workshop Journal*, 38.1 (1994), 48-85.
[42] Arthur Machen, *A Few Letters* [1932] (The Avelsford Press: Cheshire, 1993), 27.

where the little winding brook is defiled, but not yet a drain, where one tree lies felled and withered, while its fellow is still all green.' He is horrified by 'the violent irruption of red brick in the midst of a green field' and likens his shock to that of Robinson Crusoe 'when he saw the track of the foot on the sand of his desert island.'[43] It is a weird space betraying all expectations and conditions of normality. This encounter with the urban-rural fringe and other instances of it throughout Machen's oeuvre recalls symbolist works such as *Paris Spleen* (1869), where Baudelaire's narrator encounters a woman, Mademoiselle Bistouri, with a sadistic fetish for doctors fresh from the operating room ('his apron…splashed with a bit of blood') and a masochistic fetish for their surgical instruments. Grotesque and erotic though this story primarily is, its conditions are allowed only by its positioning within the context of an urban fringe. The story beings: 'As I was nearing the city's limits, under the haze of the gas lamps…'[44] In a manner which Machen was often to imitate, this 'haze' of light mimics the indistinctness of geographical, categorical, and, as the story progresses, ethical distinction. Baudelaire symbolically places his story simultaneously in an uncivilized borderland and under the artificial constellation of gas-powered modernity. If barbarity is

[43] See Machen (1951), 119-120. Machen was not alone in his attitude towards these places. Wilkie Collins's narrator in *The Woman in White* (1859) wonders 'Is there any wilderness of sand in the deserts of Arabian, is there any prospect of desolation among the ruins of Palestine, which can rival the repelling effect on the eye, and the depressing influence on the mind, of an English country town, in the first stage of its existence, and in the transition of its prosperity?' See Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (Oxford World Classics: Oxford, 2008), 493.

[44] See Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen* [first published in French in 1869], trans. Martin Sorrell (Alma Classics: London, 2010), 91-93. Another similarity between this prose-poem and *The Inmost Light* is that both texts are narrated by doctors; the difference is that Baudelaire's doctor encounters the strange whereas Machen's doctor practises it. In a letter to Vincent Starrett, Machen claimed 'I never read a line of Baudelaire…but I have read deeply in Poe, who, I believe, derives largely from Baudelaire.' Quoted in Vincent Starrett, *Arthur Machen: A Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin* [1918] (Tartarus Press: East Sussex, 1996), 21. This claim invites skepticism because it may be part of Machen's broader well-documented attempt to distance himself from the increasingly unpopular and politically toxic movements of the 1890s. See Machen (1993), 29-31, for example, for his recollection of meeting Oscar Wilde prior to the years of scandal. This portrait is a fascinating mixture of admiration and disapproval as Machen tries to distance himself from Wilde and the public stain of subsequent events.

rural darkness and civilization is urban light, then the urban weird may be said to be a sort of shadow flitting between them, made possible by elements of both while at the same time being neither.

Despite their shared uneasiness, what Machen and Dyson do recall clearly in such episodes is the emotion that accompanied their transition from one place to another:

> '…I can't conceive a greater loneliness in a desert at midnight than there is there at mid-day. It is like a city of the dead; the streets are glaring and desolate, and as you pass it suddenly strikes you that *this too is part of London*.'[45]

Elsewhere is here.[46] The shake-up of geographical and phenomenological categories that Machen enacts is a structural reflection of the multi-layered, inter-dimensional cityscape itself. They juxtapose past with present, here with there, known with unknown, and strange with banal. The city contains more than we had supposed, and Machen exploits the distortion of the urban-rural fringe to make it clear that strangeness is never far away. This passage from 'Psychology', a prose poem printed in *Ornaments in Jade*, is another case in point:

> All the inhabitants of the quarter prided themselves on their quiet and seclusion, and many of them did not so much as dream that if one went far enough the road degenerated and became abominable, the home of the hideous, the mouth of a black purlieu. Indeed stories, ill and malodorous, were told of the streets parallel, to east and west, which perhaps communicated with the terrible sink beyond, but those who lived at the good end of Abingdon Road knew nothing of their neighbours.[47]

This is not to say that the delineation between rustic London and London proper is exclusive to the inner versus outer London dynamic. The transition may occur anywhere. In *The Three Imposters*, Dyson roams 'aimlessly' through the streets of central London and happens upon

[45] See Machen (2011), 3-4. Emphasis mine.
[46] The horror that often accompanies this indigenous elsewhere is sometimes even exportable, as in the figure of Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or the first tale from *The Three Imposters* which takes place in the American West. Increasingly, London-based texts showed that instruments of horror no longer needed to be shipped in from Transylvania. Although some small parallels in their work exist, it is important to note that Machen claimed never to have enjoyed reading Conrad, whom he considered 'pure veracity: but his true tale is so terribly dull.' See Machen (1993), 25-26.
[47] Machen (1997), 32.

a dark and 'sombre little by-street…a street devoid of inhabitants' where he detects a 'strange peace and dimness' and witnesses an uncanny episode. It is only afterwards that he discovers that this removed elsewhere was in the familiar vicinity of Tottenham Court Road.[48]

If the transition from familiar to *unheimlich* can happen anywhere, then the distinction must not be one of place so much as one of psychology. It is a perceptual change. This summons again the issue of how one might map the urban space. Extending from the concept of both an inner and an outer London, Machen espoused the existence of both a 'London *cognita* and a London *incognita*'.[49] He was assiduous to emphasize in his own writings and in his reading of other exponents of the urban weird that the division between these modes did not constitute a distinction between reality and fantasy.[50] Whether in fiction or non-fiction, Machen was always advocating for his conception of what is real. For Machen, De Quincey's drug-induced urban visions were, at most, only ever quasi-hallucinatory. In fact, Machen classified De Quincey as a pinnacle of literary realism because the latter ascribed to 'the depicting of eternal, inner realities – the "things that really are" of Plato – as opposed to the description of transit [sic], external surfaces; the delusory masks and dominoes with which the human heart drapes and hides itself.'[51] At best, De Quincey's exposure to substances was instructive but ultimately unnecessary in Machen's worldview because man already contains within himself all that he needs in order to access the hidden dimensions of

[48] See *The Three Imposters* in Machen (2018) 84.
[49] See Machen (1924), 60.
[50] This is the main reason why it would be a mistake to classify Machen as an exponent of urban fantasy, a genre where the division between the real and the unreal is much clearer. There are exceptions, but the difference between urban fantasy and weird fiction might be said to be a distinction between embellishment and distortion. Urban fantasy adds to what is there whereas the urban weird provides an alternative way of perceiving what is there already.
[51] See Machen (1951), 48.

reality.[52] At worst, De Quincey was being satirized if not wholly condemned in *The Hill of Dreams* where Lucian dies of an overdose as an example of a literary man whose reliance on substances for visionary experience shadowed and then snuffed the very things he sought – he turned to material fantasy when all he needed to do, in an occult sense, was *see*.[53]

The visionary or, to use Machen's preferred term, 'ecstatic' element of weird London literature descends from this belief in a kernel of the sublime that is contained within all that is seemingly banal. It is an aesthetic that positions a Neoplatonist filter over an alleged reality. This is the very aspect that allowed Machen to pronounce *The Pickwick Papers* a paragon of western literature:

> Here [in Dickens's book] are the common things, the common people, not olives but bread & cheese, not rare wine but good ale, not Provence or Italy, but England & London, not a knight in armour but fat little Mr. Pickwick in funny clothes: & see how beneath all these common and accustomed appearances *aliquid latet divini*.[54]

Machen is establishing a hierarchy of aesthetic values that ranks local over foreign, known over unknown, and omnipresence over exclusivity. This, his formula for concocting the urban

[52] Discussing the true ascetic, Machen wrote that 'Within his soul he has the real things, of which the material objects of art galleries and museums and collections are but the wretched, dim, and ineffectual copies.' See Machen (1911), 653.

[53] This aligns with Baudelaire's comments on substance-driven and non-substance-driven visionary perception pertaining to the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Recalling Poe's observation that opium may 'invest the whole of nature with a supernatural intensity of interest, which gives every object a deeper, a more wilful [sic], and more despotic meaning', Baudelaire proceeds to claim that the same sensory effect may be achieved through the experience of art: 'Like nature apprehended through extra-sensitive nerves, it [art] reveals what lies beyond nature.' See Charles Baudelaire, *Art in Paris: 1845-1862*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (Phaidon Press: Oxford, 1965), 142-143. Baudelaire makes this comment in his discussion of Eugéne Delacroix (1798-1863) from the 1855 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Poe was thinking along similar lines in his own estimation of art's ability to transform our perception of the real. In an 1849 essay, he defines art as 'the reproduction of what the Senses perceive in Nature through the veil of the soul.' To this, he intriguingly adds the claim that we can 'double the true beauty of an actual landscape by half-closing our eyes as we look at it.' If the natural contains everything, then it is a question of how the mind (in Poe's terms, the soul) might filter the elements to extract the visionary serum: 'The naked Senses sometimes see too little – but then *always* they see too much.' See Edgar Allan Poe, *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (Penguin Classics: New York & London, 2006), 603.

[54] See Machen (1993), 18. Machen's retreat into Latin often suggests that he is directing readers to some liturgical reference, in this instance possibly Thomas Aquinas's *Adoro te devote* with its similar profession of a hidden truth – a hidden god – beneath the surface-layer.

weird from the urban banal, is entirely attainable from elements contained within the immediate environment – within the common space that is frequented by all and 'known' by all. This reappraisal of the known reveals to us something that we missed, something that was latent within the familiar or mundane all along. As Freud observed, this is the central irony of uncanny experience:

> …what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny.[55]

This 'something' that must be added is an internal perceptual shift – a leap of mind. Surface-level readers will misconstrue Freud's essay as being solely about the uncanny as horror, but of course what it is really about is the sublime, just as Machen's own weird tales are a contribution to the search for the urban sublime.[56]

As an artist of the urban weird, Machen was part of a cohort that created our modern perception of the London cityscape. In his 1891 essay 'The Decay of Lying', Oscar Wilde famously declared that 'nature, no less than Life, is an imitation of Art'. He elaborated that our appreciation of fogs 'creeping down our streets, blurring the gas-lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows' was the result of a school of art, not reality: 'At present, people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the loveliness of such effect. There may have been fogs for centuries in London. I dare say

[55] See Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1953), 219-220.

[56] The critical text on this distinction is Harold Bloom, 'Freud and the Sublime: A Catastrophe Theory of Creativity' in *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*, ed. Maud Ellmann (New York: Longman Publishing, 1994), 173-195. Machen wrote approvingly of A.E. Waite's *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy: Its Development and Records* (1926). He summarized Waite's thesis as the object of the alchemist 'is not to make gold; it is to make himself divine or all but divine. The lead he is to work on is himself'. See Arthur Machen, 'An Ancient Mystery' in *The Bookman*, 70.420 (September 1926), 281-282. This aligns with the fictional and autobiographical blur in Machen's writings as the former is alchemically worked out of the latter.

that there were. But no one saw them.'[57] Machen made the same point in a different way as part of his rebuke of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881):

> Literature is the key to life, the reflection in a shining and glorious mirror of our imperfect and cloudy actions…[Carlyle] did not perceive the essential things of life, and he was ignorant of life because he was ignorant of literature.[58]

In this Blakean twist, the weird artist usurps the non-fictional – the supposedly real – with the fictional, Machen's Neoplatonist 'inner reality' of things. Indeed, Blake's achievement alone would suffice to show that this perception of London as visionary or even weird territory was not unique to the fin-de-siècle. In one sense, Blake saw London as a city of soot and sin shrouded, as it was for De Quincey, in an 'aged ignorance' that keeps our sense 'clos'd from though'. This Neoplatonist spectacle was moreover an apocalyptic landscape suffused with Biblical imagery in which fire laps at the city walls, Primrose Hill is 'the mouth of the Furnace & the Iron Door' (J73-54), and the Thames, though also described temperately as London's 'soft, mild parent stream' (J53:3), is 'the heavenly Jordan' whose 'currents spring from the rivers of Beulah' (J53:2) and whose shores are 'infinite' (Eu 10:5).[59] Blake's London was a multidimensional playground of perceptual possibilities – a dual landscape tendering both damnation and salvation. Therefore, the fallen urban landscape holds the key to a retrievable paradise. The selfsame city is 'the spiritual fourfold London' constructed from a fragment of Jerusalem, the original sacred city, which the poet is charged with rebuilding. In the same way, Wilde's nocturnal London, like that depicted by Machen, is not only foggy but *inky* – it flows from the pen. The real London is asserted as principally if not

[57] See Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *The Oscar Wilde Reader* (London: Dover Publications, 2015), 341. Machen remembers having read this essay as a young man in a letter to Montgomery Evans dated 4 November, 1942. See *Arthur Machen & Montgomery Evans: Letters of a Literary Friendship, 1923-1947,* ed. Sue Strong Hassler and Donald M. Hassler (Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1994), 145-147.
[58] See Arthur Machen, 'The Paradox of Literature' in *The Academy*, 2108 (September 28, 1912), 409-410.
[59] William Blake, *The Complete Poems,* ed. W.H. Stevenson (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 239 & 832.

entirely an imaginative creation, even though, while the city's roots may be predominately literary, what happens there ultimately happens beyond words.

In the context of the weird, language is not truth but the nearest approximation we have to what might be known:

> Language, he understood, was chiefly important for the beauty of its sounds, by its possession of words resonant, glorious to the ear, by its capacity, when exquisitely arranged, of suggesting wonderful and indefinable impressions, perhaps more ravishing and farther removed from the domain of strict thought than the impressions excited by music itself. Here lay hidden the secret of the sensuous art of literature; *it was the secret of suggestion*, the art of causing delicious sensation by the use of words.[60]

Here again, the highest truths for Machen cannot be imparted; they must be experienced. They are inseparable from their means of expression, and their means of expression are themselves insufficient. As Machen wrote in a review of *The Holy Kabbalah* (1929) by A.E. Waite (1857-1942), 'There are mysteries so deep that they may be proclaimed from the housetops and yet remain unknown.'[61] Commenting on the above passage from *The Hill of Dreams*, Linda Dowling credited Machen for his 'anti-representational aesthetic' in which he 'seems to be appealing to a realm of alogical [sic], non-discursive experience that words cannot imitate or represent so much as magically invoke.'[62]

This intricate bond between magic and words – Aleister Crowley's formula for grimoire out of grammar – is a common theme in occult and symbolist literature, but what makes Machen's belief weird is the fact that this theorem – how we say the world is how it

[60] Machen (201), 67. Emphasis mine.
[61] See Arthur Machen, 'The Holy Kabbalah' in *The Bookman*, 79.459 (December 1929), 184.
[62] See Dowling (2010), 157-161. Dowling also offers a compelling reading of Lucian's death as Machen's satirization of 'the dead end of the cult of style'. Readers will decide for themselves whether or not this reading is compatible with my own, but it is clear that both interpretations consider Machen to be ridiculing external forces, whether substances or systems, as unnecessary and diseased crutches. He is advocating for the self-sustaining power of internal vision. The fetishistic implications of this are unavoidable, though they are not necessarily of a psycho-sexual nature.

is – is always offered with such severe reservations.[63] Machen, Wilde, Blake, Dickens, De Quincey, Stevenson, Ireland – they all concur that beneath the roar and rush of city life there sounds a hidden music of some hyperreality, some strain that we know but cannot name – something that is felt but not understood. 'Life's nonsense pierces us with strange relation' despite our inability to transfer that recognition into any expressible form.[64] It lies suspended, like our apprehension of the sublime, between acceptance and desire, distinguishable not through any so-called 'reading between the lines' but by poising oneself in thought between the thoughts themselves. This is impossible. The weird, the uncanny, the sublime – whatever one prefers to call it, the conclusion is always the same: these are philosophies that, even in moments of exultation, are tinged with the tragic because they attempt to express what they know to be inexpressible. That is what makes our experience of the weird – and our understanding of art more generally – both exhilarating and painful: it is speaking to us at once of both the wish and the impossibility.

Stylistic Ambiguity

Before addressing its musical treatment of psychogeography, the first complexity to present itself in Ireland's London works as an extension of urban ambiguity is the question of stylistic multiplicity. Edwin Evans considered *Chelsea Reach* to be 'a paradox in musical

[63] Dowling calls this 'the unutterability *topos*' of Decadent literature, though it is Machen's dogged utilization of this principle within the context of the uncanny that slightly distinguishes his catalogue from the Decadent mainstream. An early review of *The Three Imposters* was already using this metric to differentiate Machen from his contemporaries, writing that it was Machen's 'unwearied quest of the uncanny, the gruesome, and – in the classical sense – the obscene' that marked his efforts as more than derivative. See 'The Three Imposters' in *The Athenaeum*, 3562 (February 1, 1896), 146.
[64] Quoted from 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' in Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006) 333.

psychology' with its tasteful synthesis of traditionally high- and low-art features. He called this crossbreed 'Cockney grave':

> The first [movement] is not a picture, but a reverie in which the sentimental side of the Londoner – the side that takes 'ballads' seriously – comes uppermost. This somewhat ingenuous sentiment being thoroughly honest in its unsophisticated way, deserves to be treated kindly and without irony, for the sake of its sincerity, and where the inevitable sugar seemed excessive the composer has used his harmonic skill to preserve the real flavour.[65]

While commending Ireland's ability to straddle opposite sides of the stylistic spectrum, Evans is also observing the music's claim to membership in different socio-hierarchical levels. An article in *The Musical Herald* that similarly attempted to position *Chelsea Reach* within a popular genre with some qualifications shared this perception. The article described the miniature as a '*morceau de salon*' but hastened to add that it is 'not a conventional one'. In comparison to what the author considered Ireland's more serious works, *London Pieces* was 'lesser' but at the same time not necessarily 'less interesting'. Like Evans, the article was puzzled by Ireland's ability to exhibit a 'lightness [that] is not purchased at the expense of commonplaceness.'[66] Kaikhosru Sorabji (1892-1988), though generally unimpressed by Ireland's ability as a composer of piano music, approved of 'the spirit of "high seriousness"' in Ireland's work; in an age that was overflowing with the frivolous presentation of artworks 'in the spirit of "Comic Cuts"', it was this dogged high-mindedness that Sorabji felt made Ireland such 'a distinct personality'.[67]

---

[65] See Foreman (2011), 381.
[66] D.C.P., 'The Music of John Ireland', *The Musical Herald*, Issue 854 (May 1, 1919), 145. [Only the initials of the author are provided].
[67] See Kaikhosru Sorabji, 'Modern Piano Technique', *The Sackbut*, 1.3 (July 1920), 116-120. These distinctions between high and low art are of course subjective, and Ireland's amalgamation is consistent with Machen's literary manifesto. For Machen, the 'high' elements of literature can just as easily be found in 'low' works, which is why the reader sometimes finds 'surprising incidents [of literary ecstasy] in very worthless books'. See Machen (1960), 93.

These interpretations emphasize the influence of class, but Ireland's layering of style is also a reflection of the stratified stylistic ground that his work inhabits. The use of popular stylization through caricature in *London Pieces*, balanced against that work's own phenomenological complexity and against the obtuseness of *Ballade of London Nights*, is a strong indicator of this. The works are both accessible and esoteric, public and private, highbrow and lowbrow. Watercolours, beggars, and street songs are used to evoke a popularized conception of public space – they bestow and expand upon a naturalness and familiarity which Ireland enlists as a shared frame of reference onto which he may project his own feelings, sometimes occult and sometimes pastiche, about space and time. Their relative simplicity is kindred with the ballade-room accessibility noted by Evans and by an attempt at musical realism that was precedented by works like *The Almond Tree* (1913) and *A Sea Idyll* (1900), though these earlier pieces have a less distinctive sense of place and a more dispensable linkage to their subject's contemporaneity or even reality of setting. This first approach, however, is set against the less-anchored and comparatively more abstracted stylization of *Ballade of London Nights* where place becomes strangely specific yet also (contingently) generalized – identity is dispersed, and the musical material signifying those elements is fragmented into an increasingly oblique and peppered representation of an unknown known.

Bolstering and complicating these issues of stylization are the autobiographical implications of these London works – the stratification of fictional and non-fictional memoir. Ireland's titles alone fasten the music within the context of his own life. Biographical issues pertaining to Ireland will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Four, but a cursory recollection of Ireland's London addresses will help contextualize these compositions as at least semi-

autobiographical. Ireland moved to London in 1893 at the age of fourteen to begin studies at the Royal College of Music. During his student years, he occupied a succession of London apartments, not all of whose addresses are known. From 1893 to 1897, he lived in unknown locations in Paddington and in Kilburn, 10 Sunningdale Gardens, Stratford Road, Kensington, 46 Winchendon Road, Fulham, and 43 Markham Square, Chelsea. Fiona Richards observed that an increasing proximity to the Royal College of Music distinguished this sequence. From 1904 to 1915, Ireland lived in 54 Elm Park Mansions, Park Walk, but it was his move in 1915 to 14A Gunter Grove that provided Ireland with his principal adult residence.[68]

The fact that Ireland held so many addresses during a relatively short span of time is by itself unremarkable, but two points must be made. First, Ireland's and Machen's London experiences conform to a strikingly similar template. Both men came to London from the provinces on the cusp of adulthood; both spent the greater part of life in the metropolis; and both retired from the city in old age. In a way, their biographies follow the trope of a Victorian *bildungsroman* where a provincial boy emigrates to London, partakes of its pleasure and pain, and then quits the city as a changed man. It was a narrative structure perfected by Dickens through the progression of David from Blunderstone, Suffolk in *David Copperfield* (1849) and by Pip's journey outward from an unnamed village in Kent in *Great Expectations* (1861), both of which appear in Ireland's library.[69]

Second, it is Ireland's extended stay in Chelsea that invites further comment. Chelsea is the nexus of Ireland's London experience, remaining his primary residence from 1915 until

[68] See Richards (2000), 116. As an organist or choir director, Ireland also worked at numerous institutions including St. Luke's, Islington from 1904 until 1928, having previously been employed in Chelsea at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street and at St. Jude's Upper Chelsea.
[69] They are shelved alongside copies of Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

1953, interrupted only by vacations and by a self-imposed leave from the city for reasons of personal safety during the Second World War. Ireland's Chelsea was both a residence and a centre for creative enterprise. It was a base from which to venture out into the city and the country. Ernest Chambers noted how Ireland, though he often found inspiration for 'a considerable amount of his best known and most significant music' while walking in the countryside, usually returned to his Chelsea studio to compose the works that these elsewheres suggested. *Rhapsody* (1915), the *Piano Sonata* (1920), *Amberley Wild Brooks* (1921), *Equinox* (1922), and the *Legend* (1933) for piano and orchestra and other works all drew inspiration from the countryside but were composed in the city.[70] Ireland specified the location alongside the date of completion in these scores. Thus, for example, a pastoral-infused score like *Marigold: Three Impressions* bears the inscription 'Chelsea, June 1913' under its final bar. Ireland's positioning of a work like 'Chelsea Reach' within this same borough may therefore be considered within an autobiographical context.[71]

Ireland's original title for *London Pieces*, *London: Impressions for Piano*, is reminiscent of an 1898 collection of essays by Alice Meynell (1847-1922) called *London Impressions.*[72] Illustrated with Whistlerian etchings and pictures by the American artist

[70] See Chapman (1968), 9.

[71] With Ireland, it is rarely possible to know for certain the exact autobiographical sources behind a composition beyond place-names or person. Still, despite their localized and self-reflective intricacies, the enduring popularity of Ireland's London works may be ascribed to their ability to transcend those purely derivative or purely cosmetic forms of popular pastiche. Underlying their caricaturized people and places is an alternatingly reverent and sinister sensitivity to what the surface shields from sight, or at least from first-sight.

[72] Ireland set two of Meynell's poems to music in *Songs Sacred and Profane*: 'The Advent' and 'My Fair'. Machen and Meynell were in agreement on a number of points about philosophy and art. They both despised the novels of Jane Austen for an inability to transcend surface-level realism. Machen excoriated Austen in *Hieroglyphics*, comparing her work to the crude realism of a pig-sty, lacking any trace of ecstasy and being comparable to photography in that it merely portrayed 'the surface of life…[and] the outside of things' rather than the ecstatic heart beneath the surface. See Machen (1960), 66.

William Hyde (1858-1943), this popular pamphlet devoted an entire chapter to 'Chelsea Reach':

> There is nothing quite like Chelsea. The spoiling of Chelsea will not be the same thing as the spoiling of the country by pushing on a suburb, for instance; for in that case there is country beyond, only deferred. But there is no Cheyne Walk, no Chelsea, further up the river, or anywhere in the world of rivers.[73]

For Meynell, in geographical and aesthetic terms, the Reach existed both 'below' and 'above' the rest of London as a removed and self-contained inlet. Like Ireland's barcarolle, which takes place *on* the Thames, it is a place from which to view the otherness of London. Yet despite being set apart, Meynell considered Chelsea to be 'the most London-like London' in that it preserved elements of the city's original settlement. It is thus depicted as a survival – a place of pre-industrial purity in which chimneys on the opposite bank are perceived as both spatially and temporally 'a long way off', and gasworks, an iconic symbol of urban modernity, are 'out of sight'. Standing within this harbour-haven, 'you can forget the great bridges down stream [sic]', nursed contentedly by the 'animating' aureate glow of Chelsea's elevated light.[74]

The prominence of light and gasworks in Meynell's essay aligns closely with the inspiration for the first movement of *London Pieces* as recorded by Alan Rowlands, who

---

[73] See *London Impressions: Etchings and Pictures in Photogravure by William Hyde and Essays by Alice Meynell* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1898), 18. The 'spoiling of Chelsea' was already underway in the opinion of some. In 1918, William Morris called Chelsea 'a gilded desert to those who knew it in the seventies.' See Reginald Blunt *The Wonderful Village: A Further Record of some Famous Folk and Places by Chelsea Reach* (London: Mills & Boon Ltd, 1918), 293-305. See also Reginald Blunt, *Paradise Row: A Broken Piece of Old Chelsea* (London: Richard Clay & Sons Ltd, 1906) for its history of Paradise Row until its demolition in 1905. Blunt was an indefatigable historian of Chelsea and an advocate for the preservation of sites of historical interest. A copy of his *Red Anchor Pieces* (1928) is in Ireland's library, suggesting that Ireland was interested in the historical density of his borough.

[74] Ibid, 16-17. Oliver Wendell Holmes praised Chelsea as one of the 'small quasi-villages' surrounded by an urban sprawl – 'a little dimple in a great whirlpool.' Quoted in Reginald Blunt *The Wonderful Village: A Further Record of some Famous Folk and Places by Chelsea Reach*, i. Cheyne Walk was the residence of many artists, including Ralph Vaughan Williams, Percy Grainger, John Ruskin, James Henry Leigh Hunt, and Thomas Carlyle. See Arthur Ransome, *Bohemia in London* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1907), 31-68.

claimed that 'Chelsea Reach' was conceived when Ireland, 'coming back over Battersea Bridge in his Morgan motor one evening in 1917…[was] suddenly struck by the extraordinary beauty of the scene, with the flickering gas-lamps reflected in the dark waters of the Thames.'[75] Here, in summary, are all the elements of colour, metalwork, nature, and artificiality touched upon in Meynell's text.

This belief in a transformative play of light on self and on landscape was partially indebted to the paintings and prose of James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) who provides another instructive link between Machen's and Ireland's London works. Paintings by Whistler along with several by J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) and Claude Monet (1840-1926) may be seen in photographs adorning the walls of Gunter Grove, and Ireland's library includes three volumes related to the artist: *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (1908) by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *The Man: Whistler* (1952) by Hesketh Pearson, and Whistler's own collection of essays and lectures *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890). Whistler's London art is based on juxtapositions similar to those mentioned above. As Baudelaire observed, Whistler's work is full of 'wonderful tangles' of objects and atmosphere, and this gallimaufry of 'fog, furnaces and corkscrews of smoke…[embodied] the profound and intricate poetry of a vast capital'.[76] These juxtapositions transmute the landscape. Whistler's famous description of fog along the Thames in his *Ten o'clock* lecture chimes perfectly with Machen's own veil-infused imagery:

> And when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become

[75] See Foreman (2011), 381.
[76] Charles Baudelaire, *Art in Paris: 1845-1862*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (Phaidon Press: Oxford, 1965), 220. In this essay, 'Painters and Etchers', Baudelaire is writing specifically about Whistler's etchings displayed at the Paris Exhibition. Baudelaire's emphasis on Whistler's river-side images links him further with Ireland and the Thames. The 'wonderful tangles' he notes include 'rigging, yardarms and rope', and the fog and furnaces place the scene even more potently within the context of a river-front factory environment. This is another clash between modernity and the 'natural', between the urban and the pastoral.

> campanili, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairy-land is before us…

Here (indigenous 'chimneys') becomes elsewhere (foreign 'campanili'), and in this congested and contaminated megalopolis it is Nature who holds the key to change and revelation. Her secrets and her 'exquisite song' are 'unfolded' as a flower in both erotic and sublime imagery like Blake's heart of heaven to the artist who, again in deference to Blake, collects and interprets her facts 'in her choice selection of brilliant tones and delicate tints, suggestions of future harmonies.'[77]

Ireland's creative maturity, attained during the 1920s, coincided with a reassessment through numerous publications and exhibitions of landscape paintings by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), John Constable (1776-1837), J.M.W. Turner, William Blake, and Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), all of whom, though in admittedly different ways, explored parallels between the urban satanic and the urban sublime.[78] In the case of Whistler, it is not difficult to see the appeal of his aesthetic to Ireland. For one, the technique of flickering brushwork employed by Whistler and other Impressionist painters to depict the play of light on objects reflects the cumulative effect arising out of a dispersed indistinctness typifying Ireland's own nocturnal landscape. Alan Robinson has described the 'sketchiness' of

[77] James McNeill Whistler, *Mr. Whistler's "Ten o'clock"* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1888), 15. It has often been suggested that Whistler's musical terminology for various paintings in the 1860s and 1870s ('symphonies', 'nocturnes', 'harmonies', and 'arrangements') aligns him with a tradition of cross-pollination between traditionally distinct artistic categories as espoused by Gautier and Baudelaire. This may have been fostered by the Paterian proposition that music is the aspiration of all the arts in that it is 'inseparable from the means of expression'. This is partly what makes music a convenient medium for the mystical or weird. See Beckson, 259.

[78] See Tim Barringer, 'Pastures Green and Dark Satanic Mills' in *Pastures Green and Dark Satanic Mills*, ed. Tim Barringer and Oliver Fairclough (New York: American Federation of Arts, 2014), 38-39. Barringer considers this revival a consequence of the post-Great War pivot away from 'Continental' European artists towards local national ones. During the slightly earlier Impressionist era, Barringer believes the 'favoring of smoke and dynamism of modern London' to be a preoccupation of foreign visitors like Monet and Camille Pissarro (1830-1903). Local artists, he claims, were drawn more usually to pastoral landscape painting. See Ibid, 15-17. This may be seen as further evidence that Machen and Ireland come to the city as outsiders and perceive it as self-identified 'others' in their artistic representations.

Whistler's early London paintings, noting in his analysis of *The Thames in Ice* (1860) the thin and broad textural gradations which lend objects and persons in the scene an 'almost abstract shape'. Whistler makes 'no attempt to ease the tonal transition between…man and the river, nor to indicate the spatial relationships between the two; recession is suggested merely by a distinction in tone'. Like the contrast between Ireland's *London Pieces* and the later *Ballade of London Nights*, however, Whistler shifted away from French metropolitan realism towards what Robinson considers a more indigenous English modernism by being part of a tradition of the 'metropolitan picturesque'.[79] In this new guise, the visionary nature of Whistler's London aesthetic is merited by his belief in an 'imaginative alchemy in which memory distilled mundane reality in a near-abstract design intended to evoke an emotional *mood*.' Whistler is therefore, like Ireland and Machen, more attuned to symbolism in his 'atmospheric suggestivity' than to the more representational aspect of impressionism.[80] He paints what he sees, even if that may be the unseen. With these points in mind, the connection between Whistler and Ireland is perhaps more than that of a vaguely understood impressionistic brotherhood intimated by previous researchers.[81]

Written like Ireland's miniatures for popular consumption, Meynell's imaginative essays utilize a descriptive style similar to that of her contemporary writers, showing again the blurred line between the real and the unreal in urban literature. Chelsea features prominently in decadent literature as an environment conducive to this perceptual division. *The Yellow Book* included 'A Lost Masterpiece: A City Mood, Aug. '93' by George Egerton in its first installment. This story tells of a man boarding a river steamer at Chelsea bound for

[79] Alan Robinson, *Imagining London: 1770-1900* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 154-155.
[80] Ibid, 158.
[81] See Richards (2000), 118.

London bridge. The man indulges in representative descriptions of the colourful water, perceiving the 'undercurrents of beauty and pathos' latent in this portion of cityscape. His imagination filters these impressions, harnessing the transformative power of an 'inner eye' and 'inner ear' to formulate 'a precious little pear of thought' out of his 'inner chaos' as it is assailed with urban stimuli. The steamer plays the role of a mythic ferry between worlds as the man's imagination changes chimneys from 'giraffic throats belching soot and smoke over the blackening city' into 'obelisks rearing granite heads heavenwards!' In a Machenesque phrase, 'they were hieroglyphs'.[82] Chelsea is cast as the portal to this hidden city.

Chelsea Reach

It is therefore fitting that Ireland begins his London sequence in Chelsea and that the first piece is gravid with motifs of the subsequent movements and the later *Ballade of London Nights*. Despite this clear point of entry, however, *London Pieces* does not read chronologically. The first movement, as we have seen, takes place at evening. The timing of 'Soho Forenoons' is in the title, though even here there is a temporal ambiguity. Ireland's chosen terminology ('forenoons') designates a time that is not night or dawn yet also before day has come into its full inheritance. The cycle ends not in day but with the coming of day, a debatable border in a state of becoming. Between these two movements, Ireland places 'Ragamuffin' which no one would describe as night music. The skewness of the urban weird is being displayed on all levels.

[82] See George Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece: A City Mood, Aug. '93', in *The Yellow Book, Volume I: April 1894*, 189-196. 'George Egerton' was the pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne (1859-1945). This story was re-printed in a compendium of writings from *The Yellow Book* present in Ireland's library.

Ireland's first miniature is a barcarolle cast in a 6/8 metre in Ab-major, a key that Ireland had used for two earlier water-pieces: *A Sea Idyll* (1900) and 'Meridian' from *In Those Days* (1895, rev. 1941) (Figure 22).



(Figure 21) John Ireland: Chelsea Reach, bb. 1-9 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The density of texture in 'Chelsea Reach' distinguishes it from Ireland's earlier water-pieces, as do its structural and expressive ambitions: here, local dynamic eddies are contained within a larger surge from *p* to *ff* that spans 88 bars[83] before returning in a controlled fall to the calm recapitulation in bar 103. Chromatic passing tones, augmented triads, pentatonic scales, and added major sevenths – a favourite interval of Ireland's – destabilize the core progressions,

[83] Ireland gives frequent dynamic markings across relatively short time spans, and one must judge the appropriate volume of these in relation to their surroundings. There are earlier indications of *ff* in bars 39, 42, 47, 83, and 86 which, if one were to execute them literally, would blow Ireland's barcarolle onto the high seas. The cumulative force of the terraced crescendo from bar 68 that precedes the *ff* in bar 88, along with the *appassionato*, clearly indicates that this is the crest of Ireland's macro-dynamic arch.

as in bars 4-5 where the triads in the right-hand distract the listener from the arpeggiated bass that pivots respectably from the dominant to Bb-minor via V^7/ii. These side-stepping curlicues appear throughout at the ends of Ireland's phrases, and each is given further emphasis by a *tenuto, allargando,* or *ritardando* indication. The three bars of harmonic placidity at the end of the first theme (bb. 11-13) that sway between the tonic and the dominant are subverted in their final three quavers by an unprepared slip into the dominant of G-flat major. This initiates Ireland's bridge to the second theme, a bridge that introduces two motifs that feature in all four of the London pieces under discussion: the bell-motif in bars 18-19 and the rising pentatonic scale in bars 14-15 through which Ireland's Thames is both Gallicized and Orientalized (Figure 23).[84]

[84] Ireland's musical 'other' – at least in its oriental state – functions similarly to that of Debussy and Ravel in representing distance in both time and space, the foreign element being often inseparable from some notion of an 'idyllic, nonmodern world'. The oriental other is a form of 'anti- or non-modernity'. See Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), 86-95. An early review appreciated Ireland's othering of landscape through Asiatic hues by noting 'something in common between Ireland's poetic pictorialness and the London water-colours of Yusi-Markino'. See 'Review', *Monthly Musical Record*, 48 (2 April 1918), 84. Yoshio Markino (1869-1956) [anglicized spellings of his name vary] was a Japanese artist who moved to London in 1897, basing himself primarily in Chelsea and Kensington. Like Machen and Ireland, he was obsessed with nocturnal London and recognized the insufficiency of art to fully capture this subject. In imperfect English, Markino remembered living in Chelsea: 'Sometimes I started my place after midnight and walked about until sunrise. The more I observed the mists the more I fell into love. But is [sic] was most disappointing thing when I tried to put my impressions on paper. I could never be able to paint London fogs as I saw. I cursed my stupid hand.' See Yoshio Markino, *A Japanese Artist in London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1910), 105.



(Figure 22) John Ireland: Chelsea Reach, bb. 14-21 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The second theme expands the vertical range of the music while upsetting it in two ways. First, the emphasis is given to the sixth quaver of the melody in every bar, reinforced by Ireland through the accent in bar 25 and complicating the melody's agogic stability. Second, the introduction of sevenths contributes to the gradually increasing harmonic dissonance: D-natural against Db (bb. 21 and 23 and G-natural against Gb (bb. 27 and 29). But whatever disequilibrium is introduced in this section by these elements and by a final side-step in bar 38 – the progression from V-VII^{7}-I – is obliterated by the sheer volume of sound given to the arrival of the tonic in bar 39. Moments of harmonic astringency are constantly checked: the central tonality is reasserted, as in bars 39-42, only to be offset by another brief excursion (bb. 42-43) that forms the basis for both a transitional gesture and for a way in which Ireland can dramatize the relationships of large-scale harmonic schemes on a local level. These are moments in which the material is clarified and then re-obscured. Often, Ireland adds just one decorative tone to a chord that is enough to blur the harmonic clarity but not quite enough to be analyzed as bitonal (bb. 20-23).

These small-scale transgressions are all preparations for the central climax of 'Chelsea Reach' in bars 88-102 which is the most rather than the least dissonant part of the piece. Harmonic tension is 'released' in the sense that it is set free rather than resolved. As the dynamic softens and an augmented version of the bell-motif – foreshadowed by the three bass-note downbeats (bb. 93-95) – establishes a pedal of Eb, the return to Ab-major in bar 103 is entirely expected. Rather than upsetting the stasis, the final end-of-phrase side-step of the development in bar 102 confirms our expectations of resolution (Figure 24). This suggests that the moments of divergence were not frivolous asides but little epiphanies that both ornamented and affirmed the stasis from which they deviated.



(Figure 23) John Ireland: Chelsea Reach, bb. 127-132 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

In the recapitulation, the original memory is remembered with increasingly less clarity. The primary theme is initially displaced to the middle voice before jumping mid-stream to the top of the chord (bb. 103-104). This passage is an amalgamation of two full statements of the primary theme (bb. 1-13 and 39-53) that links bars 1-8 with 110-117; the phrase is extended by three bars (bb. 118-120) as the melody drifts upward over a sustained

pedal in quasi-improvisatory fashion. The coda (bb. 121-132) pays homage to all of the miniature's themes and motifs, and the overtone-like bell-motif on Ab (bb. 125-126) echoes and clarifies the tonal centre. A last touch of local colouration in bar 128 pits Eb-major in the left-hand against the right-hand's D-major – the furthest harmonic disparity of any of the miniature's end-of-phrase turns – and ushers in the final cadence in Ab-major with its undulations of the primary theme's first three-note cell and a final chime of the church bell.[85]

Ragamuffin

We have already encountered *Ragamuffin* in our chapter on eroticism,[86] but the movement must be considered again in an urban context which both explains and expands upon its erotic dimension. In the urban weird, the uncanny becomes foregrounded in the imagery of urban horror. As a place becomes unplaceable, the things one would tell about it become proportionately untellable. This was Jack London's concession in the chapter 'A Vision of Night' from his raw journalistic enterprise *The People of the Abyss* (1903).

> It is rather hard to tell a tithe of what I saw. Much of it is untellable. But in a general way I may say that I saw a nightmare, a fearful slime that quickened the pavement with life, a mess of unmentionable obscenity that put into eclipse the 'nightly horror' of Piccadilly and the Strand. It was a menagerie of garmented bipeds that looked something like humans and more like beasts, and to complete the picture, brass-buttoned keepers kept order among them when they snarled too fiercely.[87]

The 'untellable' and perhaps incomprehensible horrors that in reality he saw become abstracted through a journalistic representation that depends on the fantastic. This filtering of the real through the unreal typifies the urban weird, but horror was only one of several

[85] Chelsea Old Church is visible on the left-side of Whistler's *Nocturne: Blue and Gold – Old Battersea Bridge* (1872-1875). The bell-tones on Ab are further reminiscent of Chopin's *Ballade No. 3 in A-flat Major, Op. 47* (1841).
[86] See page 85.
[87] Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (Tangerine Press: London, 2015), 210-211.

means that writers adopted to accommodate the landscape and its characters. Ross Chambers describes a school of 'cultural reassurance' whereby the 'strangeness of the streets is partly celebrated and partly explained away, as readers…were provided with entertaining accounts of urban types and social milieus they might well glimpse in their daily lives, but would never consider approaching in the flesh.'[88]

Shortly after Ireland's birth, Andrew Mearns shocked the nation with *The Bitter Cry of Outcast*, a devasting survey of slum conditions that, with an admittedly broad degree of scientific veracity, detailed the poverty and immorality of London's poor. Children were identified in Mearns's report as helpless victims of this system:

> The child-misery that one beholds is the most heart-rending and appalling element in these discoveries; and of this not the least is the misery inherited from the vice of drunken and dissolute parents, and manifest in the stunted, misshapen, and often loathsome objects that we constantly meet in these localities…..many of them have never seen a green field, and do not know what it is to go beyond the streets immediately around them…[89]

Mearn was not the first to scandalize London with descriptions of slum-life. In his 1851-1852 articles, Henry Mayhew had already introduced readers to thieves and beggars along the Thames, many of who were orphans or the product of 'unprincipled parents', driven to vice through 'the bad companionship' of other juvenile criminals.[90]

By the time Ireland penned his own London works, all of this information was well-known, and writers with whom he was well-acquainted including Machen, Blake, Dickens, and Stevenson all took the victimization of children into account. Ireland was living in

---

[88] Ross Chambers, 'Baudelaire's Paris', in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 104. Chambers is discussing the literature of the flâneur, and the semi-journalistic features of this school he identifies apply readily to Machen's own 'non-fiction' articles.
[89] Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* [October 1883], ed. Anthony S. Wohl (Leicester University Press: New York, 1970), 62-67.
[90] Henry Mayhew, *London's Underworld*, ed. Peter Quennell (Spring Brook: London, 1950), 133. This edition is an anthology of Mayhew's articles written from 1851-1852.

London upon the publication of *The People of the Abyss* which concluded that 'the outlook for children is hopeless' in the city's slums.[91] Ireland's lack of engagement with the unpleasant reality of the slum-child figure cannot be discounted as ignorance. It must be considered evidence of willful blindness. Ireland is selective in the characteristics exhibited by Mayhew's and Mearns's ragged boys on to which he decides to latch: 'Ragamuffin' certainly captures what Mayhew described as the 'mental imbecility and low cunning' of child criminals and also the curious aspect of their studied insouciance.[92] But even so, Ireland's mischievous ragamuffin is not the documented slum-child who is taught to steal and 'mercilessly beaten' if they returned at day's end without anything of value for their keeper.[93] His interpretation is more in keeping with what Jack London deemed the only beautiful sight in London's East End: 'the children dancing in the street when the organ-grinder goes his round…A joyous life is romping in their blood. They delight in music, and motion, and color, and very often they betray a startling beauty of face and form under their filth and rags.' Jack London is considering an aesthetic beauty of innocence beneath the untellable surface-level horror. As we have seen in Chapter 1, this was a frequently eroticized perception of childhood in fin-de-siècle literature. In a metaphor that highlights the evanescent nature and the erotic subtext of the musical and dancing scene, Jack London laments that 'there is a Pied Piper of London Town who steals them all away. They disappear…'[94]

In 'Ragamuffin', Ireland similarly disappears children by abstracting them into a blithe fantasy. They never enter the harsh and unpleasant reality of slum-life. For Ireland, the

[91] Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (London: Tangerine Press, 2015), 206.
[92] Mayhew, 153.
[93] Ibid, 62.
[94] London (2015), 204.

child is invariably a source of pleasure. He cannot allow himself to see imperfection in the object of fixation, and so the street urchin is portrayed only in its most superficially appealing form – as a clever and carefree spirit (the score is marked *marcato ma con grazia*) and not as the victim of social, economic, and environmental forces beyond its control.[95] To acknowledge the plight of the poor urban child would have cast the child in the role of a victim which, considering Ireland's sexual predilection, was perhaps a scenario he preferred to avoid engaging with publicly. It is far easier for Ireland to re-dress 'the little ragged boys' whose clothes, when they have any, Mayhew described as 'covered with vermin', in the playful fabric of erotic fantasy.[96] The sluicing of horror through a weird filter leaves us with the approachable banal.



(Figure 25) John Ireland: Ragamuffin, bb. 13-16 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

A number of specific points in 'Ragamuffin' are to be noted in preparation for our reading of *Ballade of London Nights*. First, here again there are cyclical figures that tie the three miniatures together. The interval of a descending third begins the first theme in both

[95] An early performance of 'Ragamuffin' by the pianist Winifred McBride, a former pupil of Franklin Taylor (1843-1919) at the Royal College of Music, was scolded by a reviewer for its failure to capture the unruly nature of Ireland's subject: '…John Ireland's ragamuffin is a more disreputable urchin than she [McBride] takes him to be.' There are, however, no directions in the score that expressly direct the performer to evoke anything 'disreputable' in their interpretation. The reviewer is therefore showing how, even in contemporary performances, there was a discrepancy between expectations and realizations of the ragamuffin's actual nature. See 'Concerts', *The Athenaeum,* 4671 (November 1919), 1161 and 'Obituary', *The Musical Herald*, 855 (June 1919), 195.

[96] Mayhew, 292-293.

'Chelsea Reach' and 'Ragamuffin'; the pentatonic transitional figure in bars 14-15 of 'Chelsea Reach' appears in 'Ragamuffin' at bars 13-14 (Figure 25), 45-46, and 91-92;[97] and parallel triads abound (bb. 22-24, for example) (Figure 26), including the separation of the triad chord into the right-hand (containing the 1st and 5th) and the left-hand (containing the 3rd) as in bars 75-78.[98]



(Figure 24) John Ireland: Ragamuffin, bb. 21-24 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Second, frequency of modulation is this movement's defining feature. The first theme (bb. 1-16) begins in E-major and then modulates to the dominant key of B-Major in bar 8, only to slip into D-Major in the succeeding bar. After four bars in this key, another unexpected turn brings the music to Ab-Major for two bars before a B^7 chord in bar 15 leads to the conclusion of the theme in E-major with an added second. These compressed modulations characterize the whole movement, especially during the development of the second theme (bb. 49-78). The music flirts with a number of tonal centres during a relatively brief span, yet it ultimately returns to itself – it both has and has not gone anywhere. The most aggressive subversion of expectations along this line comes in what is another instance of Ireland's distorted mirror effect. The piece begins with an ascending E-major scale that

[97] The Eb in the bass that acts as a pedal beneath this figure for each appearance is also suggestive of the same note's significance in bars 93-102 of 'Chelsea Reach'.
[98] Along with bars 31-32, this figure in bars 73-78 may be read as a variation on the bell-motif from bars 18-19 in 'Chelsea Reach'.

leads directly to an E-major triad. In bar 99, the final cadence in E-major is prefaced by an ascending glissando. Both gestures lead to the same end, but the latter is a perversion of the former. The urban representation in this movement is one of visual cacophony arising out of topographical diversity, moments in which the uncontrolled has seeped through the cracks of a traditional structure.

There are no rhythmic irregularities to underscore any of this harmonic invention.[99] All of the phrase-lengths are separable into 8-bar units, and the theme is restricted to the same repetitive pattern. As is typical of Ireland's music, there are also no sustained climaxes. There is a bravura that is prepared in the arpeggios of bars 70-72 and culminates in the declamation of the *con forza* parallel triads in bars 79-80, but the sudden arrival and the brevity of this moment carries a discomfiture by dint also of its rhythmic and harmonic squareness (Figure 27).[100]

[99] 'Bergomask' from *Two Pieces* (1925) is Ireland's attempt to give his rascal some rhythmic sophistication. Ireland throws in an occasional metric change, but metric irregularity by itself is not enough; there must be variation in the melodic material to fit this new frame. Instead, every beat in the miniature's 117 bars is emphasized, so whatever instability was intended is lost by the mere persistence of the crotchets. There are no 'weak beats' to give the metric changes any spontaneity. The lack of clarity arising from this monotony is made worse by the oversaturation of texture which makes the melody at times difficult to follow. Cramped by its neighbours, even the fingering of thumb-thumb-thumb-thumb recommended by Ireland in bar 4 is not enough to declaim unambiguously the melody in the middle-voice.

[100] This climax is foreshadowed in bars 29-35 to shorter but similar effect.



(Figure 25) John Ireland: Ragamuffin, bb. 65-80 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This climax does not even gradually dissolve, it simply cuts away to the next moment. The change is instantaneous as the melody shifts down by three octaves and is displaced to the inner voice.[101]

The cumulative effect is that of a succession of rapidly flipped snapshots, none of which can be viewed long enough to clearly identify the figure they present. The ragamuffin dodges in and out of the city's texture, momentarily emerging without ever fully leaving the background. The discord between Ireland's harmonic inventiveness and his rhythmic and

[101] Note the similarity between this melodic displacement and the same effect in bars 103-105 in 'Chelsea Reach'.

agogic simplicity – one discursive and the other reserved – is a commentary on the tension between his subject's youth and experience.[102] This is a strain of musical exoticism. Ireland is treating the ragamuffin as a domestic 'other' who is not a complex being victimized by an enormous system of economic and social oppression but a half-fantastical *thing*, an object of desire that exists for the entertainment (in Ireland's case, the pleasure) of the viewer.[103] By keeping his ragamuffin half-disclosed, Ireland is engaging with London as a landscape that is laden with the undiscussed.

Soho Forenoons

In 'The Holy Things', the final prose-poem from *Ornaments in Jade*, Machen presents us with his vision of London as a sanctified city. Walking through the daytime streets, the narrator observes how all the visual, aural, and tactile elements of the landscape suffuse synaesthetically in an ecstasy of perception.

> In the safety of a blind passage an Italian whirled round the handle of his piano-organ; the sound of it swelled and sank as the traffic surged and paused, and now and then one heard the shrill voices of the children who danced and shrieked in time to the music. Close to the pavement a coster pushed his barrow, and proclaimed flowers in an odd intonation, reminding one of the Gregorian chant. The cyclist went by again with his jangling insistent bell, and a man who stood by the lamp-post set fire to his pastille ribbon, and let the faint blue smoke rise into the sun.[104]

'The Holy Things' is not only an example of Machen's acute awareness of urban detail but also an illustration of his holism. There is no division here between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Rather, it is a combination of the two that sustains the narrator's ecstatic

[102] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the tension between the child as an object of spiritual purity verses one of sexual fixation within the context of 'Ragamuffin' and Ireland's *Preludes* (1913).
[103] The ragamuffin may be said to exist respectively 'below' the viewer in a social sense that surpasses both physical proximity and the merely visual.
[104] Machen (1924), 52.

vision. His embrasure of the whole awakens new avenues of consciousness. The narrator confesses that he had regarded the aforementioned scene hundreds of times and had even come to find it 'a nuisance and a weariness', only now 'a change fell. He did not in the least know what it was, but there seemed to be a strange air, and a new charm that soothed his mind.' The purpose of all this sound is to foster contrasting moments of absolute silence as amidst Machen's sensually explosive scene there may still be found reservoirs of sudden and unadulterated spiritual repose. The traffic stops, the noises of people and their machines fade, the streets become 'endued with a grave and reverent expectation', and the city convenes 'a solemn hush that summoned remnants of a far-off memory'. For this briefest of moments, the narrator suddenly and strangely feels that the minutest of details, even the 'golden glow' of some electric lamps above a shop's door, become imbued with significance.[105]

This visionary mood swiftly disperses as 'a chord of music' from the 'grind and jar of wheels' returns the scene to one of urban bustle, only something has been altered. The 'change' that the narrator discerned opens a visionary portal. Though the noise of the cityscape, which here represents a superficial layer of consciousness, has resumed, the narrator now proceeds to view everything, including the seemingly inconsequential, within the context of an omnipresent sacred rite. The cityscape assumes religious iconography: the roar of movement is perceived as 'the roll and swell and triumph of the organ', the 'shrill

[105] Ibid, 53. That being said, Machen's worldview is never microscopic. It is consistently macrocosmic. The perspective he recommends is one that regards the whole *with* all of its particulars rather than *from* them. This philosophy recalls Dupin in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) who rebukes the impaired vision of those who hold objects 'too close', gaining thereby an 'unusual clearness' concerning several points while losing 'sight of the matter as a whole'. Truth, Dupin asserts, is not something that is drawn laboriously from a well but is rather 'invariably superficial'. As evidence, Dupin argues that one sees more of a star's glow when viewing it in periphery. The 'lustre [of the star] grows dim just in proportion as we turn out vision *fully* upon it.' See Poe (2006), 252-253.

sweet' passing voices are heard as those of singing choristers, and streets are likened to a 'vast aisle' in which music, the incantation of ceremony, 'sank and swelled'.

Street becomes nave, and the church, that traditional enclosure of vision and salvation, is found to exist in the light outside all of its walls. The prose-poem ends with increasingly arcane religious imagery as a single rich voice overtakes the initiatory ditty of the Italian instrument, 'rising and falling in monotonous but awful modulations, singing a longing triumphant song, bidding the faithful lift up their hearts, be joined in heart with the Angels and Archangels, with the Thrones and Dominations.'

> Tears fell from his eyes, in his weeping the tears poured a rain upon his cheeks. But he saw in the distance, in the far distance, the carven tabernacle, golden mighty figures moving slowly, imploring arms stretched forth.
>
> There was a noise of a great shout; the choir sang in the tongue of his boyhood that he had forgotten:
>
> SANT…SANT…SANT
>
> Then the silvery bell tinkled anew; and again, and again. He looked and saw the Holy, White, and Shining Mysteries exhibited – in Holborn.[106]

This lengthy prose-poem is one of Machen's finest creations, and it is certainly his most intense and concrete expression of the visionary urban weird. In a miniature form, it follows the transformative urban path from unawakened passerby to spellbound participant. In the end, the street, the jugular of city life,[107] becomes transmuted into a nave, and the church, the enclosed space of vision and salvation, is found to exist anywhere and everywhere. This is the significance of that dash preceding Machen's last two words: it emphasizes the incredibility of the scene and the narrator's amazement (the dash recommends an inhalation

[106] Machen (1997), 52-54.
[107] Machen refers elsewhere to the street as the 'roaring main artery of London life'. See *The Three Imposters* in Machen (2018), 84.

in recitation) that all of this extraordinary magic may be found in the most familiar of places.[108] 'Holborn' becomes a holy word signifying a holy place. And it is all contained within the context of both a racial ('sudden and far-off') and a personal memory ('the tongue of his boyhood' – another displacement of the urban present by a rural and, in Machen's case, a provincial memory), whereby the visionary weird is understood not as something found but as something regained.[109]

'Soho Forenoons' was written in 1920, nearly three years after the cycle's other miniatures. Ireland's layered London is treated here in a series of short and abruptly alternating fragments with varying tonal centres, textures, and articulations, reflective of 'the enormous fragmentariness of the street view.'[110] These snapshots schizophrenically discourse with one another to form a scene that is both animated and calm – it both intensifies and unwinds, and the aggregation of this constant flux within the music is in contention with symbolic moments of unprepared and unexpected silence.

The placement of the movement within this borough is significant. As noted in Chapter 1, Soho is a frequent setting in Machen's tales and a nexus of socio-sexual subtext. In the present context, it is the foreignness of Soho that becomes relevant. Fiona Richards's appraisal of 'Soho Forenoons' as a 'not very English Soho' is apt, though it applies just as

[108] In this sense, the dash takes the place of an explanation mark at the end of the sentence, retaining exhilaration without risking the triviality of melodrama that often soils the latter.

[109] This prose-poem is another semi-autobiographical London tale as a passage from *Hieroglyphics* makes clear. Machen is in the process of explaining that 'the other things' – the portals to the ecstatic – are omnipresent:

> The 'other things'? Ah, that is another synonym, but who can furnish a precise definition of the indefinable? They are sometimes in the song of a bird, sometimes in the scent of a flower, sometimes in the whirl of a London street, sometimes hidden under a great lonely hill. Some of us seek them with most hope and the fullest assurance in the sacring of the Mass, others receive tidings through the sound of music, in the colour of a picture, in the shining form of a statue, in the meditation of eternal truth. Do you know that I can never hear a jangling piano-organ, contending with the roar of traffic without the tears – not of feeling but of emotion – coming to my eyes?' See Machen (1960), 94.

[110] Hyde & Meynell, 7.

well to the set's other two movements.[111] There are suggestions that temper Ireland's indigenous scene in peculiarly foreign colours. The 'Frenchness' of Ireland's aesthetics has been noted here, and in 'Soho Forenoons' one can expand this association to place itself. Alice Meynell's description of Chelsea's river-side wharf as 'the counterpart of spade cultivation on the Jersey *coteaux*', itself an uncanny reference to Ireland's own favourite topography, places the area in a landscape of dual cultural identity.[112] It is both local and foreign.

The first movement of Claude Debussy's *Images pour orchestra* (1909-1912), 'Gigues', is believed to have been inspired by Debussy's memories of England and makes use of a popular jig, 'Dansons la gigue', by the composer Charles Bordes (1863-1909), though an eponymous and contemporaneous poem by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) is also instructive.[113] Written in a café in Soho, Verlaine's poem alternates between images of an unnamed beloved and the refrain's injunction, 'Danson la gigue!':

Let's dance a jig!

I loved above all else here eyes,
Brighter than stars that light the skies,
I loved her eyes that tantalize.

Let's dance a jig!

She had that manner…Ah, but it
Could make poor lovers lose their wit,
Yet charm them too, I must admit!

Let's dance a jig!
And even more, today, I miss

[111] Richards (2000), 121.
[112] Meynell and Hyde, 16-17.
[113] See Williametta Spencer, 'The Relationship between André Caplet and Claude Debussy', *The Musical Quarterly*, 66.1 (January 1980), 112-131.

Her lips pursed in a flower-kiss –
Now dead and gone, alas, the bliss.

Let's dance a jig![114]

Here again we see the juxtaposition of two levels of feeling and perception – the romantic with the disengaged, the strange with the banal. It is as if Verlaine, like Machen, perceived amongst the bustle of London street-life instances of sweet or mystical serenity. In Machen's novel *The Secret Glory* (1923), there is a vivid Soho episode in which Ambrose Meyrick, having arrived as a Welsh outsider on a spiritual quest for the Holy Grail, wanders through London's streets with a 'satisfactory condition of bewilderment'. This 'bewilderment' manifests itself through Machen's familiar trope of the disoriented ambler: '…distinctions of the mariner's compass, its pedantry of east and west, north and south, were annihilated and had ceased to be; it was an adventure in a trackless desert, in the Australian bush, but on safer ground and in an infinitely more entertaining scene'. Ambrose is struck by the Frenchness of

[114] Paul Verlaine, *A Hundred and One Poems*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 100-101.

Dansons la gigue!

J'aimais surtout ses jolis yeux
Plus clairs que l'étoile des cieux,
J'aimais ses yeux malicieux.

Dansons la gigue!

Elle avait des façons vraiment
De désoler un pauvre amant,
Que c'en était vraiment charmant!

Dansons la gigue!

Mais je trouve encore Meilleur
Le baiser de sa bouche en fleur
Depuis qu'elle est morte à mon Coeur.

the district. He hears 'nothing but the roll of the French "r"' from passing strangers, and the signs and papers were all written in French.[115]

Ireland begins with a sliver of a silence. A semiquaver of rest on the downbeat of the first bar provides an inhalation while also leaving the metre indeterminate to the listener until the entrance of the soprano and bass voices on the downbeat of the second bar. This is not a preparatory bar but a premature one – the spring is released before the music box has finished winding – and the anchorless drift of this three-note semiquaver figure continues to modify the whole of the first theme. The first theme is modal, distinguishing it in tone from the themes of the earlier movements and carrying a religious connotation similar to that expressed in 'The Holy Things'. The ecumenicism of Machen's story is reflected here in that Ireland's liturgical element is counterbalanced by the immediate indication of *quasi Tambourine* over the first bar; by the use of syncopated dance-rhythms throughout; and by allusions to previous movements of secular character. This is street music masquerading as liturgical music, or vice versa: it is both low and high (Figure 28).

[115] Arthur Machen, *The Secret Glory* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1923), 240-241. This novel was published after 'Soho Forenoons', though it was serialized in the previous decade.



(Figure 26) John Ireland: Soho Forenoons, bb. 1-15 © Copyright 1920 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

At bar 27, the theme gives way entirely to the dance figuration that was gradually seeping into the texture but only for a brief five bars. This crude figure – according to Alan Rowlands, Ireland said that it should suggest 'an alcoholically unsteady gait' – in turn is overtaken by a variation on the consequent phrase of the first theme which marks the beginning of the development section (b. 32).[116] These sudden changes typify the movement. The dynamic range continues to vary widely during the development (from *p sotte voce* to

[116] Foreman (2011), 32.

ff) with transitions between them occurring swiftly.[117] Ireland's articulation is meticulous. Nearly every note has an articulation mark on it: tenuto, staccato, 'ponticello', accent, accent with a staccato, cap-accent, cap-accent with a staccato, along with two written-out indications of 'tenuto' that suggest changes in touch as well as time. After a muted reappearance of the "unsteady gait" (bb. 45-50), the *staccato* semiquavers begin to disappear, underwritten by an organ-pedal figure in the left-hand (bb. 51-52) (Figure 29).



(Figure 27) John Ireland: Soho Forenoons, bb. 50-57 © Copyright 1920 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

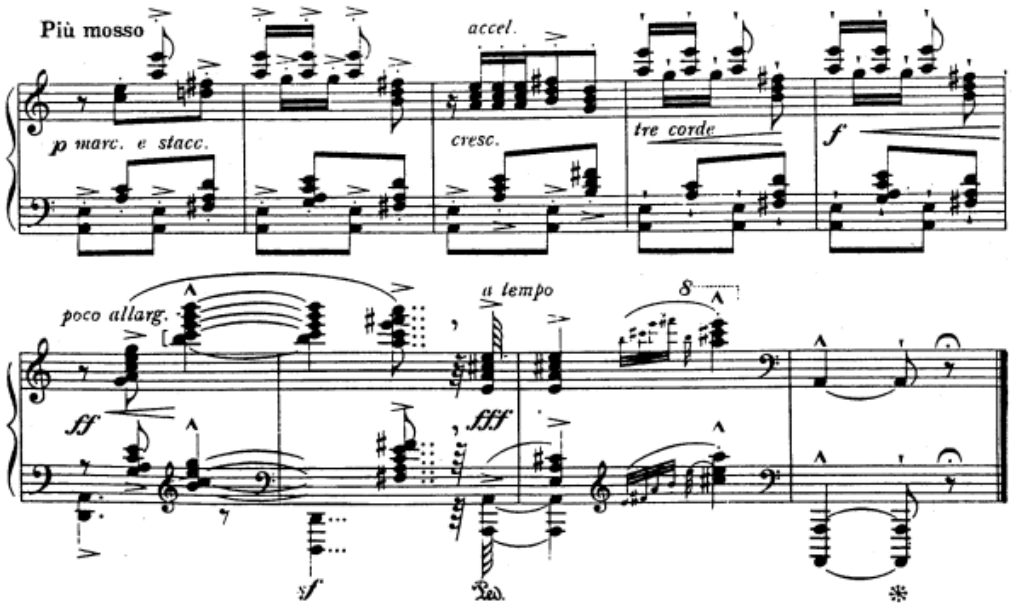
The different elements competing for the foreground gradually recede and submit until the parallel triads – Ireland's 'Thames-motif' from 'Chelsea Reach' (first appearance at bb. 14-15), divided, as in that movement, between the hands – dominate the landscape. Just as the music finally seems to be reaching a point of reconciliation between spirit and place, or at least of stasis, a *mf subito* quaver interrupts the scene (b. 57). This quaver (A-Bb-Bb-A-Bb) is the jangling-motif from 'Ragamuffin' (bb. 26-27), itself an analogy to the bell-motif of 'Chelsea Reach', transposed down by a half-tone. This in turn is followed by a fermata over

[117] The *ff* marking is given to a variation on Ireland's 'passion motif' (bb. 43-44).

another quaver of silence, as unprepared as the dynamic which preceded it.[118] Ireland returns unexpectedly to the first theme of 'Soho Forenoons' – transposed, like the previous quaver, down a half-tone – but it begins in mid-bar, apparently as surprised as the listener is by its fortuitous re-intrusion upon the scene. The added designation of *una corda* further displaces this passage into a submerged background that itself suggests a temporal hinterland (bb. 58-66). This music is heard *from before* (as recapitulation) but also *beneath* (as a consequence of the *una corde*) the scene just witnessed.

It all ends with scripted silence. The final note is depressed on the down-beat with a cap-accent and released briskly on the third quaver with a *secco* mark. A fermata is then placed over the bar's remaining fourth quaver (b. 106) (Figure 30). There is no practical need for this fermata, and it is of no discernible sonic import whatsoever.[119] Its use in a slower or softer passage could be read as an emphasis on a diminuendo to absolute silence, but in this case, Ireland is moving the dynamic in the opposite direction. Its purpose is entirely symbolic and can only be communicated to an audience visually. The swift removal of the hands from the keyboard necessitated by the release of the third quaver may be followed by a pose that is stationary but gives the impression of an intent to move: stillness in motion.[120]

[118] Jonathan Churchill has drawn attention to the use of disruptive silence to create urban disjunction in Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*. See Jonathan Churchill, *Form, Continuity, and Disjunction in Vaughan Williams's Symphonies* (DPhil Thesis: Duke University, 2022), 27-37.
[119] Ireland's likely debt to Debussy and Ravel for this effect is noted in Chapter 1.
[120] To achieve this effect, it is crucial that the final bar is executed *a tempo* as Ireland clearly indicates in the semi-quaver anacrusis into bar 104. Though performers often take liberties in this passage, no relaxation of the tempo is appropriate. The *poco allargando* Ireland previously designated applies only to bars 102 and 103.



(Figure 28) John Ireland: Soho Forenoons, bb. 98-106 © Copyright 1920 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

When executed *a tempo* as Ireland clearly indicates, the impact of the silence in this final bar is one of surprise. It is a parallel effect to the concluding sentence in Machen's 'The Holy Things'. Both inhalations are instances of shock that reconfigure the significance of what has come before them. It is also reflective of the sudden break that announces the arrival of day in full, a moment which, from the ghost of Hamlet's father to Bram Stoker to Stevenson's *Arabian Nights* to Machen's blood ritual in 'The Adventure of the Gold Tiberius' and others, breaks the spell.

Incompleteness and the Failure of Representation

The failure of urban representation that was noted in the first section of this chapter becomes especially relevant in the case of *Ballade of London Nights* because we are dealing with a work which is not only unfinished but whose subject is 'the unfinished', or 'the

unfinishable.' It is an exercise in insufficient means of expressions. An article in 1922 identified this as a recurring theme in Ireland's music:

> His music shows a mind restless, keenly analytical, unable to take life and art easily. Occasionally there have been reactions into tranquillity, [sic] but his latest works show that these are not final. Resolution is not yet….In all his work, there is…the same real and often painful sincerity. It is music born of emotional conflict. The fluctuations of the struggle leave critical opinion guessing. They puzzle the public. Most of all, probably, they puzzle Ireland.[121]

In *The Three Imposters*, Machen provided his own case study in the aesthetics of incompleteness, addressing it in both local and broad terms with philosophical implications concerning knowledge and experience that relate directly to our understanding of urban landscape. In a compelling study, Kelly Hurley attempts to explain the reader's difficulty in extracting meaning from *The Three Imposters* by placing responsibility on the novel's unusual narrative structure, a structure that consists, from her perspective, of at least three possible interpretations. First, the novel is picaresque in the sense that its events are characterized by their implausibility, 'by happenstance rather than [by] design'. The order of Machen's 'impossible coincidences' is cobbled together in a seemingly random fashion: 'The placement or sequence of events is without significance, and only the need for textual closure checks a narrative movement which proceeds by means of addition ("and…and…and")'. Second, one may observe in the novel a 'paranoiac mode of narration' in which the unaccountable events of the preceding interpretation are pardoned for any potential dubiousness. In this reading, everything rather than nothing has a purpose and an explanation, even if that explanation lies beyond our understanding. It is a conspiratorial reading of fated contingencies in which 'there is no such thing as a coincidence'. And thirdly, one may place the novel between these two opposing interpretations as a testament to some paradoxical

[121] Rodney Bennett, 'The Songs of John Ireland' in *The Bookman*, 61.366 (March 1922), 282-285.

'urban *chaosmos* that cannot be brought to order through narrative and other conventional strategies of organization', exemplifying in this way the spirit of 'a Gothicized city, whose only order of meaningfulness is an abjected space.'[122]

The more overarching features of the novel's narrative structure further complicate potential readings. Here, one may again observe Machen's recurring interest in large-scale cyclical form which comes to the foreground even more significantly than it did in the previous chapter's discussion of *A Fragment of Life*, itself another London-based text. In *The Three Imposters*, the reader intrudes upon the narrative in the middle of an exchange. The book 'begins' with a question:

> 'And Mr Joseph Walters is going to stay the night?' said the smooth, clean-shaven man to his companion, an individual not of the most charming appearance, who had chosen to make his ginger-coloured moustache merge into a pair of short chin-whiskers.

Without the benefit of an exposition with which to anchor ourselves, we have suddenly become the perplexed witnesses to a conversation between three completely unfamiliar figures. Standing in a doorway, these three friends make oblique references to persons and incidents that bear no meaning to the reader before walking away from the house, across the property, and disappearing into the suburban space. At this point, two figures, Dyson and Phillipps, stumble upon the scene much as the reader did only a moment ago. They are intrigued by the sight of the deserted house and by the building's atmosphere of 'heavy desolation'. Dyson sweepingly declares that he 'cannot remain commonplace' in the presence of such a thing. 'I yield to fantasy', he proclaims, in this place where 'all is falling

[122] See Hurley (2004), 157-160. Hurley's placing of the novel in 'slightly parodic relation' towards Gothicism and aestheticism, to which she respectively ascribes the traditions of affect and style, recalls S.T. Joshi's comment that weird fiction may be the only genre that is defined by the mood or affect that it engenders and that the means employed to achieve that end might be irrelevant.

into dimness and dissolution…and the very air of heaven goes mouldering to the lungs'. Within the house – beneath the known, external surface of things – he conjectures an 'enchanted' space where all is 'blood and fire'.

At this point, the narrative abruptly breaks. Machen shifts back in time to the moment where Dyson and Phillipps originally met, described significantly as another 'one of those myriad chances which are every day doing their work in the streets of London.'[123] We have already summarized the content of the ensuing narrative – the first and last chapters occur in the present while the middle occurs in the past – but a further observation must be made about the 'Adventure of the Deserted Residence', the novel's final chapter. Here, Machen returns the reader to the opening scene. Details from the opening scene are retold in paraphrases of distinct imprecision. Note, for example, the differences between the following passages. In the first chapter, Machen writes:

> About five minutes later two gentlemen [Dyson and Phillipps], whom idleness had led to explore these forgotten outskirts of London, came sauntering up the shadowy carriage-drive.

This sentence is wrested into a new yet markedly familiar form in the closing chapter:

> Dyson had persuaded the ingenious Mr Phillipps to accompany him on one of those aimless walks to which he was himself so addicted. Starting from the very heart of London, they had made their way westward through the stony avenues, and were not just emerging from the red lines of an extreme suburb, and presently the half-finished road ended, a quiet lane began, and they were beneath the shade of elm -trees.

The form has been somewhat expanded, and phrases have been tweaked: 'idleness' becomes 'aimless', 'forgotten outskirts of London' becomes a 'westward' removed 'from the very heart of London', a 'shadowy carriage-drive' becomes 'the half-finished road', and so on. This is only one example from a bevy of such transformations. The 'fine autumn evening' is

[123] See *The Three Imposters* in Machen (2018), 79-81.

described again with ‘yellow autumn sunlight; the ‘blood and fire’ that Dyson earlier commented on from the sun setting behind the windowpanes becomes ‘a distant window catching the sun and kindling with fire’ in which the glow is ‘reflected…as if blood and fire were mingled’; the ‘Georgian wings’ of the house become ‘curved wings’; the sloping windows and roofs become ‘irregular roofs and projections’; the ‘two dome-like cupolas’ become ‘two wings…roofed in cupola fashion’; ‘decay’ reappears with the further adage of ‘symbols of dissolution’; ‘a rusting Triton on the rocks’ becomes a Triton whose ‘bronze flesh’ has been ‘eaten’ by rust, his ‘shattered horn’ now a broken ‘conch-shell’; the sun that ‘slid down and shone red through the bars of the elm-trees’ becomes a light ‘filtered down through the boughs of the trees’.[124]

This extensive list is by no means comprehensive, but it is sufficient to make the point: we are witnessing not only a retelling of story but a reconfiguration of it. This is a return that bears either the distortions of a faulty memory or the inconsistencies of an unreliable narrator. We are being told things we already know or at least thought we already knew. There is thus a peculiar sense that one was in this place before, though it is not déjà vu because in one’s memory one could have sworn that the scene was different – a sense of half-recognition as things are simultaneously known and unknown. And if these things are not what we thought they were then the reader is constrained to doubt oneself. The reader becomes complicit in the trickery of a weird narrative arch.[125]

---

[124] Ibid, 79-81 and 192-196.

[125] Happenstance events always happen in Machen’s universe, and this is inseparable from the role of story-telling in his narratives. Hurley notes that ‘the most important thing that the three imposters do is tell stories…which serve to further their ostensible designs not one whit’. She continues:

> ‘Their story-telling is a gratuitous act. As Dyson would have it, the imposters’ tales are utterly fantastic; as Phillipps [sic] would have it, they make no “sense” and turn out to be brilliant formal exercises, produced sheerly for the pleasures of narrativization. This is what one must finally say about the novel as a whole. It stands in opportunistic relation to the urban chaosmos it explores, identifying

Having returned to this scene in the final chapter, Dyson and Phillipps enter the house to find a bound and mutilated corpse, and the novel ends abruptly with a line of shock and recognition: "'The young man in spectacles," said Mr Dyson.' This is the same man intimated by the novel's first sentence: Mr Joseph Walters. We have returned precisely to the figure and place of the beginning, ready to begin again, only the previously oblique references in the opening conversation of the strange trio, like the substance of the subsequent chapters, are now permanently and in most cases grotesquely altered by the foreknowledge of this 'conclusion'. The beginning only makes sense upon a second reading. Even if, as Hurley argues, 'contingency is the organizing, or rather disorganizing, principle of narrative structure' within *The Three Imposters*, the book's uroboric linkage between its end and its beginning gives that structure an unexpectedly self-sustaining flow. The structure is indeterminate – both open and closed – and self-reliant. It utilizes a self-referential form whose inward gaze produces a dreamy redundancy in which the ghastly is fabricated to such an extreme that it eventually becomes inextricable from the tedious. This subtle interplay between the novel's bookending chapters is one of Machen's greatest achievements. Whether reading from the beginning or looping back from the end, the reader cannot possibly know which chapter contains the more truthful account. The detail that Machen provides is not too little or too much but too equivocal, and perhaps that is the point: to learn that what we cannot grasp is lost.[126]

London as a dense and clamorous space from which to extract sensation, incident, narrative. But it cannot and will not organize that space in any meaningful way.' See Hurley, 166.

[126] This is not nihilism. There is a difference between the absence of meaning and the inability to the comprehend a meaning that is known or presumed to exist. The phenomenological problem in so much of Machen's work concerns the super-abundance of meaning – it is literally everywhere in the visionary seizures of his protagonists. Francois Jullien writes about the relationship between beauty and 'ecstasy', a word which, as we have seen, had special significance for Machen. The ecstatic is that sense of being 'overwhelmed': 'the sensible has come out of its casing and its limitations and is now this, and no longer the Invisible, which assumes the role of the absolute.' It is this overwhelming that not only splinters our perception but broadens it. The

The sadness that underlies Machen's and Ireland's later reflections on London is also a result of their nostalgia for an altered landscape and a lost era. 'My Strand is gone forever; some of it is a wild rock-garden of purple flowers, some of it is imposing new buildings; but one way or another, the spirit is wholly departed.' The 1880 London of Machen's youth is remembered as 'a more brilliant place' than its modern counterpart: 'something of the glitter and splendour has passed away from the West End of London.' [127] Machen objected also to the changed architecture of middle- and working-class communities: 'I said the chief horror of the modern street was not to be sought in the poverty of the design…but in the fact that in the street of to-day each house is a replica of the other, so that the effect is, if the street be long enough, the prolongation of one house to infinity, in an endless series of repetitions.' Machen considers this a 'continual slight' to the beholder and a desecration of the urban beautiful.[128]

In the 1950s, the degeneration of London becomes a recurring theme of Ireland's correspondence. He wrote of the constant traffic in Chelsea that had become 'absolutely unbearable' and of the 'constant poisonous fumes [that] have become really a menace to one's health.' The changes had left him 'a total wreck, mentally and physical[ly].'

> …what is there to tie me to London any longer? Few people come to see me – hardly <u>any</u> – I can no longer frequent clubs or ''pubs'' – I do not entertain or give parties, + very rarely go to a concert…London is no longer the London I used to know – Chelsea, <u>as</u> Chelsea, no longer exists, + I feel like a <u>ghost</u> here! Any regrets I have

senses become more fully 'exorbitant.' Again, the 'feeling of lack' that accompanies our being unable to respond to or process the '*totality*' of this phenomenon is not to be misconstrued as nihilistic but rather nostalgic. See Francois Jullien, *This Strange Idea of the Beautiful*, trans. Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London and New York: Seagull Books, 2016), 197. Compounding this is the tendency for Machen to suggest rather than describe, making the evidence persistently ambiguous. An early review of *The Three Imposters* described the stories as teeming with 'strange beauty, mysticism, and weird, diabolical power of suggestion'. See Edmund Lester Pearson, 'New Books and Old', *The Independent*, 108.3819 (24 June 1922), 558.

[127] Machen (1951), 73.

[128] Arthur Machen, *Things Near and Far* (London: Martin Secker, 1923), 96. Ireland similarly despaired over those 'hideous council houses [that] are springing up all over the place.' See MS. 60535 (4 July 1951), fol. 14.

> will be for the London of 20 or 30 years ago, which has completely changed – it is now a cruel, horrible city.[129]

Having left London, Ireland came to 'loathe' his returns to the city to attend performances of his music, which he referred to as 'compulsory visits.' He complained, 'I am too old for the strain.'[130] The sense of loss did not soften with time. On New Year's Eve, at the end of his first full-year living in Rock Mill, Ireland wrote a wistful letter saying that he had received a bottle of brandy along with 'a handsome book on Chelsea' from a friend: '[it] made me feel very nostalgic.'[131]

Ballade of London Nights

The cyclical or regenerative element of Machen's London vision, along with its inherent sadness and nostalgia, achieves its fullest manifestation in *Ballade of London Nights*. Night presents us with a landscape at once the same as and different from that of day. In fin-de-siècle London literature, this is often communicated through the imagery of fog, the gas-lamp's fraternal twin. Gas-lamps and fog transmute the cityscape. Machen wrote of fog's ability to veil, though not necessarily to douse, 'the deformities of London'.[132] Cloaked in smoke ('English air'), Arthur Symons wrote of the cityscape as 'a picture continually changing, a continual sequence of pictures, and there is no knowing what mean street corner may not suddenly take on a glory not its own.'[133] In Machen's London, the gas-lamp appears

---

[129] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (27 September 1953), fol. 27. These complaints are reiterated in a letter later that season, where Ireland writes of London 'heavy traffic, noise, stench and poisonous fumes' and of the negative effect on his well-being. See Ibid (20 November 1953), fol. 30. A year later, he refers again to how 'badly the atmosphere is affected by the fumes from Diesel-oil engined [sic] vehicles – it really is very serious.' See MS. 60356 (7 June 1954), fol. 66.
[130] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (27 August 1957), fol. 99.
[131] Ibid (31 December 1954), fol. 44.
[132] From 'The Inmost Light' in Machen (2011), 1.
[133] Arthur Symons, *London a Book of Aspects* (London: Privately Printed for Edmund D. Brooks and His Friends, 1909), 2.

prominently as a constellatory metaphor. Machen's London is a universe bewitched by the blaze of modernity.

> London seemed a city of the Arabian Nights, and its labyrinths of streets an enchanted maze; its long avenues of lighted lamps were as starry systems, and its immensity became for him an image of the endless universe.[134]

Machen's gas-lamp is a multi-dimensional symbol of future and past, of modernity and memory. It is both a contemporary curiosity and a practical feature of everyday life. Decades later, they serve as a reminder to Machen of his first encounter with the weird cityscape. On his initial visit to the city with his father, Machen was suddenly confronted by the 'twinkle' of 'multitudinous lamps' in London's 'sunset flushed' Strand. Before that visit, Machen admitted that he 'had hardly seen a lamp-lit street before'.[135]

Like Machen, Symons considered such overcast and equivocal scenes to be in fact the 'real London'. He believed that the city owed 'much of the mystery of its beauty' to the 'trail of fire' made by the relatively recent addition of gas-lamps to the cityscape. In equally Neoplatonist imagery, Symons credited London's lamps with dispersing modernity's 'masque of shadows', proving how, in a conscious reassertion of Miltonian sinisterism, night 'becomes palpable, and not only an absence of the light of day'.[136] As late as 1962, the year

---

[134] Machen (2011), 217.
[135] See Machen (1951), 74.
[136] Symons (1909), 60. Fiona Richards makes no mention of Machen in her discussion of *Ballade of London Nights*. She instead compares the music to the writing of Arthur Symons, stating vaguely that there are 'clearly connections' between the two artists even though those connections 'are elusive'. She notes Ireland's reading of Symons's *Days and Nights* (1889) and speculates on the influence of Symons's later collection *London Nights* (1895) on Ireland's own title. Symons was unquestionably an important figure in the urban tradition to which Ireland subscribed, but the directness of influence in the case of the ballade is open to debate. See Richards (2000), 139. Yoshio Markino made an interesting observation in his meditation on the colours of nocturnal London. Below the towering 'bluish (perhaps a little greenish) grey' of Westminster Bridge, electric lights are 'reflected on the full tide'. 'Ladies in white, and gentlemen's white chests, broke the darkness here and there. They were walking together as light as butterflies.' While Markino concedes that these may not be the 'real colours' of London's landscape, he finds them unquestionably more 'fascinating in the mists'. The mists make the 'crude' colours of London beautiful, giving them a 'harmony'. See Markino, 189.

of Ireland's death, V.S. Pritchett (1900-1997) was to recall the gas-lamps of his youth and the resultant interplay between light (artificial day) and fog (artificial night) for their memorable shadows:

> The people in the streets appeared out of one shadow and presently vanished into the next. The city was mysterious, and soft to the eye…Waiting for your bus under the lamp standard your skin takes on a corpse-like quality – perhaps, in our kind of world, prophetic.[137]

Pritchett was writing in the context of the Cold War – the 'whitish and greenish' tinge he perceives in the gaslight corresponds to propagandistic images concerning atomic radiation in the 1960s – but the malicious element he detects was longstanding. Even in the nineteenth century, the perception of gas-lamps was not wholly romantic, soiled by a slew of high-profile disasters, legal complications, and political proceedings that accompanied the introduction of gasworks on a large-scale to both Paris and London. They were themselves perceivable as instruments of horror. Criticism was also aesthetic. In his review of this controversy, Jean-Baptiste Fressoz explained how gas-lamps were criticized for having 'transported the ugliness of an industrial light into the middle of refined spaces. It threw on things and persons a strong and uniform light that negated the beauty of the nocturnal world.[138] This artificialization of the night-scape is in accord with the common thread that binds the imagery of many fin-de-siècle artists, writers, and musicians on this subject together: by switching off the external light of day, we ignite the gleam of an imaginative

[137] V.S. Pritchett, *London Perceived*, photographs by Evelyn Hoffer (London: Penguin Books, 1962), 210.
[138] See Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, 'The Gas Lighting Controversy: Technological Risk, Expertise, and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London', *Journal of Urban History*, 33.5 (July 2007), 729-755.

interior.[139] Night awakens the city, and in the world of night, pockets of light become portals to more than merely literal vision.[140]

These associations show how Ireland's confessed inspiration for 'Chelsea Reach' of gaslight flickering on the evening waters of the Thames can resurface twelve years later in *Ballade of London Nights*. However periphrastically, it illuminates the latent sinisterism of a shared space in a manner that complicates and enriches our understanding of both compositions as manifestations of the contentious borderlines between time and space that define urban experience.

The stratification here of Ireland's and Machen's London across social, historical, and stylistic categories charges the ballade's capacity for phenomenological nuance and ambiguity – the polyvalent spawns the polysemous. Ross Chambers's description of fin-de-siècle Paris applies equally to Gothic London: in a modern cityscape, 'the past, the present[,] and even the future are co-present and commingled.'[141] London has a 'historical density' in which the physical manifestations of the space throughout its disparate epochs 'literally lie beside each other; one cannot be imagined without the other.' Therefore, the city's stratifications are not only 'commingled' but also in dialogue. Space is self-reflective in both a visual and a psychological sense. The discombobulating effect that this has on the perceiver of the space was noted by V.S. Pritchett: confronted with chronological layers of architecture,

[139] I am reminded of Theodore Roethke's Blakean image from *In a Dark Time* of 'All natural shapes blazing unnatural light' with the spiritually illuminating light of the self being counterintuitively 'dark'. See Theodore Roethke, *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1975), 199.
[140] Stephen Graham's popular *London Nights* (1925) is indicative of the fashionable nocturnal urban scene of the 1920s in which Ireland and Machen were complicit. See Stephen Graham, *London Nights* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1925). Graham would later publish a similarly themed but less successful book called *Twice Round the London Clock and More London Nights* (1933).

[141] Chambers (2006), 108.

'the Londoner's mind splits into past and present. Every street name takes a bit of him into a past he cannot but know.'[142]

For Machen, narrative emanates from this fractured landscape. The problem is that landscape and, by extension, its narrative are 'vague in the sense in which music is vague'. It is the responsibility of the artist 'to realise – or, perhaps, to actualize – this emotion by inventing a tale' about the landscape – a tale that it contains within itself.[143] In the case of urban landscape, Machen rewilds the city in his imagination through the medium of the past. Machen recalled how the origin of his London-based memoir, *Far Off Things*, was intertwined with his sense of the unknown, wild elsewhere within the urban present. The sound of wind blowing through his chimney carried with it the landscape of his childhood in Llanddewi:

> It is seldom that one hears the great winds in London, and the noise and rumour of them at night always brings back to me the thought of the old days and the old ways; dark winter woods, dead fires, dead faces; the mountain in the west, the forest in the east, and a wild land between them.[144]

The uncanny, in Freud's essay, 'is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar.'[145] In *Ballade of London Nights*, all of Ireland's musical imagery from *London Pieces* is treated to a process of reverse scorification that rewilds or *unknows* the urban space. It is at once an elaboration and a deconstruction of those earlier miniatures which serve as both catalyst and medium; it is an unhearing that marries the peculiar with the general in order to assert 'the surrealism of the habitual'.[146] The

[142] Pritchett (1962), 100-101.
[143] Machen (1951), 32.
[144] Quoted in Danielson (1923), 58.
[145] See Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1953), 219-220. Freud believed the loss of this original familiarity to be the consequence of repression.
[146] See Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 154. Cavell is discussing Heidegger in this section.

ballade is an extreme instance of Ireland's self-referential style and an example of how Ireland used self-reference to represent the complexities surrounding our experience of place. Snippets of past tunes briefly surface then submerge; chronologies of earlier movements are shaken out of order; and as will be illustrated later, the musical iconography of different boroughs trespass on one another. Ireland's defamiliarization goes just far enough to establish a landscape that is at once new and too-familiar; he displaces rather than grounds his listener by the disorientation arising from a calculated field of misquotations and other deformities. Like the uncanny, *Ballade of London Nights* floats in a contention: the flux between the imagined and the real – two elements of opposite nature which depend upon and even reconcile one another despite their incompatibility to prove Machen's contention that 'everything visible was the veil of an invisible secret.'[147]

If 'Chelsea Reach' takes place on the Thames, then *Ballade of London Nights* emerges from it as a memory bubbled imperfectly to the surface.[148] Immediately at the beginning, we find ourselves again in the vicinity of the water where a barcarolle in 3/8 whose bars are paired in two-bar phrases bears the same sense of movement as the 6/8 metre of

[147] Machen (1951), 32.

[148] The Thames is still a channel for the personal – still the 'pale and unreal' river that Arthur in *Little Dorrit* uses to launch his love 'to the eternal seas' – but Ireland cannot dissociate his Thames from that river's larger association with distance and imperial memory. See Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* [1855-1857] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 339. As Joseph Conrad wrote, the Thames is a silent witness to experience that exists outside of time and place, 'unruffled' by the changes it channels – its 'unceasing service crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea.' See Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* [1899], ed. Owen Knowles and Allan H. Simmons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4-5. Conrad's conception of the Thames as an extension of the sea adds to this degree of elsewhere within the heart of empire. Laura Chrisman used this perception of the river and the sea to illuminate 'a double structure' inherent to the British metropolis. The Thames becomes 'a transhistorical emblem of metropolitan England itself'. See Laura Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 25-28. W.E. Henley's ode to the Thames, framed as a four-movement musical composition, put this in blunt terms when he layered the river with personal and public fantasy: 'Reach upon reach of burial – so they feel,/These colonies of dreams!' See W.E. Henley, *London Voluntaries: The Song of the Sword and Other Verses* (London: David Nutt, 1893), 8-9.

‘Chelsea Reach’ (Figures 22 and 31). It does not take much sleuthing to find additional correspondences between the two pieces, and a case may indeed be made that the ballade’s first 97 bars are an elaborate paraphrase of bars 1-53 of ‘Chelsea Reach’. These sections map almost perfectly onto one another. Both pieces have a primary theme that begins with a falling interval; this is followed by an ascending scalar pattern at which point the melody is joined by a second voice in the right-hand (Ballade bb. 1-8, Chelsea bb. 1-4); the phrase continues this ascension along with a marked crescendo and the utilization of ties across bar-lines in the melody (Ballade bb. 9-17, Chelsea bb. 5-8); the melody achieves an octave doubling and is marked *mf* along with a hairpin dynamic (Ballade bb. 18-21, Chelsea bb. 9-10); there is a diminuendo across several bars, the last of which has over the final three quavers a tenuto in the ballade and a ritardando in ‘Chelsea Reach’ (Ballade bb. 22-30, Chelsea bb. 11-13); the music is characterized by parallel fourths as it ascends and transitions to the next section (Ballade bb. 30-41, Chelsea bb. 14-17).



Figure 29 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 1-38)

It is not until bar 51 of *Ballade of London Nights* that Ireland introduces an idea which may be said not to derive explicitly from 'Chelsea Reach', and this is still not an original idea – it is a version of Ireland's passion motif, something which appeared also in bars 43-44 of 'Soho Forenoons', though again the motif signals not passion but submission, the acquiescence of the listener to the ritual.[149] Ireland is gradually expanding his frame of self-reference from the first movement of *London Pieces* to the whole set. Subsequent bars remain in a familiar zone even if the material is not as explicitly derived as the previous section was.

[149] This half-reappears in 'Soho Forenoons' moments later in bars 53-54.

For example, one may reasonably interpret the accents and *sforzandi* in bars 67-73 as a counterpart to the chimes of bars 18-19 and 24-25 in 'Chelsea Reach'. If these are the bells of London churches or dockyards that they seem to suggest, then we may observe how Ireland has presented us with time as both static and animated, a symbol of nighttime's mutability rather than of daytime's stasis. But these less tenuous connections do not dominate the scene for very long because at bars 80-84 and 94-98 Ireland resorts again to self-quotation by presenting a minor and chromatically altered version of the primary theme from 'Chelsea Reach'. The chromaticism of these bars and the use of parallel augmented triads may be linked to bars 42- 49, and 112-113 of the earlier miniature. As observed previously, these parallel triads are a feature of all three movements in *London Pieces*. In *Ballade of London Nights*, they occur with similar frequency, albeit with a more chromatic bent (bb. 141-142, for example) (Figure 32).



Figure 30 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 141-142)

There is a striking resemblance between the use in both pieces of parallel triads that descend, like the primary theme of 'Chelsea Reach', by a minor-third before ascending step-wise; compare, for example, bars 58-67 of 'Chelsea Reach' (Figure 33) with bars 128-130 of *Ballade of London Nights* (Figure 34).[150] In bars 128-130 of *Ballade of London Nights*, Ireland recasts this figuration in major triads.

[150] Chromatically descending minor triads are of course a prominent feature of Ralph Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* (1911-13, revs. 1918 and 1933). Sydney Grew called this the 'London' chord. See Sydney



(Figure 31) John Ireland: Chelsea Reach, bb. 58-69 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Grew, 'A London Symphony by Ralph Vaughan Williams', *The British Musician*, 2.4 (December 1926), 149-156. *A London Symphony* is another near contemporary case of an approach to London's representation that expands on a literary source, in this case *Tono-Bungay* (1909) by H.G. Wells. See Alain Frogley, 'H.G. Wells and Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*: Politics and Culture in Fin-de-Siècle England', *Sundry Sorts of Music Books: Essays on the British Library Collections. Presented to O.W. Neighbour on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Chris A. Banks, Arthur Searle, and Malcolm Turner, (London: British Library, 1993), 299-308. Like Machen, Wells is writing in a semiautobiographical manner. Like Ireland, Vaughan Williams frames his London portrait with depictions of the Thames. Frogley suggests that Vaughan Williams is presenting London as 'almost unrepresentable', speculating that the possibility that the finale 'fall[s] short of the expectations and responsibilities generated by the preceding movements may serve as a 'not inappropriate' metaphor for the city itself. See Alain Frogley, 'History and Geography: The Early Orchestral Works and the First Three Symphonies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, ed. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81-105.



Figure 32 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 128-130)

Even when their sources are less obvious, the parallels are too many to be entirely coincidental, and while the substance may not always be identical the overall trajectory certainly is. This is a nocturnal rendering of a diurnal landscape. Space has been transmuted along with our perception of it. Pentatonicism appears throughout, most blatantly in bars 124-128 – the gradual busying of the development is interrupted by these four bars to allow for this splash of *japonisme* along with its subtext of exotic othering. Half-remembered tunes blend with the new material as the barriers between the pieces continues to dissolve. The contour of the five-note figure in bars 84-91 (Figure 36) maps onto the last five quavers of the melody in bars 7 and 8 of 'Chelsea Reach' (Figure 35) while also, by resolving each time to an open-fifth, alluding to bars 11-13. When Ireland expands this figure to six quavers, we see how it corresponds also with 'Ragamuffin' (bb. 5-6 and 83-84) (Figure 37).



(Figure 33) John Ireland: Chelsea Reach, bb. 7-9 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Figure 34 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 75-100)



(Figure 35) John Ireland: Ragamuffin, bb. 4-7 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The landscape shifts as elements of Soho also present themselves. The consequent phrase of that miniature's first theme is alluded to in bars 101-105, though the reference is obscured by modifications to the rhythm and changes in the quality of the intervals (the initial descending fourth becomes a descending tritone). Still, the contour of this phrase is identical. It even resolves on the same open fifth (A-E), and the accompanying septuplet arpeggiations may be heard as an elaboration of the semiquavers in 'Soho Forenoons'. In bar 106, these arpeggiations expand and contract to become an eight-note pentatonic version of the three-quaver accompanying figure from the beginning of the earlier miniature. Above and below this, Ireland places the first four notes of the primary theme in 'Soho Forenoons', though he switches the respectively on- and off-beat presence of the soprano and alto voices (bb. 108-110). Even the modulation of this passage by a semi-tone in bar 116 mirrors that of 'Soho Forenoons' in bar 58. In bar 124, the character of ragamuffin reappears. Ireland's sudden modulations in bars 124-126 followed by a pentatonic flourish (Figure 38) – the image followed by the latent double within the image – recall his earlier miniature's similar figure at bars 13-14 (Figure 49), 45-46, and 91-92.



Figure 36 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 124-126)



(Figure 37) John Ireland: Ragamuffin, bb. 13-16 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

A moment later (b. 131), after a single-bar excursion to Chelsea via the Thames-motif, Ireland returns to the cascading arpeggios of 'Ragamuffin' (bb. 29-30; 70-72), followed by a scalar sequence in the left-hand (bb. 135-139) – Ireland shifts this to the instrument's lowest and least distinct register, a deepening that helps to half-hide the reference – which mimics

the passagework of that earlier miniature (bb. 19-24; 51-56) while also, by the frequency of its modulation and the asymmetry of its groupings, adding to the hysteria.

This progression is cauterized in bar 141 by an extravagantly altered version of the Thames-motif from 'Chelsea Reach', reworked into nonharmonic noise. The motif begins and ends on a G-major triad, but the formerly modest curl about the interval of a minor third is expanded to a spread of two octaves. Furthermore, the motif appears in both hands but in opposite modes and in opposite directions. In the right-hand, the motif ascends in major triads; the left-hand descends by the same intervals in minor triads. The articulation of the motif is also changed from legato to staccato accents.[151] These three bars are succeeded by a return to Soho: the initial notes of that movement's primary theme are rendered *secco* along with a sudden quickening of the tempo. This is followed by an allusion to Soho's transitional whole-tone figure (Soho bb. 86-90; Ballade bb. 147-151) where the articulation is again altered from legato to *secco*. In bar 152, Ireland reverts to a bitonal smear of arpeggios (Figure 40) – a doppelgänger of bars 29-30 and 70-72 in 'Ragamuffin' (Figure 41).

[151] The staccatos are not marked, but Ireland's use of semiquaver rests between the triads of the first beat in bars 141-142 strongly recommends an absence of pedal. The same applies to the quaver rests separating the chords in bar 143. Another Whistler painting is brought to mind: *Nocturne in Black and Gold – The Falling Rocket* (1875). Inspired by celebrations at Cremorne Gardens, the chiaroscuro of the bright and dotted fireworks against the bulging and caliginous black and blue-grey sky is an articulatory juxtaposition parallel to that of this moment in Ireland's score.



Figure 38 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 151-162)



(Figure 39) John Ireland: Ragamuffin, bb. 70-76 © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Both instances mark a moment of transgression from an increasingly uncontrolled soundscape, but in *Ballade of London Nights* this is also a point of dispersion within the narrative as the tension subsides back to a re-worked version of its earlier self. As the arpeggios gradually descend, another subtle reference to 'Soho Forenoons' appears in an off-beat emphasis that suggests that miniature's opening countermelody in the right-hand, though its step-wise descent of a minor third bears traces also of the left-hand's lowest voice in the same passage (Soho bars 2-6). Ireland then introduces a semiquaver pedal on C2 (bars 161-175) before changing to an F#, the dominant of the ballade's opening key of B minor (in 'Soho Forenoons', Ireland likewise adds a drumming figure in the left-hand on an F♮ that resolves to its tonic key of Bb-minor). Over this pedal, a heavily chromaticized and interspliced version of the ballade's primary theme appears; this putrefaction is itself a variation on the transition in 'Chelsea Reach' from recapitulation to coda (bb. 115-120). Then, in bar 198, Ireland places a fermata over a complete measure of silence (Figure 42).



Figure 40 ('Ballade of London Nights' bb. 163-198)

Here, the manuscript ends. It was discovered unfinished in Ireland's desk after his death, though others seem to have been aware of its existence while he was alive. Jocelyn Brooke recalled Ireland's hesitation to discuss the work and that the composer was not

entirely satisfied with it. "Yes, it doesn't quite come off", Brooke recalls Ireland saying.[152] Alan Rowlands was the first to suggest that *Ballade of London Nights* be 'finished' and performed by repeating bars 1-41 before cadencing in B major. Richards may be correct in assuming that something like this was intended by Ireland; his penchant for ternary form and the preparation of the F# pedal (bb. 176-197) strongly suggests this. In Rowlands's posthumous rendition, the music is allowed to return to the imagery of the Thames.

The primary objection to Rowlands's editorial decision is that it does not contain the vital changes that Ireland *always* gave to the return of his A material.[153] But by considering Ireland's score as the composer left it – incomplete – an alternative reading is made possible. Machen recalled reading books on the mysteries in London as a young man. Sitting on a park bench, he would contemplate the essence of this city. He would sit in the 'reality' of that 'bald, arid, detestable' space but in 'actuality' be wandering in the hidden space beneath, the true landscape, in wonder at how a city's cathedral is 'rushing upwards to the stars which it cannot attain'; at how the 'old modes in which there are no true closes, but rather hints of undying melodies far beyond their endings; interminable'; and how the dictum of the 'dark robed Masters' rang true – '*omnia exeunt in Mysterium*.' In this, the dynamic between self, imagination, and city becomes a 'quest to which there is no term, nor bound, nor limit: *pelagus vastissimum*.'[154] *Ballade of London Nights* follows Machen's template for representation of urban space as ambiguous in temporal and spatial matters, but it is also a great failure. It utilizes the same past-present, open-closed structure of *The Three Imposters*

[152] Longmire (1969), 122.
[153] The counterargument to Richards's opinion is that Ireland has already done this – bars 161-197 give a complete restatement of the primary theme complete with the distinguishing alterations she finds in Ireland's other ternary structures.
[154] Machen (1951), 133.

while also serving as an example of Machen's own admission that the urban space was beyond understanding, what he called 'the sorrowful consideration of how much lower is the book than the dream behind it.'[155]

Authorial intention is irrelevant to this effect. By remaining incomplete, *Ballade of London Nights* serves as a Machenesque meta-commentary on the unfinished and, by implication, on the unknowable with regard to urban space. What Roland Barthes credited to the Romantic Fantasy may equally apply to *Ballade of London Nights*: there is 'an ever-new speech [arising] out of brief fragments, each of which is both intense and mobile, uncertainly located', and which succeeds in producing 'the novelistic without constructing a novel'. Barthes, who was in this instance discussing Franz Schubert, argued that even text-reliant compositions such as song-cycles 'do not narrate' but rather project journeys in which 'each moment...is in a sense turned back on itself, blind, closed to any general meaning'.[156] This phenomenological issue of the open-closed work directly concerns our reading of the disconcertingly familiar yet extreme representation that Ireland gives to his urban space. The composition's weird power comes from its inexplicability, from the perversion of its own origin – *London Pieces* – in such a way that both decorates and degenerates; it comes from these reworkings as they are grafted onto a framework whose meaning is so skeletal that it cannot help but devolve into mystery and myth. The subsequent '*wandering*' that Barthes identifies, rooted though it is in the imagery of Austro-Germanic folklore, is not excessively dissimilar from the London roaming of Machen's London self – both fictional and non-

[155] Machen (1993), 22. Machen would have appreciated the failure to represent the urban in musical terms as well. Though he believed Pater's identification of music as the end goal of the arts to be true, he nevertheless considered music to be 'super-intellectual' in the sense that 'It does not ''mean'' anything' and does nothing to satisfy our faculty for 'logical understanding'. Ibid, 32.

[156] Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 291.

fictional – and his search, however futile, for an understanding of the urban space which Ireland's incomplete score reflects: the process is one of 'becoming without finality: at one stroke, and to infinity, to begin everything all over again'. [157] Or, in the words of Machen, 'So here ends, without beginning, *The London Adventure*.'[158]

[157] Ibid, 291.
[158] Machen, *The London Adventure* (1924) 179.

Chapter 3

The Pastoral Weird: A Walking *Legend*

Introduction

Numerous publications in recent years have reconsidered the role of pastoralism in English music of the early twentieth century, calling into question its (mis-)identification as a merely escapist, patriotic, or ahistorical mode. Of particular interest are works in which composers turned to pastoral settings or modes to address themes of morbidity, pain, isolation, and the grotesque.[1] These reassessments have revealed traditional interpretations of pastoralism, landscape, and Englishness in music to be increasingly problematic. Ireland has often been identified with a wave of early twentieth-century English pastoralism, but the focus by commentators has primarily been on his most popular works which show only one aspect of his pastoral character, often associated with the secondary theme of nationalism that was only pronounced in Ireland's music during the 1910s as a consequence of the First World War.[2]

Ireland's *Legend* (1933) for piano and orchestra has long been associated with the landscape of the Sussex Downs which Ireland claimed to have played a central part of its

[1] This revisionism has been especially prominent in Vaughan Williams studies. See Daniel Grimley, 'Landscape and Distance: Vaughan Williams, Modernism, and the Symphonic Pastoral', in *British Musical Modernism, 1895-1960*, ed. Matthew Riley (Farnharm: Ashgate, 2010), 147-174; Daniel Grimley, 'Music, Ice, and the ''Geometry of Fear'': The Landscapes of Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91.1-2 (Spring-Summer 2008), 116-150; Paul Harrington, 'Holst and Vaughan Williams: Radical Pastoral', in *Music and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), 106-127; George Revill, '*The Lark Ascending*: Monument to a Radical Pastoral', *Landscape Research*, 16.2 (1991), 24-30; Eric Saylor, ''It's Not Lambkins Frisking At All'': English Pastoral Music and the Great War', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91.1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008), 39-59.

[2] See Saylor (2017), 62-71.

inspiration. His friend the writer Jocelyn Brooke summarized the standard account of *Legend*'s origins:

> The composer was staying, as he often did, in West Sussex, and one day took a picnic lunch to a remote spot on the downs which had for him a peculiar and inexpressible attraction. Soon after he had sat down and unpacked his sandwiches, he was suddenly aware that a number of children had invaded the open space in front of the bank on which he was sitting…A moment later he realized that the children were in fact no ordinary children: they played and danced together on the downland turf, but in complete silence; and they were dressed in white garments of a curious and archaic pattern. Ireland watched them for some time: that they were 'real' enough he had, at first, no doubt whatsoever. Then reason reasserted itself: could they be real – these silent, dancing children in their strange white raiment? The composer glanced away for an instant, then looked up again: the 'children' had vanished.[3]

The same story is given in Muriel Searle's book, who specifies that the incident occurred at Harrow Hill, a remote spot of neolithic interest to the southwest of Chanctonbury Ring.[4] This material also features in Fiona Richards's overview of *Legend*, as it does in Julia Danielle Ganske's later reading of the work.[5] Commentators have previously asserted that the work betrays a more intricate relationship with Machen's work than simply being dedicated to the author. Geoffrey Bush regarded *Legend* as 'perhaps the finest, certainly most extended, work written under Machen's influence' with its central section 'embodying a strange Machen-like experience'.[6] But enumerations of Machen's influence on *Legend* have tended towards either cursory or vague. This chapter seeks to shift attention away from the confined locality of West Sussex towards the more general conception of pastoral landscape presented in Machen's work which, it argues, Ireland's *Legend* reflects through its manifestation of place, time, walking, and the weird intersection of these elements.

---

[3] Jocelyn Brooke, *The Birth of a Legend: A Reminiscence of Arthur Machen and John Ireland* (London: Bertram Rota, 1964), 7.
[4] Searle (1979), 85-86.
[5] Richards (2000), 82-86 and Ganske (2010), 78-79.
[6] See Geoffrey Bush, *Left, Right, and Centre: Reflections on Composers and Composing* (London: Thames Publishing, 1983), 100-112.

Whitby and 'The Happy Children'

Our discussion of *Legend* therefore begins farther North in Whitby. Here, at 6 Royal Crescent on the West Cliff of the town, Bram Stoker holidayed with his family in 1890 while conducting research at Whitby Library;[7] it was in this library that Stoker first learned the name 'Dracula' from a book called *Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* by William Wilkinson. Whitby features prominently in the first half of Stoker's *Dracula*, marking the landing site of the vampire on English soil and providing the atmospheric setting for his first violations of English purity.[8]

In 1916, Arthur Machen journeyed to Whitby on assignment for *The Evening News*, lodging at Angel Inn (now a pub and restaurant) on the New Quay beside the River Esk, about a hundred yards east of the railway station. This visit provided Machen with material for two travel articles. The first article detailed his journey north from London. During his first night in the town, Machen stared out of his open window, finding that night and landscape had already conspired to transmute this place into something other: 'It has been said that when one looks out over the country at night one sees in fact a mediaeval landscape; and so I shall always hold that I saw at Whitby that night a mediaeval city.' The following day, as he explained in his second article, Machen wandered through Whitby and the surrounding villages to learn about Whitby Jet, the black gemstone made of fossilized wood for which Whitby is still internationally renowned. Machen was particularly interested in Jet's possible connection to flint-knapping, noting enthusiastically that this 'prehistoric concern' allegedly persists in areas of Suffolk.[9]

[7] This is now a restaurant called 'Quayside'.
[8] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* [1897], ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 61-77.
[9] Arthur Machen, *The Town of a Magic Dream: Arthur Machen in Whitby*, ed. Mark Valentine (Southampton: A Caermaen Publication, 1987), 6-7. This source reproduces Machen's articles in-full, published respectively

Machen was familiar with Stoker's writing and would therefore have been aware of the Gothic associations of Whitby Jet, architecture, and literary history, all of which were prefigured and inspired by remnants of mediaeval local folklore. Of special fascination to Machen was the uncanny, widely folklorized relationship concerning the borderline between Whitby and the sea, seeing it as an example of how sound can act as both symptom and cause of the disintegration of the wall between landscapes, between the living and the dead, and between the real and the unreal. In Whitby, this sound is most associated with bells and children. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, the bells of Whitby Abbey were said to have been marked for shipment to London, only the ship on which they were loaded sank just beyond the harbour's iconic rock.[10] As the ship went down, the children of Whitby ran through the streets shouting, 'The bells are going to be drowned! The bells are going to be drowned!' Legends arose as people claimed to hear these sunken bells ringing on certain nights; some believed their tolling to mark the drowning of a Whitby seaman, wherever he may be.[11] This legend was referenced by Mina Murray in Stoker's *Dracula*.[12]

Children feature prominently in other Whitby superstitions, including the belief that 28 December, Childermas or 'Holy Innocents', was the unluckiest day of the year, being the day on which the Mass of the Holy Innocents is said to have taken place. On this day, and

---

on 14 and 15 November 1916. Eleanor Dobson has written about the ways in which Whitby Jet served as a metaphor for the living-dead in the Gothic imagination: it is the preserved, uncovered remains of something once alive from the distant past. See Eleanor Dobson, 'Ruby Lips and Whitby Jet', *Gothic Studies*, 20.1 (May 2018), 124-139.

[10] George Young, *A History of Whitby and Streoneshalh Abbey: With a Statistical Survey of the Vicinity to the distance of Twenty-Five Miles* (Whitby: Clark and Medd, 1817), 462.

[11] Paul McDermott, *The Whitby Ghost Book: Hauntings, Legends, & Superstitions*, Illustrated by Helen Walasek (Leicester: Anderson Publications, 1987), 23-24. The veracity of the drowned bells' history has been questioned by Andrew White, who notes that it was more common during the Dissolution for precious metals to be melted down to simplify their transport. See Andrew White, *A History of Whitby* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2019), 180-181.

[12] Stoker, 62.

sometimes for the surrounding week, Whitby fishermen would refrain from taking to sea.[13] Furthermore, young Whitby girls performed a ritual of moon-worship during the New Year and on St. Agnes Day (21 January): this 'relic of paganism' was said to reveal to them the identity of their future husbands.[14] Pagan practices extended to the perforated stones of Whitby Jet that were hung inside buildings to negate the powers of witches. Like Machen, the inhabitants of the town historically had an interest in prehistoric flintworks which were known to be found in large quantities throughout the surrounding moorland and believed to have been used by elves and other supernatural beings.[15]

Notions of whiteness are central to these stories, as they are to the legend of the ghost of St. Hilda, the founding abbess of Whitby Abbey, who was said to appear at specific times of the year on the north side of the Abbey, 'dressed in a shroud' and 'hovering upon the sunny air'.[16] There is also the legend of a 'White Wraith', first recorded in 1905, who descended 'floating' from the West Cliff before vanishing when it reached the water's edge, and there is another concerning 'a procession of phantoms' on St. Mark's Eve (24 April), representing not the dead but the soon-to-die.[17]

These elements all appear in Machen's short story, 'The Happy Children', showing how Machen absorbed geographical and cultural elements of place into his fictionalized works. Published the year after Machen's Whitby visit, 'The Happy Children' is set in a fictionalized version of Whitby called 'Banwick'. The unnamed narrator spends the evening walking through the town, only to notice an unusual number of children running about the

[13] White (2019), 179.
[14] McDermott, 11 and 17-18.
[15] White (2019), 182.
[16] Some claimed that the ghost was that of a nun who was bricked up inside the abbey walls centuries ago. Lionel Charlton, quoted in Colin Waters, *Gothic Whitby* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2009), 34.
[17] McDermott, 28.

streets and making noise. A visibly uncomfortable landlord is unable to explain this phenomenon, so the narrator returns to the streets later that night. As in Machen's article for *The Evening News*, Banwick at night is likened to 'a town of the Middle ages'. Although the streets are vacant, the courts and alleys 'seemed alive with children':

> I could just see little white forms fluttering to and fro as they ran in and out. And I never heard such happy children's voices. Some were singing, some were laughing; and peering into one black cavern, I made out a ring of children dancing round and round and chanting in clear voices a wonderful melody; some old tune of local tradition, as I supposed, for its modulations were such as I had never heard before.[18]

Dressed all in white, the children have 'the appearance of floating in mid air [sic]', and their voices are compared to the sound of 'bells on the night'. As the narrator follows the dancing and singing across the bridge straddling the River Esk and through the Old Town under the East Cliff, he realizes that the children were moving 'in a long procession' towards the foot of Whitby's infamous steps leading up the abbey.

At this point, he observes the 'strange marks' on the bodies of the children: 'a painted scar on her throat'; 'dripping seaweed about their brows'; 'a dreadful wound above his heart, from which the blood seemed to flow'; and the hands of the children are 'torn and bleeding'. The narrator follows the procession up the steps and into the abbey, whereupon he realizes that it is the eve of the Holy Innocents. He briefly glimpses a ritual inside the abbey as children are led towards the altar, but at this point the narrative suddenly breaks. The narrator claims that weeks after this incident, he came across a passage detailing the ritual of 'Childermas Day' in a book called 'The Ancient Rites of Banwick', explaining partly what he had seen. In this ritual, as the lord abbot sings the Mass of the Holy Innocents, the youngest

[18] Machen (1987), 13.

child in the congregation is taken to the high altar; and the congregation and monks, one by one, 'worship and reverence…the little child that was upon the throne.'[19]

The story leaves many questions unanswered. Most significantly, the identity of the children is never disclosed. They exhibit stock traits of the Gothic ghost, but they also have elements of the fairy, singing as they do 'with the rapture and exultation of them that sing in the woods in springtime.'[20] There is also a local historical context for the connection between sea and violence as signaled by the 'strange marks' and 'dripping seaweed'. On 16 December 1914, only two years before Machen's journey north, Whitby became one of the only English towns to be directly bombarded during the First World War. The west end of the abbey in which Machen's ritual takes place was damaged in this attack. This traumatic incident, the first instance of total war in Britain since the Napoleonic Wars, dominated the national press and served as a cautionary metaphor for the defilement of English landscape and identity by external, modernized forces.[21]

It is not the contention of this chapter that Ireland's *Legend* is solely indebted to 'The Happy Children' or that the music depicts features of Yorkshire's coastal landscape. But the story introduces elements that will become relevant later to our reading of Ireland's music and indicates that Ireland's vision is embedded in a tradition that marks it as more than an isolated anecdote. Some of these elements are recurring features in Machen's work. Uncanny children and strange dancing figures are part of Machen's regular troupe. In 'The White People', the girl and her nurse follow a path through the wood and come to a deep pool, out of which emerge 'two wonderful white people' who 'began to play and dance and sing.'[22] In

[19] Ibid, 12-15.
[20] Ibid, 14.
[21] White (2019), 40-41.
[22] Machen (2011), 120.

'Out of the Earth', Machen is sent to Wales to investigate rumours of 'the ill-behaviour of the children.' Morgan, a local man, testifies to have had his mid-walk meditation 'broken by a sudden burst of horrible raucous cries – and the cries of children, too.' These children are described as 'of the lowest type', and the eerie 'tones' they emit cause Morgan to shudder: 'They were to the ear what slime is to the touch.'[23]

In 1923, seven years after his visit to Whitby, Machen published two articles, *Strange Roads* and *With the Gods in Spring*, that have further parallels with Ireland's alleged inspiration. In *Strange Roads*, Machen writes about a countryside path that he passed but did not follow, year after year, 'without speculations'. Then, one winter afternoon, his curiosity prompted him to follow this unfamiliar bridle-path, which transpires to be less a route than a portal: he follows the way, 'and in a moment had gone beyond the world.'[24]

Machen recalls walking in Marlborough along the 'white and chalky' paths of the downs, a landscape more easily comparable to Ireland's West Sussex. He and his unnamed companion follow the track up 'a wild, silent hill', noting how the paths squiggle about the landscape and seem to veer purposefully towards clumps of 'ancient, low, twisted thorn' before 'trickling and turning away towards the dimness of the valley.' As they proceed along these 'queer, winding paths', Machen is reminded of 'the People', and this fancy is accompanied by a vision:

> And suddenly, quite instantly, without any preparation of a distant sound, soft at first and growing louder by degrees, we both heard the rattle of footfalls coming behind, and gaining on us. We looked back, fully expecting to see the figure of someone in a great hurry and making pace; but no one was visible. And, though the air was now growing dim and the general aspect of the country indistinct, yet the road, white and chalky, without the shadow of hedges, was quite clear before us. While we turned and stopped the sound ceased, but when we went on, wondering a little, the clatter of

[23] Ibid, 265-270.
[24] Arthur Machen, *Strange Roads: With the Gods in Spring* (Green Round Press: Caerleon, 1990), 12-13.

> hurrying steps was at once renewed and increased, as if the pursuit or the flight had grown sharper.

Machen declares that the rattling footfalls could not have been echoes of his own, the former sounding like that of 'iron-shod feet beating on a track of granite' versus the muted patter one would expect from a road 'soft with dust'.[25]

The emphasis on sound in these texts is significant. In *Strange Roads*, the beating is 'heard but unseen', giving Machen a sense of disorientation ('all sense of direction was lost'). This lends the sonic encounter its ghostly effect because sound, even when its point of origin is invisible, almost invariably suggests a presence. Ghostly scenes, like the music they inspire, exploit sound's 'ambiguous relation with embodiment.'[26] Or, in Machen's words, 'There are, no doubt, mysteries in sound as in all else.'[27] This principle runs both ways, with the alleged silence of Ireland's dancing children ('No voices. No laughter. No sounds of feet.') disturbing notions of presence, movement, and sound.[28] An extended instance of disembodied sound occurs in Machen's story 'The Great Return', which Machen told Ireland was one of his favourites.[29] This story also includes a walk along seldom trodden paths ('there seemed to be some faint indications of a track'), leading to 'a gate in a hedge of old thorns.' This gateway brings the narrator, Machen, to 'a certain solitary place': 'a place where fragments of dreams – they seemed such then – might, perhaps, be gathered into the clearness of vision.' Machen never sees the source, but the countryside in this story is filled with the

[25] Ibid, 23-25. Machen told this same story almost verbatim in an article in 1926. See Arthur Machen, 'One Night When I was Frightened' in *Dreads and Drolls* (Tartarus Press: Leyburn, North Yorkshire, 2007), 189-191.
[26] Isabella Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 4.
[27] Machen (1990), 14.
[28] Searle, 85.
[29] London, British Library, John Ireland: Personal Correspondence (Arthur Machen), MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (13 November 1933), fol. 2.

sound of 'thrilling music of a bell that was like no bell ever heard before…and a choir of sweet voices singing all together.'[30]

In his fictional and non-fictional writings on fairies, Machen is careful to distinguish between vision and hallucination, just as Ireland was 'emphatic' in clarifying to the pianist Eric Parkin that 'he had not been dreaming' when he saw the dancing children.[31] Machen objects to being misidentified as a fanciful fool who *thinks* himself into hallucination. Indeed, the visions of fairy sights and sounds lead Machen to be more sympathetic towards countryside people ('men of character, and of apparent good faith') who claim to have seen fairies on their daily walks.[32] Machen often portrays himself as a skeptic to lend credibility to incredulous things: he considers the sounds of strange bells to be 'either a collective auditory hallucination or a manifestation of what is conveniently, if inaccurately, called the supernatural order.'[33]

In an article for *The Graphic*, Machen approached the question of fairies from a pseudo-anthropological perspective, describing them as existing in Ireland and Wales as 'an aboriginal people of small stature overcome and sent into the dark by invaders.' In Britain and Ireland, the 'Little People' made 'subterranean dwellings…under the hills in the wildest and most remote parts of the country.' In the same piece, Machen recounts the story of a Frenchman who claimed to have encountered fairies, which Machen laconically deems to have been 'highly probable.'[34]

---

[30] Machen (2011), 243-248.
[31] Foreman (2011), 187.
[32] Ibid, 26-28.
[33] Machen (2011), 248.
[34] Arthur Machen, 'The Little Beings of the Forest', *The Graphic*, 112 (11 July 1925), 64. Machen goes on to compare the Irish and Welsh fairies with those in Africa living in 'the dark.'

The larger foundational elements unifying these texts are walking, landscape, and vision. It is the seemingly guided movement of self through place – whether following children through a town, being suddenly moved to trace a curiously patterned path, etc. – plus the surrendering of the senses to imaginative prompts latent within landscape that allow the walker to pass through a veil onto the landscape and soundscape of another dimension. The external transformation is mirrored internally: a new *here* generates a new *I*. This is the critical point for Machen about fairies or Little People: what matters is the way in which they are approached and the place in which they are found, which is always 'a curious borderland between the natural and the supernatural.'[35]

Borderlands

We have discussed the symbolism of borderlands in urban texts, but in rural contexts the issue assumes a new form. Machen's interest in borderlands originated in his childhood in Gwent, which represented for him a borderland between *this* world and a hidden one.[36] This borderland took multiple forms: it was the geographical borderline between nations (England and Wales); it was the intersection point of cultural, geological, and political forces, both contemporary and historical, merging with the mythic (Celtic Wales, Roman Wales, Arthurian Wales, and British Wales). And third, for Machen, it was a borderland between perceptive dimensions – between physical, categorical, and imaginative realms, all of which he considered to be manifested in landscape through one's experience and perception of it.

Though his interest may have stemmed from childhood, Machen's conception of borderlands evolved into something not specific to Monmouthshire. The borderland is

[35] Machen (2007), 106.
[36] See Valentine (1995), 7 and Starrett (1996), 11.

ubiquitous, separating this world from its other in all times and places. This explains why the designation of 'Borderland fiction' has been given as much to Machen's urban texts as to his rural ones, referring as it does to the human subject rather than merely his or her location.[37] The borderland is a state of mind whose violation of natural laws led to so-called degenerates being derided as 'Borderland dwellers' who, in the opinion of Max Nordau, exist 'on the borderland between reason and pronounced madness.'[38] Elaine Showalter has documented the prevalence of this term in late-nineteenth-century English psychiatry:

> …psychiatrists identified a new kind of male neurotic, the 'borderliner'. Andrew Wynter's popular medical text, *The Borderlands of Insanity* (1877), described the potential degeneration of borderline men in 'Mazeland', 'Dazeland' and 'Driftland', whose minds felt the lack of 'directing' or 'controlling power'.[39]

There were entire journals devoted to this subject, such as *Borderland: A Psychical Quarterly*, which ran from 1894 until 1897. Borderlands are therefore associated with transgression and instability, whether cultural, psychological, or moral.[40]

For Machen and Ireland, notions of borderlands and visions are entangled with their classification by some commentators as Celtic artists. In his monograph on the composer, Peter Crossley-Holland saw an importance in Ireland's 'Celtic' ancestry, his father being a Scot from Fifeshire. Crossley-Holland believed Ireland's obsession with Machen – as indicated by their shared interest in pantheism, *Sehnsucht*, and a certain expressive 'ruggedness' – to have derived from this ancestral link: the 'imaginative genius so proper to the Celt lay in him as a seed'. For Crossley-Holland, this heritage explained the visionary aspect of Ireland's music – the music's ability to 'unfold and flower' in a distinctly 'Celtic'

---

[37] 'Review – *The Great God Pan* by Arthur Machen', *The Glasgow Herald*, 298 (13 December 1894).
[38] Nordau, 18.
[39] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* (London: Virago, 1992), 10.
[40] See Michael Kane, *Modern Men: Mapping Masculinity in English and German Literature, 1880-1930* (London: Cassell, 1999).

atmosphere. Because of both its 'mystical' character and its dogged 'attention to detail', Crossley-Holland compared Ireland's music to pre-Christian Celtic art ('the ornaments of bardic music').[41]

Unlike those of the Celtic Fringe, Machen's borderlines are not engrained in political or national sub-narratives. He did not ascribe like Yeats to a mythology that 'marries' landscape to national identity through mythology.[42] For Machen, industrial and cultural shifts rendered one's sense of the landscape permanently 'strange'. Even with respect to one's home, the former sense of familiarity and belonging, and the language one uses to understand and represent those feelings, has been 'literally annihilated' or 'almost decimated'.[43] Part of this effect is the consequence of the industrialization of countryside, a movement that both Machen and Ireland viewed with horror. Ireland considered himself to have lived during an 'over-industrialized' age.[44] In a letter that contains an allusion to Machen's infamous short story, Ireland complained that industrialization had permanently altered his experience of nature:

> Until the last year or two, I have always felt moved…by the burgeoning and unfolding of Nature at this season [Spring]; but now, the contrast between all this and the worsening state of human affairs is too glaring, too contradictory, to allow me to feel any happiness or inspiration from these outward manifestations of beauty and renewal. The Great God Pan has departed from this present, driven hence by the mastery of the material and the machine over mankind.[45]

A recurring subject of Ireland's letters in the late 1950s is the development project of the 'Walker Sandpit' adjacent to his home at Rock Mill. Ireland believed the project would

[41] Crossley-Holland, 9-13 and 22.
[42] W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ed. W. O' Donnell and D. Archibald (New York: Scribner, 1989), 166-167.
[43] Machen (1922), 31-32.
[44] MS. 60356 (24 December 1955) fol. 101.
[45] Ibid (29 May 1952), fol. 25.

'devastate the remaining N.E. [northeastern] part of Rock Common.'[46] The sandpit's creation resulted in the bulldozing of surrounding trees, about which Ireland commented, 'Such are the joys of our advanced civilisation.'[47]

Machen wrote with disgust about the 'violent irruption of red brick in the midst of a green field.' His memoirs document 'that sad zone of destruction and disgrace' expanding from the edges of the city into the countryside: 'These are places where the hedges are half ruined, half remaining, where the little winding brook is defiled, but not yet a drain, where one tree lies felled and withered, while its fellow is all green.' To Machen, the encroachment of the urban on the rural and the modern on the pre-modern is understood in terms of footpaths: 'I was as aghast as Robinson Crusoe when he saw the track of the foot on the sand of his desert island.'[48] In all these cases, home has become elsewhere. This estrangement and quintessentially Freudian twist of the familiar-made-unfamiliar qualifies Machen's landscapes as weird.

To this, Machen's landscapes add a pronounced streak of the grotesque, considered by John Addington Symonds to be 'a branch of the fantastic', that overtakes their nostalgia and melancholia, thus further problematizing Machen's classification as a representative Celtic writer.[49] As Holbrook Jackson argued, it is not the Celticism but the 'imaginative atmosphere' of these tales that constituted their appeal to contemporary readers, specifically their violations of natural law.[50] Machen places the spiritual, aesthetic, psychological, historical, and physical experiences of landscape on equal footing. While to some degree an

[46] Ibid (15 August 1955), fol. 96.
[47] Ibid (11 April 1956), fol. 106.
[48] Machen (1923), 120-121.
[49] John Addington Symonds, *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive* (London: Scriber, 1907), 158.
[50] Jackson (1922), 155.

occasional fantasist, he more importantly consistently campaigned for a perception of 'reality' that questioned our definition of what did and did not qualify as fantastic, both in landscape and character. For Machen, the 'world of beauty' is not nowhere but rather *everywhere*, and human beings are simply blind to it.[51] As Dr. Raymond explained to his interlocutor in 'The Great God Pan', 'There *is* a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision.'[52] One might even classify Machen as a realist who simply believed our definition of realism to be stiflingly narrow. As always, it is the simultaneous presence in two or more, seemingly opposing worldviews that contributes to Machen's qualification as a weird writer; like his landscapes, he ceaselessly fluctuates between categories.

This same ambiguity is present in Crossley-Holland's monograph, which introduces a national and stylistic divide to Ireland's musical identity by describing the composer as a non-English Celt who is nevertheless 'every bit as English as…the Tudor composers.' Crossley-Holland perceives the 'mystical' element of Ireland's music as coming from his Celtic ancestry, but he also proclaims Ireland to be 'in communication with the legacy of the English mystics', with this legacy qualifying Ireland's identification as a specifically 'English genius'.[53] More important than whether or not Ireland is a 'Celtic' composer is this contentious, displaced identity that is critical to the uncanny effect, especially with regard to its effect on landscape. It positions Ireland as a composer engaged in what Gerrard Caruthers and Alan Rawes call 'negotiated dialogues': his work manifests a divide between non-English impulses and English tastes.[54] Like Machen, it positions Ireland as an outsider, an

[51] This assessment opposes that made in Karl Marius Petersen, *Arthur Machen and the Celtic Renaissance in Wales* (PhD. Thesis: Louisiana State University and Agricultural Mechanical College, 1973), 53-54.
[52] Machen (2018), 10.
[53] Ibid, 66.
[54] Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes, *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18-19.

'other' set against the comfortable and non-threatening familiarity of Anglo-Saxon Christian culture. In the racialized 'philological abstraction' of their contemporary Anglophone critics, Ireland and Machen are both classifiable as composite 'other-than English Britons'.[55]

In Machen's writing, the lack of control to which Elaine Showalter referred, and which was often associated negatively with the Celtic Revival, is recast in positive, liberating terms. They are deemed the lucky ones, the initiated who can read landscape as Machen does by what Alex Murray calls 'the red light of the philosopher's flame'. This reading of landscape is anti-logical and anti-scientific; it is anti-romantic and anti-picturesque; and it is also, as Murray points out, opposed to the disengaged, 'humanizing' gaze of 'benign mysticism'. For Murray, Machen reads landscape as a literary text that is 'open to esoteric meaning that bubbles under the exoteric surface'.[56]

That said, as with his urban texts, Machen's understanding of rural landscape is also somatic. For Machen, 'the geographic and the somatic are associatively linked' as characters sense the atmosphere or personality of their environments, especially when those environments are inherently unstable or ill-defined.[57] As in his urban texts, Machen often signifies this process through his use of the word 'transmute': 'I looked out of my window and saw the whole landscape transmuted before me'; 'some enchantment had informed all common things, transmuting them into a great sacrament, causing earthly works to glow with

[55] Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), xiii. Jarlath Killen writes that Machen occupies an ambivalent stance in this movement. He sometimes responded to racial stereotyping by 'internalising' it, especially with regard to colonization and degeneration, but he also participated in the assault on borderlines between 'colonial Self' and 'degenerate Other'. Machen's work thus both endorses and critiques the racial and social structures of his time. See Jarlath Killeen, *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 110.
[56] Alex Murray, *Landscapes of Decadence: Literature and Place at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 138.
[57] Mighall (2003), 154.

the fire and the glory of the everlasting light'; 'Though he had gone but a little way on the path,…he was already aware of the enchantment that was transmuting all the world about him', and so on.[58] This is perhaps most evident in scenes where Machen's characters find themselves alone, as in *The Hill of Dreams* when Lucian experiences 'a very strange sensation' upon finding himself 'utterly alone'. Lucian's isolation allows him to have an intense psycho-somatic experience ('his fancies strayed over half-imagined, delicious things'; 'The hot air seemed to beat upon him in palpable waves') that are suggested by natural elements surrounding him; his mind and body are in dialogue with the landscape.[59] David Matless calls such phenomena the creation of a 'geographical self' which is, he claims, 'central to competing visions of landscape and Englishness.'[60]

Loneliness greatly informed Ireland's experience of Sussex landscape. Even when he moved to Sussex permanently, Ireland was sensitive to a loneliness in the landscape and not always in an approving sense. He claimed to be 'very lonely' and 'isolated' at Rock Mill and felt 'completely cut off from everything' that had constituted his life in London. These thoughts devolved into reflections on mortality and nostalgia, always with a note of resignation: 'It is one of the realities of old age [to be lonely], which one ought to have foreseen and guarded against, but is now too late to remedy.'[61] In later letters, he continued to refer to Rock Mill as 'my ''remote hideout''!!!'.[62] The sense of isolation may have added to the landscape's suggestive power for Ireland. In 1959, he speculated that his garden was

[58] Machen (2011), 40, 183, and 217.
[59] Machen (2010), 8-10.
[60] David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion, 1998), 14.
[61] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (February 1954) [day unspecified], fol. 32. Hugh Ottaway described Ireland as suffering from 'an almost Elgarian discontent and inner loneliness.' See Hugh Ottaway, 'Review: John Ireland, Portrait of a Friend by John Longmire', *The Musical Times*, 110.1518 (August 1969), 838-839. Ireland's narrative of isolation is contradicted by the lively correspondence he maintained well-into old age with relatives throughout England and America. See Richards (2020), 293-297.
[62] MS. 60356 (23 September 1955) fol. 98.

perhaps once 'used for the worship of Baalzebub [sic] – it might have been a witches' coven.'[63] This suggestive tendency is evident in the first letter Ireland wrote to Kenneth Thompson after moving to Rock Mill from London: he described the change of scenery as 'so great as to be almost terrifying!' and could not decide whether it had 'been brought about by the Almighty, or whether the Devil has arranged it for my final ruin?' Again, a walking metaphor appears: 'Every step has seemed so inevitable – I feel I have hardly had any choice in the matter, as if everything had been out of my hands.'[64] This imagery was reiterated in a letter to John Longmire four months later, with further references to Ireland's suspicion of being guided by 'an evil Fate' that was perhaps inherited. And again, a walking metaphor appears: 'Maybe it was the Devil, not Providence that led me to take this drastic step…'[65]

Notions of England and Englishness are associated with rural landscape to a considerable degree. In the estimation of Alun Howkins, the notion of an 'English *ideal*' is frequently conflated with English rural landscape. This conflation is based on the understanding that the rural image of England is in fact the ''real England''; England's rural landscapes constitute a 'real' counterpart to the supposed unreality of its urban ones.[66] G.K. Chesterton made a similar statement in 1917, writing that English patriotism was necessarily linked not with 'country' (i.e., state) but with 'countryside'; he employed a metaphor that compared English patriotism with the nation's 'tender…climate' that can be 'vulgarized' easily by a city's 'verbal fog and gas'.[67] Eric Saylor has further documented the appeal of English countryside to Victorian theories of racial and social degeneration and its effect on

[63] Ibid (28 June 1959), fol. 140.
[64] Ibid (15 October 1953), fol. 55.
[65] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (February 1954) [day unspecified], fol. 32.
[66] Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1987), 85-86.
[67] G.K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917), 54 and 209.

early twentieth-century English music. The pastoral is offered as a physical and psychological counterpart to 'the deleterious effects of urbanization and industrialization'; it is a purifying, redeeming space.[68]

Ireland and Machen are artists for whom the redeeming element of rural landscape is problematic. Their pastoral works are associated with darkness or vice or, in lighter instances, tainted by nostalgia or melancholia. Like its remedial counterpart, the rural weird is a space for something other, but that other is an outcast or a violation rather than some utopian alternative society. Like Howkins, Sam Wiseman considers rural Britain a 'counter-site to the modern metropolis', but he contrastingly stresses that this counter-site 'is rendered more obscure' as its urban relative becomes increasingly rationalized. In Freudian terms, England's rural environment is made uncanny by the rendering of 'apparently' placid and familiar landscape as 'disturbingly strange', harbouring 'repressed anxieties, belief systems, or histories of trauma and violence [that] re-emerge within this world.'[69] This may explain the prominence of children in pastoral visions like those of Ireland and Machen. Weird art entertains our desire for destabilization, for the cultural other. By crossing and blurring the borderlines between a dominant conventional culture and a fringe transgressive culture, it allows one to reconnect with an 'inner child' who embodies uncanny return and renewal in their most familiar form.[70]

[68] Saylor (2017), 100.
[69] Sam Wiseman, *Locating the Gothic in British Modernity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 64.
[70] See Killeen (2009), 94.

Allcroft and Walking

Legend was at one stage given the working-title *Queen Fridias*, which Fiona Richards has conjectured to have been learned by the composer from a book in his personal library: A. Hadrian Allcroft's *Downland Pathways* (1924), a popular text on the West Sussex landscape.[71] The book is structured according to walking routes, leading the reader gradually through West Sussex, and colourfully noting geological, archaeological, anthropological, historical, and folkloric details along the way. A shift in tone distinguishes Allcroft's passage on Harrow Hill. The surrounding downland landscape is electrified by uncanny forces. It is 'uncannily lonely'. Allcroft elaborates on this impression, defining the hill's loneliness as the specific desire for some 'terror' that once visited it 'and has never since departed'.[72] In other words, the hill's loneliness is for something that is both present and absent, or whose presence *is* absence, and vice versa.

On Harrow Hill, Allcroft's attention is drawn to the weird silence of the place, which is a 'waste silence'. Sound is subdued as the hill's animal inhabitants seem abnormally quiet: 'Doubtless the larks sing over this, as they sing over the other hills, but not loud enough to fill the air. Elsewhere they positively shout, but here their notes are whispers only.' Allcroft confesses to be relieved when these thoughts are disturbed by the 'sudden whirr' of partridges, whose wings 'startle' him back to the present.[73] The birds are an example of what Elisabeth Van Elferen calls 'the spectral phenomenology of sound' that fosters a 'sonic uncanny': they are mute yet also ''silently present''. In her analysis of soundscapes in Gothic and uncanny literature, Van Elferen remarks that 'terror' in these texts is often 'preceded by

[71] Richards (2000), 84. This is not to be confused with Allcroft's 1922 book, also called *Downland Pathways*, which only covers East Sussex.
[72] A. Hadrian Allcroft, *Downland Pathways* (London: Methuen, 1924), 220.
[73] Ibid, 183-184.

an unworldly silence' that is disrupted by sounds that 'suggest' rather than confirm presence, or, just as frequently, the scene is described as having 'the complete absence of sound, which, in its unnatural improbability, functions as a signifier of the unhomely'.[74]

Walking disrupts time in both Machen's fictional and non-fictional writings. In the closing pages of *Far Off Things*, Machen describes a walk with his friend, Bill Rowlands, in the Usk Valley. The faintness and obscurity of the footpaths ('deep, forgotten lanes, where no one came'), along with the act of walking, give Machen and his friend 'a singular impression of travelling in time – backwards, not forwards, as in Mr. Wells's enchantment'. This leads Machen to assume that they had 'fallen on old ways that were not of our day at all' and to suspect that if they encountered anyone on their walk, 'it would not be a man of our time.'[75]

Like Machen, Allcroft's walker is guided through landscape by forces outside of himself that reveal the impress of history and others on his present experience: 'The footsteps of other men you may find at every turn, but of the men of other days. Their roads and tracks inmesh [sic] all the lower slopes of the hill, starred here and again with the usual *memento mori* in form of a barrow.'[76] As Christopher Tilley discusses, this fusion of different times is particular to walking, the movement of which gathers and re-enacts the disparate histories of place through the following of a path, by tracing 'the footsteps of previous generations, the ancestor.'[77]

[74] Van Elferen (2012), 19-25.
[75] Machen (1922), 149-150. The reference is to H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895).
[76] Allcroft, 184.
[77] Christopher Tilley, 'Walking the Past in the Present', in *Landscapes Beyond Land: Routes, Aesthetic, Narratives*, ed. Arnar Árnasan, Nicolas Ellison, Jo Vergunst, and Andrew Whitehouse (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 18.

The weird blurring of time in Machen's work is further disturbed by his obsession with *deep history* or *deep time*. His writing is littered with survivals from pre-historic eras, ranging from ghosts to 'Little People' to unclassifiable others. Characters like Jervase Craddock in 'Novel of the Black Seal' or Helen Vaughan in 'The Great God Pan' revert to pre-human forms in graphic scenes of what Aaron Worth calls a 'disconcertingly reversible narrative of evolutionary recapitulation'. Machen's fiction is haunted by both the concept of *deep time* and the prospect of a heretofore concealed, alternative history that might accompany it. These characters therefore embody the 'terrifyingly expansive past' that archaeological and scientific discoveries in the nineteenth century had exposed to Victorian consciousness.[78] Machen plays off the fear that history is a living *thing*. In Robert Mighall's phrase concerning *fin-de-siècle* horror, 'the past is the unfolding of the present'.[79]

For an example of a story that combines the experience of *deep time* with walking, we turn to Machen's short story 'The Red Hand'. Here, a mystery unfolds around the finding of freshly carved fishhooks and recent graffiti that accord to a Neolithic design. During their investigation, Dyson and Philipps interview Mr. Selby who connects these phenomena to his discovery of a race of pre-historic survivals in rural Wales. This mystery of survivals is embedded in landscape – as Selby says, the contour of landscape is 'apt to suggest the mystical' – and walking plays a crucial role in the narrative: the solution to the mystery occurs to Selby because of his 'habit' of daily walks, and a walk through the hills, again guided by some external force ('drawn as if by enchantment'), towards a tumulus ('the domed memorial of some forgotten people') leads him to the survivals, 'the keepers' of the secret.[80]

[78] Aaron Worth, 'Arthur Machen and the Horrors of Deep History', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40.1 (2012), 216-217.
[79] Mighall (2003), 133.
[80] Machen (2011), 83-110.

Walking, landscape, and time converge in the moment of weird encounter. In his influential study, Paul Connerton places the body at the centre of societal memory. His focus on the re-enactment of the past through commemorative ceremonies extends to the exercise of skilled habits, of which walking is a foremost example. Machen, Ireland, and Allcroft accentuate the role of footpaths in their weird impressions. A footpath is a design left by ancestors for the recreation of a specific activity of social and cultural significance. If ceremony is defined as the following of a prescriptive pattern to re-enact societal memory, then the walker following footpaths is engaging in ceremonial behaviour; the walker's supervised 'patterns of body' form a ritual. That Machen's narrators are often uncertain as to the purpose of the ritual they are re-enacting – in Connerton's lingo, that skilled habits like walking are 'operative in some subdued way' – only adds to their uncanny sensitivity because it clouds the role of agency. It queries the understanding of *whose* activity is in fact the dominant one: the present walker's or the ancestor's. In short, walking is a habit that places knowledge and remembering in the body, and it is the body rather than the rational mind which 'understands'.[81]

To Machen, the details of what occurred in his walking visions are somewhat irrelevant for two reasons. First, as Elizabeth Bowen noted, the effectiveness ('horror') of the ghostly depends upon its unverifiability, on its 'being just, *just* out of the true.' That is why the explanation of Machen's walking visions always remains concealed: 'If heard, what is heard is typically indistinct…If seen, what is seen is shadowy, evanescent.'[82] Second, the details of the experience are invariably either forgotten or obscured through memory. In his

[81] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 93-95.
[82] Elizabeth Bowen, introduction to Cynthia Asquith, *The Second Ghost Book* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1956), vii.

Usk Valley excursion from *Far Off Things*, Machen confesses to having 'a confused recollection'; the landscape becomes increasingly indistinct and unfamiliar the further one walks, transforming into 'dreamland' as the path threads the hills in 'an uncertain way'.[83]

For Machen, all that matters is the remaining affect, 'the wonder' that the experience gave, 'which is always a wonder, of passing through a new land and seeing things which are strange, and thereby receiving a revelation of the unknown.' As shown by the examples above, this 'wonder' is not always perceived in a positive sense. And again, Machen emphasizes that it was the act of walking that allowed him this sensation and revealed to him 'that glint of twinkling of the high supernal light.' He walked his way into 'fairy land'.[84] In these texts, Machen walks into societal memory. Consider again *Strange Roads* where Machen describes 'the strangest road I know': a short path leading from Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire to the side of the castle facing the sea. As the path opens through a 'window' onto the cliff-edge, so too does the past open onto the present as Machen has a vision of the castle being besieged centuries before.[85] These are not fanciful hallucinations but calculated engagements with societal memory acted out through walking in which the past, in Connerton's phrase, is 'sedimented in the body'.[86] They are instances of the performativity of memory.

Placenames in Machen's rural writing are often ambiguous. This is also true in Allcroft's text. Significantly, the name 'Harrow Hill' is a point of contention for Allcroft:

---

[83] Machen (2011), 153. Part of the confusion or delirium in these narratives arises out of Machen's profuse descriptions: plot is subsumed by setting. John MacNeill Miller has proposed a defining feature of weird fiction as the foregrounding of background: excessive scenic detail is not style but narrative. Because the weird thing being described must, in the Lovecraftian sense, resist definition, endless description takes the place of certain narratological norms. See John MacNeill Miller, 'Weird Beyond Description: Weird Fiction and the Suspicion of Scenery', *Victorian Studies*, 62.2 (2020), 244-252.
[84] Machen (1990), 52.
[85] Ibid, 1-3.
[86] Connerton, 72.

'There is the hill and the name of the hill…'. He cannot discern its origin or whether the name is a misnomer. If Tilley is correct that 'names create landscapes', granting them identity by investing place with meaning and with historical and social experience, then the unsubstantiated name of Harrow Hill is part of its weird feel.[87] Its name is uncertain, therefore its identity may not be what it seems. In the end, Allcroft defers to etymology by calling it vaguely 'a holy place'.[88]

Uncertain identity and the performativity of memory are present elsewhere in *Downland Pathways*. In a later chapter, Allcroft brings his reader to the church of St. Mary the Virgin in Burpham, an eleventh-century building set above the River Arun whose window sills include a number of re-used Roman tiles. One of these windows is a medieval leper's window dating from the fourteenth century, which allowed lepers from the nearby colony at Lee Farm, just under Harrow Hill, to view services. Following the long flank of Wepham Down and crossing Barpham Hill, from which Chanctonbury Ring is visible to the east, the route connecting Burpham to Harrow Hill is known as 'Leper's Path', which Ireland specifically connected with his inspiration for *Legend*.[89] It is important to note that 'a direct, uninterrupted view of Chanctonbury Ring' was one of the most appealing features of his home at Rock Mill.[90]

Here, Ireland's working-title for *Legend*, *Queen Fridias*, appears in the text. Allcroft's interest in the Leper's Path is not the route itself but something along the way: another church called 'Friday's Church'. As in Machen's texts, the footpath suddenly opens via a natural thorny gateway – in this instance, a 'curious wide patch of maybe virgin scrub'

[87] Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 18.
[88] Allcroft, 184-185.
[89] Quoted in Foreman (2011), 61. This is not a misspelling: Burpham and Barpham are different locations.
[90] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (27 September 1953), fol. 27.

– to bring the walker to Barpham Hill's highest point. This is the so-called location of 'Friday's Church', so-called because Allcroft can find no evidence that it ever existed:

> No name is better known to the *indigenæ* than is 'Friday's Church,' yet there is nothing to be seen that the wildest imagination could interpret as pertaining to a church – nothing at all, indeed, save the remnants of a cluster of small barrows long since spread by the plough. There is nothing even to suggest that hereabouts there ever stood a village which might be excuse for a church.

Allcroft consults the locals, only to be told that 'Queen Fridias was buried here', which he takes this as a sign that Friday's Church is, if nothing else, a 'church' in the sense of 'a place of burial'. To Allcroft, Friday's Church is 'a problem in archaeology'. The solution to this problem is not scientific but performative. To walk the Leper's Path from Burpham to Barpham is to traverse the boundaries between Christian and Pre-Christian religion, verifiable and unverifiable, and therefore, for Allcroft, the legend of Friday's Church 'savours of genuine folk-memory'.[91]

When asked whether he could explain the extent to which Sussex landscape had influenced his music, Ireland demurred. He explained that the Sussex Downs contained many Neolithic sites ('burial mounds and so forth') and that he had 'always felt moved by that sort of thing.' Ireland then referenced *Legend* as an example of a work that had been inspired by 'an experience of that kind', claiming that his music often reflected 'certain thoughts and images' conjured up by landscape and history. But Ireland was not more specific than that and conceded to being unable to describe the exact correspondence between these elements.[92] Machen would have appreciated this statement, having made clear what medium he considered best able to approximate the weird nature of landscape: 'It is only music, I think, that could image the wonder of the red sky over the faery dome, and the gathering dusk of

[91] Allcroft, 220-223.
[92] Quoted in Foreman (2011), 61.

the night as it fell on the rocks of that high land and the gathering dusk of the night…gleaming and then vanishing away. Only by music, if at all, can such things be expressed, since they are ineffable; not to be uttered in any literal or logical speech of men.[93]

Legend

The phenomenological tensions and layering of material in *Legend* can be traced in the music's juxtaposition of reference, tonality, and fragments. Like many of Ireland's works, *Legend* has three main sections. The material unfolds linearly but constantly refers to the past, whether by referencing material from a preceding section or evoking notions of history and memory through musical symbols. This is evident from the start of the piece which begins with an unaccompanied horn call in E-flat pentatonic (Figure 43).

[93] Machen (1922), 154-155.



Figure 41 ('Legend' bb. 1-12)

This is one of the most common signifiers for instances of distance, memory, isolation, and rural landscape.[94] It is also an example of music that 'calls attention to itself', a phenomenon that Van Elferen has associated with 'the uncanny moment' in music.[95] Scott Burnham has also drawn attention to the relationship between horn calls and the uncanny, identifying the infamous call in Beethoven's *Eroica* as a 'crux point', by which he means 'an uncanny incursion and…a key stage in an unfolding process, often narrating an impending return or conclusion'. Like Van Elferen's 'uncanny moment', the crux point is an instance of music's 'self-aware presence'; it stands 'both within and without the temporal flow.'[96] The reappearance of Ireland's horn call throughout serves a similar function, especially in the B section of the 'dancing children' where it shadows the dominant melodic material (see especially the violins in bb. 144-145) and prefigures the return of *Legend*'s A section by suddenly overtaking the dancing theme from bar 163 long before the recapitulation proper (b. 186) has occurred.

Machen makes numerous references to horn calls in *The Hill of Dreams*. When Lucian walks into the hills above Caermaen, he looks down onto the town and the mounds of its Roman amphitheatre, only to hear 'out of the stillness the clear and piercing music of the *réveillé*, calling, recalling, iterated, reiterated, and ending with one long high fierce shrill note with which the steep hills rang.'[97] Always a slight reordering of the same words and phrases, these calls mark the intersection of landscape, vision, and memory in the novel:

> …there came suddenly the piercing trumpet call, the loud reiterated summons that rose and fell, that called and recalled, echoing through all the valley, crying to the

[94] See Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998), 116-123. For a similar use of the horn-call as ghostly evocation, see Alain Frogley, 'Vaughan Williams and Thomas Hardy': 'Tess' and the Slow Movement of the Ninth Symphony', *Music & Letters*, 68.1 (January 1987), 42-59.
[95] Van Elferen (2012), 107.
[96] Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 149 and 166.
[97] Machen (2010), 28.

> dead as the last note rang. It summoned the legion from the river and the graves and the battlefield, the host floated up from the sea, the centuries swarmed about the eagles, the array was set for the last great battle, behind the leaguer of the mist.[98]

Like Machen, Ireland makes the horn call not only a reference to pre-Christian heritage but an integral part of narrative – it opens the piece, it summons other material into being, and each return of the figure either juxtaposes the foreground or calls something else into it; it not only evokes but sustains the vision. Ireland's minimal alteration of the figure may be read as a syntactical mimicking of Machen's own subtle variations on the phrases used to describe the call – the figure never substantially changes from its initial form (compare horn, bb. 1-6; oboe, bb. 98-98; flute, bb. 169-170, etc.).

The constant, circular motion of this figure is further reminiscent of the disorientation in Machen's walking texts as his narrators have the impression of themselves and landscape moving 'round and round and round'.[99] Combined with the gradual increase in volume and thickening of texture that ascends to a 'high fierce shrill note', this principle is most powerfully present from the beginning through the *un poco animando* and *Poco piu moto* from bars 11-28 in the violins and violas: the call begins in triplets that accelerate before modulating to semiquavers, circling round and round; against this, the woodwinds and second violins (bb. 21-23) play chromatically ascending quintuplets that reach ever higher, culminating in a 'shrill' *fff* of chromatic major triads, topped by the piccolo in its highest register – this too is an 'opening' gesture whose registral expansion suggests an elasticity of space. Bursting into pentatonic octaves in the piano, the passage suddenly changes into major sevenths from the piano's highest register to its lowest that suggest the shape of horn call without utilizing its exact figure. With the assistance of the cymbal and timpani, this passage

[98] Ibid, 113.
[99] Machen (2011), 123.

crescendos until bar 32 where it leads to a *ff* strike of the gong, the moment at which the call – having been 'iterated and reiterated', circling 'round and round and round' in figures that 'rose and fell' – reverberates in landscape ('the steep hills rang'). The immediate *ff* reiteration of the call in the trombones confirms its signification of both summoning and presence in landscape, of which the placid opening horn call was merely the first intimation. To 'sound in' landscape is also to 'act on' it.

There is a second call figure in *Legend* which has not been noted in previous commentaries (Figure 44). Over an A-diminished triad, this is introduced at the end of the piano's second entrance (b. 15): D-sharp – G-sharp – D-sharp. After a brief silence, it is repeated in the woodwinds (15-16). Then, on the third beat of bar 16, the narrative returns to the original horn call and proceeds with the build towards the initial climax. It is as if the second call had never occurred. While less prominent, this second call balances the revelatory, 'opening' of *Legend*'s first call by serving as an unanswered counterpart. The dissolving of boundary evoked by the first call is balanced by the second call's covering up, a withholding that goes nowhere (see also bb. 34-36 and 203-205, where the second call is again ignored).



Figure 42 ('Legend' bb. 13-17)

Tonally, *Legend* struggles to cohere. The opening horn call sustains a final E-flat, under which the strings resolve to C-minor via a B-major triad. Decorated by B-minor triad appoggiaturas, this C-minor cadence is taken up by the piano (bb. 7-9), whose ascending arpeggio from the piano's lowest register to its highest further 'opens' the landscape. The piano's initial arpeggio is followed immediately by a reiteration by the horn call in E-flat pentatonic, as if in disregard of the intervening material. These tritonal and half-tone relationships (Eb-B-C) underscore the disagreement over the music's tonal centre: something is slightly 'off', and the instruments are not occupying the same soundscape. Michael Cherlin has proposed that such 'glimmerings of tonality' are a kind of musical uncanny because they never fully appear or disappear but seem permanently 'estranged' from one another, like

'evanescent spectres'.[100] *Legend*'s tonal landscape is riddled with these evanescent tonal centres; it only settles, if at all, in the last seven bars and in a key which has not appeared once in the rest of the piece: D minor. Here again we see that the tonal and motivic figures in *Legend* never reconcile. At no point does the horn call's pentatonicism become, like Beethoven's *Lebewohl* motive, the basis for a later triumphant and tonally stable resolution.[101] Ireland's motives return only to reinforce the uncertainties they raised.

The three elements of *Legend*'s first phrase – horn call, tonal disparity, and 'opening' arpeggio – reappear in bars 9-16. This time, the call is accompanied by two clarinets in A who enter a half-tone in the opposite direction; they descend chromatically in parallel fourths, a signifier of plagal music, coming to rest on A-E in half-tone dissonance to another sustained E-flat in the horn call. Again, the tonal centre has yet to confirm itself. The chromatic parallel fourths unsettle the pentatonic call; the figure 'nags at our ears', a phrase Joseph Kerman used to describe the musical uncanny. This is not to say that uncanniness is simply distortion or unpleasantness but that it is something unresolved – the reason for its appearance in the texture (i.e., its function) is never entirely confirmed.[102]

Ireland had a lifelong love of plainsong, claiming late in life that the only classical music he could 'tolerate' other than that of J.S. Bach and 'the later ''romantic period''.'[103] The musical allusion in *Legend* to the *Dies irae*, beginning at bar 50 in C minor and marked

[100] Michael Cherlin, 'Schoenberg and Das Unheimlich: Spectres of Tonality', *The Journal of Musicology*, 11.3 (Summer 1993), 362.
[101] Kenneth Drake, *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 75-77.
[102] Joseph Kerman, 'Beethoven's Opus 131 and the Uncanny', *19th-Century Music*, 25.2-3 (Fall/Spring, 2001-2002), 158. Lawrence Kramer has proposed that the musical uncanny may arise from our sense that something is wrong in a musical work: the bad or perhaps simply unusual writing, like Kerman's 'nagging', provides a window for *something* to occur, and that something suggests an uncanny presence. See Lawrence Kramer, 'Revenants: Masculine Thresholds in Schubert, James, and Freud', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 57.3 (September 1996), 449-477.
[103] MS. 60536 (4 September 1958), fol. 130.

'quasi recitando', has been noted by previous commentators as early as Ralph Hill in 1946 (Figure 45).[104] But a specific connection between Machen's calls and the *Dies irae* has escaped previous analyses. In *The Hill of Dreams*' first reference to these calls, 'the note of the Roman trumpet' is linked in Lucian's mind with the words of the chant: '*tuba mirum spargens sonum*'.[105] This is a significant connection, supporting the argument that Ireland's musical decisions are determined by Machen's texts in a specific and not exclusively atmospheric way. Ireland referred to death as 'the king of terrors'.[106] In Machen's text, the *Dies irae* is used to summon the dead rather than lay them to rest, and this suggests that the chant's appearance in *Legend* may have been employed by Ireland to evoke the same principle.

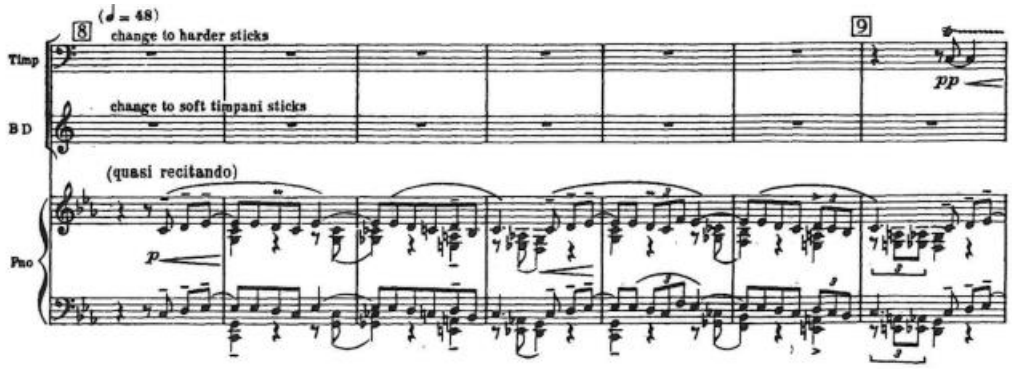


Figure 43 ('Legend' bb. 50-56)

The chant is accompanied by the chromatically descending parallel fourths which only adds to its plagal character. At points, these fourths are doubled by the horns. Again, half-tone relationships are prominent, including the cadence in bar 60 from C minor to C-flat major, an enharmonic reversal of *Legend*'s first cadence in bars 6-7. In bar 71, the strings interject a B-major chord, only to have it immediately made minor in the piano part; these

[104] Hill (1946), 111. See also Rankin (1970), 184; and Richards (2000), 85-86.
[105] Machen (2010), 28.
[106] MS. 60536 (29 July 1951), fol. 2.

vacillations between major and minor, as we have seen in previous chapters, are a fingerprint of Ireland's style, lending additional destabilization. The phrase-lengths in this section are of further interest as the chant becomes truncated. It only appears once in its full nine-bar form (bb. 51-59), after which only the second half of the chant is restated in fragments of varying length (four, four, three, three, two, three, and two). This metric displacement is heightened by the fact that the bass drum and timpani rolls leading to the downbeat of each new phrase also vary in duration: they are sometimes two and sometimes three quavers long, with no discernible pattern in the alteration, leading the listener to falsely predict the exact moment at which the new phrase will begin.

With each restatement, the chant modulates. The downbeat of each restatement is a major triad reinforced by the violins and cellos, which is then shifted to a minor triad whose root is a major third higher. Thus, the initial C minor becomes C-flat major on the downbeat of bar 60, which two bars later in the piano part modulates to E-flat minor; the D-major passing chord in bar 63 becomes F-sharp minor in bar 64; and so on. While the tonal centre modulates according to minor thirds (C minor – E-flat minor – F-sharp minor – A minor, etc.), the intimation of additional third relationships along the way recalls the practice of employing hexatonic poles to signify uncanny subjects as explored by Richard Cohn.[107]

Passages like this with unstable tonality that proceed against a gradually compressed melodic figure that revolves around a minor third appear in other works by Ireland, most prominently in *Ballad* (1929) for solo piano (bb. 49-81). *Ballad* was also inspired by Ireland's walks in West Sussex. Colin Scott-Sutherland noted the similarity it had with *Legend* in its transformation of material 'by some mighty and awful experience' into 'a kind of nobility',

[107] Richard Cohn, 'Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57 (2004), 285-323.

underwritten with an 'age-old sorrow' that played with notions of time and memory – he read *Ballad* as an earlier version of summoning in Ireland's music, describing it as 'the outcome of some deeply felt spiritual encounter'.[108] Both the *Legend* and *Ballad* transition out of these passages in the same manner: the triplet figure modulates to semiquavers, the tempo accelerates, and the scale is octatonic, ascending higher and higher against the marcato interjections of augmented major seventh triads before cascading down in a cacophony of sound (compare *Ballad* bb. 82-90 with *Legend* bb. 80-85; Figures 46 and 47, respectively), reminiscent also of the transgressive 'smear' from *Decorations* noted in Chapter 1. One might call this process a gradual *hystericalization* of material.

[108] Foreman (2011), 15.



Figure 44 ('Ballade' bb. 81-90)



Figure 45 ('Legend' bb. 80-84)

In *Legend*, this brings us to the music of the dancing children (b. 95) (Figures 48 and 49). This new theme is first played in G Dorian by the bassoons and horns against a pattering ostinato of descending semiquavers (D-C-A-G). At times, this ostinato is supplemented by open-fifth drones (G-D) in the cellos (bb. 101-102 and 109-110). Interjections of the horn call continue (see the oboe, bb. 98-99). First played in the cellos and then passed to the piano, bars 114-119 introduce an octatonic figure (Figure 50) that appears in two of Ireland's earlier works: the *Ballad* (b. 12-13) and *The Towing Path* (1918) for solo piano (bb. 46-48), the latter of which confirms its association for the composer with landscape and walking. In both works, as in *Legend*, the figure serves as a transitional gesture. It is at this point (b. 120) that the dancing music is played by the piano alone and reveals itself to be an early version of the middle section of 'In a May Morning' (1940) from *Sarnia* (bb. 54-89) (Figure 51). Both pieces utilize an accompanying pentatonic figure; over this, a modal melody of distinctly similar contour is harmonized in descending parallel thirds that cadence on a pentatonic cluster. The rhythmic material is nearly identical.



Figure 46 ('Legend' bb. 92-96)



Figure 47 ('Legend' bb. 97-101)



Figure 48 ('Legend' bb. 111-115)

This is a crucial moment in *Legend* because it confirms the music's layering of three times: past, present, and future. As Derrida explained in *Specters of Marx*, hauntology disrupts concepts of being and time, making it possible for haunting to come into the present from both the past and the future.[109] Mark Fisher explains this as the idea that a haunting is both '*no longer*' and '*not yet*', with the latter having the ability to be *'already* effective' on the present.[110] In *Legend*, the quote from *Ballade* and *The Towing Path* looks back; *Legend*'s new material looks present; and the reference to *Sarnia* looks to the future.



Figure 49 ('In a May Morning' bb. 52-61)

[109] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 202.
[110] Mark Fisher, 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, 66.1 (Fall 2012), 19. Victor Zuckerkandl discussed this Bergson notion in musical terms, i.e., the idea that a melody is the intersection or superimposition of the past and future in the present. See Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), 234-235. See also Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 86-96 and 115-121.

That Ireland may have associated the music of the dancing children in *Legend* with 'In a May Morning' is made further likely by a connection in *Downland Pathways*: 'In a May Morning' is dedicated to Michael Rayson, a Guernsey boy with whom Ireland was infatuated, and in his descent to the south of Harrow Hill, Allcroft refers walkers to the 'ghost' of Michelgrove ('*magni nominis umbrae*'), once the site of a sixteenth-century mansion.[111] The musical 'ghost' of Michael, like the ghost of Michelgrove, may have been retrospectively prefigured in Ireland's musical imagination. In *Legend*, past, present, and future intersect and act on one another.

Numerous musicologists have interpreted concerti in the context of the discourse they suggest between soloist and orchestra, performer and audience, and performer and composer.[112] These differing interpretations are all in some way indebted to Edward T. Cone, who described the solo concerto as a form 'in which recognition of the protagonist and sympathy for his point of view are prerequisite to a synoptic understanding of the composition.'[113] This is a conception of the concerto as drama. For Cone, the distance between performer and instrument is 'as indissoluble as a singer and his voice.'[114] In other words, performer becomes instrument. In piano concertos, this discourse is made further weird by the piano's unique relationship to sound, movement, and identity. In reference to E.T.A Hoffman, Lawrence Kramer has written of 'the ghost in the machine' that haunts piano

[111] Allcroft, 190.
[112] See Owen Jander, 'Beethoven's ''Orpheus in Hades'': The ''Andante con moto'' of the Fourth Piano Concerto', *19th-Century Music*, 8.3 (Spring 1985), 129-212; Owen Jander, 'A Ten-Year Retrospect on the Andante con moto of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto', *19th-Century Music*, 19.1 (Summer 1995), 31-49; Joseph Kerman, *Concerto Conversations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Joseph Kerman, 'Representing a Relationship: Notes on a Beethoven Concerto', *Representations*, 39 (Summer 1992), 80-101; and Susan McClary, 'A Musical Dialectic from the Enlightenment: Mozart's *Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453*, Movement 2', *Cultural Critique*, 4 (Autumn 1986), 129-169.
[113] Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 123-125.
[114] Ibid, 106.

music, claiming that the instrument 'binds playing and listening more closely' than any other. Its character is uniquely performative in the sense that it 'make[s] performance itself uniquely audible. We always hear the pianist in the piano…' For Kramer, the pianist is 'a vehicle' for a persona imagined by the music, a conception that was developed by nineteenth-century listeners into specific habits of listening and response that rested on the principle of the piano as a summoning agent.[115]

If the protagonist in *Legend* is the pianist, then the pianist represents the walker – the Schubertian wanderer. This is confirmed in the work's final bars where landscape, vision, and walking merge in a final image. From bar 194, the horn call becomes progressive softer. It is modulated down a half-step from its original B-flat, showing the significance of half-tone relationships to the piece's larger tonal scheme. In bar 210, for the first time in the entire piece, the horn call appears in the piano part. The piano gives a distorted, chromatically descending variation of the call that is joined in bar 210 by a pedal tone of crotchets in the timpani on D which will become the root of *Legend*'s cadence in D-minor (bb. 215-221). The timpani's strokes are marked *ma sempre marcato* – a steady, soft tread that is doubled by the piano from bar 215 until the end. In playing the horn call at *Legend*'s end and joining with the walking strokes of the timpani, this moment signifies the final performativity of memory by the protagonist: the call, once external, has been internalized by the pianist.

In the end, whatever their original source, the ghostly footfalls become our own. As Vernon Lee wrote, a ghost is 'the sound of *our* steps through a ruined cloister' – a 'vague' and indescribable feeling that builds until it 'invades our whole consciousness'.[116] The sight

[115] Lawrence Kramer, *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 134-170. See also Kramer (2001), 68-99.
[116] Vernon Lee, 'Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art', *The Cornhill Magazine* (August 1880), 222. The emphasis is mine.

or sound of ghostly dancing figures in landscape manifest the *Genius Loci,* which is the subject ('*he*') that lurks in the 'meeting-place[s]' of landscape.[117] In *Legend*, as in Machen's own walking visions, memory has been re-enacted physically. As Tilley observes, the body is both an 'interpretational constraint and enabling condition for the construction of meaning.'[118] To fully engage with memory through landscape, one must shift the centre of thinking from mind to body through ritualized movement. Walking unleashes memory. Tilley proposes the term 'phenomenological walk' to describe a walk that unites body, landscape, and experience *in the act* of walking. In other words, walking is an unparalleled way in which to unfold landscape's narratives by allowing landscape 'to exert its own agency in relation to my body'. The phenomenological walk is therefore a conception of walking as a way to know, especially with regard to cultural knowledge.[119] One might almost say that those looking for evidence of ghosts and the supernatural need only go for a walk.

Conclusion

In 1933, shortly before *Legend*'s premiere, Ireland wrote to Machen to share his vision of the dancing children. Machen's notorious and laconic reply was something of a disappointment: 'Oh, so *you've* seen them too, have you?'[120] Sceptics may wonder if the vision was 'real' or whether Ireland was simply trying to get Machen's attention. As Jocelyn Brooke recalled, Ireland had met with Machen in-person around this time, only to find the

[117] Vernon Lee, *Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (Chicago: Leopold Classic Library, 1898), 6.
[118] Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 220-221.
[119] See Tilley (2012), 15-32.
[120] Quoted in Brooke, 7. The last-known owner of the postcard on which this comment was written was the collector Aidan Reynolds, who sold it some years ago and does not know where it now is. Mark Valentine assumes that it is in a private collection. Reynolds has been a collector of Machenalia for sixty years, and this postcard is the only letter from Ireland to Machen he has come across. It is also the only letter between them known to exist outside of the British Library's collection. Mark Valentine, Personal Correspondence, 5 October 2020.

author 'inclined to be reticent both on the subject of his work and of his dealings with the occult.'[121] But even if Ireland's story of the dancing children were proved to be a complete fabrication, the fact that he felt a need to write of it to Machen and to depict it in a work dedicated to the author is of enormous significance, showing *Legend* to have been in dialogue with Machen's work and persona, the latter of which will form the basis of the final chapter.

That a broader approach to the programmatic content of *Legend* may be needed is indicated by the work's performance history, which has not been extensive. The piece was premiered on 12 January 1934 by Helen Perkin and the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Adrian Boult. Perkin performed the work three times that year, including at a Promenade Concert on 28 August with conductor Henry Wood, and she broadcast the work with Ireland as the conductor for the BBC in December 1937. Ireland served as the soloist in another Promenade Concert on 28 September 1935. Reactions to *Legend* were divided. Benjamin Britten attended the premiere and considered Perkin 'inadequate' to the task and the music 'unsatisfactory & meandering - & rather reminiscent – tho' [sic] some nice things in it…'[122] Britten's second exposure to the work on 22 April 1934 did not alter his opinion: he wrote of the piece 'an attractive idea', but, despite discerning 'a fine atmosphere in parts of it', concluded that Ireland 'hasn't the creative power or technique to do it'.[123]

A critic from the *Radio Times* at the premiere was quick to notice that, though it was not 'attached to any tale', *Legend* seemed to imply some extra-musical narrative: '[it] is legendary in the sense that its inspiration is thought of remote things; that too is its mood.'[124]

---

[121] Brooke, 7.
[122] *Journeying Boy: The Diaries of the Young Benjamin Britten, 1928-1938*, ed. John Evans (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), 196.
[123] Ibid, 209.
[124] 'Review', *Radio Times*, 42.536 (12 January 1934), 56.

The lack of an explicit connection between inspiration and content frustrates critical reception, inhibiting anything beyond these vague references to 'remote things'. In a letter to Alan Bush on 23 April 1934, Ireland wondered if *Legend* was structurally unbalanced: 'I am beginning to think there ought to be a lighter movement (Scherzo, or something similar) to follow it up, to dissipate the gloomy impression.'[125] However, rather than necessarily proving that Ireland doubted *Legend*'s structural integrity, this comment must be read in the context of his ambition to have written a second piano concerto. Following in the footsteps of Ireland's commercially successful *Piano Concerto no. 1*, Robert Matthew-Walker has speculated that *Legend* might have received greater attention had Ireland simply called it *Concerto no. 2*.[126]

Of course, one also sees in *Legend* Ireland's ability to read Machen contrary to the author's expressed agenda. The children of Ireland's vision represent 'joys of paradise' on the other side of the strange road's 'magic door' that might not serve the same purpose as Machen's.[127] In any case, with the contextualization of Machen's conception of landscape, walking, and vision, the musical contents of *Legend* come into sharper focus. Its specific content remains esoteric, but its touches of theatrical effects, tonal ambiguities, fragments, textures, and references reveal themselves as part of a drama that is both performative and symbolic – it is an anti-pastoral, presenting a vision of the rural made alien through distortions of time and place, evoking polarities that are weird by virtue of their remaining unresolved.

---

[125] Quoted in *The Correspondence of Alan Bush and John Ireland, 1927-1961*, ed. Rachel O'Higgins (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 52.
[126] See Foreman (2011), 210 and 310. As Matthew-Walker notes, in 1934 a 15-minute single-movement work might have been too short to call 'concerto', but by the late 1940s there were other single-movement concertos in the repertoire to justify a re-labelling.
[127] Machen (1990), 12-13.

Chapter 4

Becoming Weird: A Discourse on Biography

> It all happened, and there is nothing very remarkable in it – save for the wonderful though unconscious art which has made a plain tale of plain facts read like a subtle study in mysterious suggestion, a ghost story of the rarest kind. This is a great gift: to be able to tell the bare truth that it seems a magnificent lie. To many of us it is rather given to invent elaborate fictions which are plainer (and duller) than the plainest facts.[1]

Introduction

This chapter's suggestive and exploratory approach will mimic the Coleridgean 'circular mode of discourse' that Machen and his fictional avatars regarded as the *ne plus ultra* of speculative thought. Its oblique relation to the exhaustive or taxonomic is a consequence of the belief that discourse 'must have the form of that of which it speaks.'[2] What follows is a Machenesque discourse in pursuit not of possible methodologies for Ireland's biography but of the methodology that Ireland sanctioned when he aligned his legacy with Machen's.

When Lewis Foreman abandoned his attempt to write a biography of Ireland in 2011, he claimed that there were simply too many 'gaps in the documentary record' to sustain a full-length study. Eleven years later, and more than half a century after Ireland's death, a biography of this composer remains non-existent. Machen, more than seventy years after his death, remains likewise without a definitive biographical treatment.[3] Meanwhile, studies of

---

[1] Machen (2007), x.

[2] Jacques Derrida, 'Writing and Difference', in *Jacques Derrida: Basic Writings*, trans. Alan Bass, ed. Barry Stocker (London: Routledge, 2007), 225-226. See also Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact, and Form* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 186.

[3] A distinction is made here between biography and life-and-works studies. Of the latter, Machen has been the subject of four: Aidan Reynolds and William Charlton, *Arthur Machen: A Short Account of His Life and Work* (London: J. Baker, 1963); John Gawsworth, *The Life of Arthur Machen*, ed. Roger Dobson (Leyburn: Tartarus Press, 2005); Wesley D. Sweetser, *Arthur Machen* (New York: Twayne, 1964); and Mark Valentine, *Arthur Machen* (Seren: Mid Glamorgan, Wales, 1995).

composers like J.S. Bach, Franz Schubert, and others whose evidential records are arguably much sparser continue to appear. This suggests that there are more elements frustrating Ireland's potential biographers than mere 'gaps' alone.

In his 2006 study of H.P. Lovecraft, the most celebrated exponent of the weird tale, Michel Houellebecq concluded that all attempts at 'demystification' of this author have failed, leaving Lovecraft's character suspended in 'the aura of strange pathos' typifying his stories; we cannot read Lovecraft in isolation from the Lovecraftian. Ireland, a composer whose style was rooted in literary sources characterized by the unfathomability of human experience and the inability of language to convey what is meant, echoes Houellebecq's representative summation of the weird artist and serves as an illuminating case study in the complexities of weird historiography.

Assisted by the related field of speculative realism, this chapter enumerates Machen's weird philosophy in order to understand his contrarian approach to life-writing. In the process, it makes recourse to elements of post-modern cultural theory in order to explain Machen's complicated self-image and his posthumous treatment by connoisseurs of weird art. In both discussions, of central concern is the way in which a historical figure becomes mythical, fostering Houellebecq's auratic quality. The concepts of consecration, play, curation, and re-enchantment will all factor into this discourse.

To understand Ireland's current and potential position in music history, one must cease to approach him as a historical figure and instead interpret him through the cryptic context of Machen's weird, speculative worldview. Ireland must become a provisional 'Ireland'. The discussion of Machen in this chapter provides a framework for a biographical approach to Ireland that accords with the composer's wish to be understood through the work

of his favourite writer. By taking Machen and Ireland at their word, this chapter suggests that biographies of weird artists demand potential biographers' speculative participation as agents of actualization to a degree far greater than that considered generally acceptable; these biographies require an approach that is distinctly 'weird'. The following is therefore a circular discourse on how a weird artist becomes weird.

Speculative or 'Weird' Realism

To varying degrees, aspects like consecration, play, and myth-making are present in artists from all mediums and working in all genres. What distinguishes both weird art and its practitioners is the extreme extent to which alternatives to empirical methodologies are entertained. In recent times, the canon of weird fiction has played a role in the creation of a new field of philosophy called speculative realism. Broadly defined, speculative realism is a system that opposes what it considers to be the overly anthropocentric worldview of scientism with a metaphysics rooted in anti-correlationism.[4] In other words, it is an attempt to resurrect the battle in continental philosophy between realism and idealism in order to overcome the post-Kantian limitations of linguistics and consciousness. Speculative realism contends that certain assumptions underlying the status of science and epistemology in contemporary philosophy and ontology – especially the reliance on the phenomenal – are not

[4] Scientism is the belief, chiefly depreciative, that 'only knowledge obtained from scientific research is valid', usually accompanied by the view that the methodology of science can (and often should) be applied to non-scientific disciplines. See 'scientism, n.' *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press: September 2022), accessed 24 July 2022.

as definitive as is generally supposed.[5] As an alternative worldview, speculative realists propose what Quentin Meillassoux calls a 'hyper-chaos' in which 'everything is possible'.[6]

By this point in the present thesis, much of the appeal of weird fiction to such a philosophy will be self-evident, and it will come as no surprise that Graham Harman has used 'weird realism' as an alternative term for the field. Both weird fiction and speculative realism share the importance of play and games to one's conception of reality. This is signalled by the envy among practitioners of speculative realism of the 'dazzling speculation' that is permitted in contemporary scientific texts as contrasted with the non-speculative, two-dimensional character of much contemporary philosophy. It is a system that expresses a 'discontent' with dominant modes of philosophical thought.[7] In Harman's words, 'Philosophy has become *boring*.'[8] Speculative realism may therefore be interpreted as a playful yet wholly serious attempt to liven the discourse or, in weightier terms, to enable re-enchantment.

Lest it be dismissed as glibly contrarian, one must stress that the worldview of speculative realism is always proposed in the name of (what its practitioners consider to be)

[5] This is a broad definition. Speculative Realism was formally established in 2007, but, because of its youth, the dominant figures in the movement– Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, and Ray Brassier – have yet to coalesce around a single definition. This is discussed in Fabio Gironi, 'Science-Laden Theory: Outlines of an Unsettled Alliance', in *Speculations*, ed. Paul J. Ennis (Earth, Milky Way: Punctum Books, 2010), 9-46. At the very least, what these figures share is a critique of correlationism, which Harman calls 'the central polemical term of speculative realism.' See Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), viii. For a general introduction to speculative realism, see Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010). For a discussion of philosophers that prefigured speculative realism, especially Alfred North Whitehead's speculative philosophy, see Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

[6] Quoted in Zdravko Kobe, 'A Return to the Pre-critical? On Meillassoux's Speculative Realism and a More General Problem' in *New Realism and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Gregor Kroupa and Jure Simoniti (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 116.

[7] Ibid, 135.

[8] Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 148-149. Jure Simoniti has posited that speculative realism, of which he remains sceptical, is 'a symptom of a *crisis of philosophy*'. See Jure Simoniti, *The Untruth of Reality: The Unacknowledged Realism of Modern Philosophy* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016), 102-104.

commonsense. ‘Speculation’ in this context is used in its Kantian definition: ‘to speculate’ is *to think* the world as it really is, hence, the emphasis on ‘realism’ in ‘speculative *realism*’.[9]

Like the philosophical and artistic fields to which it is related, the Weird is similarly not to be confused with the whimsically fantastical. It is a speculative mode, proposing alternative ways of knowing that repudiate Enlightenment, scientific, and Western narratives in a genuine pursuit of the real. Chloe Germaine Buckley tackles this point directly, explaining how weird literature ‘disrupts’ our scientific forms of thought, encouraging readers ‘not only to suspend their disbelief, but to surrender their faith in rational systems of thought’. What replaces Enlightenment systems is an embrasure of ‘Weird speculation’ and ‘Weird ontology’ that, though resolutely material, refuses to be classified as yet another variation of scientific knowledge. The Weird is therefore a close relative of alternate history, another speculative mode, in that both aspire to contrive ‘moments of ‘‘estrangement’’.’[10] Most importantly, like speculative realists, weird practitioners are in pursuit of a re-enchantment that will subvert the boredom of contemporary life and scholarship by pursuing truth without compromising it.

[9] Peter Gratton has caricatured speculative realists as ‘gallant defenders of reason routing the postmodern constructivists and relativistic hordes from the academic citadel.’ See Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 11.

[10] Chloe Germaine Buckley, ‘H.P. Lovecraft versus Sherlock Holmes in *Shadow Over Baker Street*’, in *Sideways in Time: Critical Essays on Alternate History Fiction*, ed. Glyn Morgan and Charul Palmer-Patel (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 139-141. There is overlap here with elements of counterfactualism. See Simon T. Kaye, ‘Challenging Certainty: The Utility and History of Counterfactualism’, *History and Theory*, 49.1 (February 2010), 38-57.

Machen's Philosophy and Life-Writing

S.T. Joshi hesitates to deem Machen's worldview a 'philosophy', considering it more akin to a loose 'set of dogmatic prejudices.'[11] This appraisal is justified for two reasons. First, Machen never wrote a philosophical treatise. His beliefs are scattered in fragments throughout a voluminous catalogue, and it is a formidable task to find and stitch these together. Second, once the material has been assembled, one quickly realizes that, unlike the speculative logic of other thinkers, Machen's philosophy has no progression; there is movement, but there is no form. Machen claims to strive for actualization of the self, but he never clearly indicates the thought-path from speculation to – whatever lies beyond. As a result, the scholar is confronted with a hoard of often contradictory axioms that never fully coalesce. As will be demonstrated later on, Machen factors failure and contradiction into his system, but for the scholar trained in Western, post-Enlightenment systems of analysis it remains problematic that Machen never allows for a Hegelian 'speculative moment' in which his statements, not despite but because of their contradictions, dissolve into one another to forge a new rational unity.[12] This is ultimately because Machen has no faith in the ability of *any* philosophical system, even his own, to tell the truth about his life. For Machen, we cannot know or prove anything about what did or did not happen, and even if we could, it would not lead to any deeper understanding. In Machen's words, 'there is no *ergo*' to the story – 'there is no ''therefore''; no *ratio*.'[13]

[11] S.T. Joshi, 'Arthur Machen: The Evils of Materialism', in *The Scarlet Ceremonies: Critical Essays on Arthur Machen*, ed. Mark Valentine and Timothy J. Jarvis (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2019), 19-20.
[12] See *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel*, ed. Allegra De Laurentis and Jeffrey Edwards (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 87-90. For an introduction to movement and progression in Hegel's philosophy, see John Montani, 'The Rhythm of Hegel's Speculative Logic', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 36.2 (2022), 254-263.
[13] Machen, *The London Adventure* (1924), 146-147.

Nevertheless, with the contextualizing assistance of speculative realism, the foundation for a philosophy is there, sufficiently so to allow for an enumeration of Machen's objective. At the heart of Machen's worldview is his belief that a scientific or factual account of life, rooted in empiricism and correlationism, is not only inadequate but misleading: 'you can enumerate the scientific facts…and when all is done, you know – nothing.'[14] For Machen, this is in part because all phenomenal perceptions, the tools of the empirical trade, are 'deceitful' and offer a window only into a 'phantasmagoria' or 'shadow show'.[15] Man is simply not capable of absolute truth, and the 'net of contradictions, obscurities, [and] mysteries' that surround even the most basic and mundane aspects of his own life belie his classification as a purely rational creature who lives in a rational universe. For Machen, life is beyond the confines of reason. It is either 'irrational' or 'a-rational'. Hence, Machen prefers speculation to scepticism because he foresees no solution to 'the riddle of ourselves and of our lives' any more than he does a clear and adequate solution to the mystery of the universe.[16]

In this system, we can only attempt an approximation of the self. Machen here endorses the same 'surrender' of one's faith in Enlightenment schematizations of rationality that was noted above by Germaine Buckley as a hallmark of speculative realism:

> Now it is possible to look the universe in the face, to contemplate the mysteries and enigmas of life and death, of faith and belief, and say frankly, 'I give it up. All I can say is that it seems to me a most infernal muddle, a sort of practical joke of a puzzle without any answer.'[17]

---

[14] Machen (1923), 73-74. Machen often gives his criticism of science and empiricism a moral element, with 'the good people' such as himself on one side and 'the bad people, or scientists as they are sometimes called' on the other. See Machen (1922), 124.
[15] Machen (1923) 125-129. See the introduction to the present thesis for correlations between Machen and Neo-Platonism.
[16] Arthur Machen, *War and the Christian Faith* (London: Skeffington & Son, Ltd, 1918), 43-60. See also Machen's debate with his strawman 'rationalist' in Machen (1960), 164-167. This thread returns in Machen's later books. See Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 16-18.
[17] Machen (1918), 23.

Though it may elude our grasp, Machen suggests that we can move closer to the truth by focusing on the mysteries of life rather than the facts, interpreting the weird or speculative on their own terms.[18] By 'mystery', Machen refers to things whose existence cannot be proven even though one 'knows' them to be real, with 'knowing' understood as a form of belief – a 'surrender.' Machen is insistent that life's mysteries, often dismissed as imaginative, are closer to logic than we suppose, revealing what he describes as 'a certain secret alliance' between 'the dream and the syllogism'.[19]

Thus, the ontological playbook is reformatted with terms altered to suit Machen's needs. His redefinition of realism serves as a typical example: '…I define realism as the depicting of eternal, inner realities – the ''things that really are'' of Plato – as opposed to the description of transitory, external surfaces; the delusory masks and dominoes with which the human heart drapes and hides itself.'[20] In isolation, this comes across as a straight-forward reiteration of two-world Platonism, but a key difference in Machen's philosophy is his emphasis on the roles of 'wonder' and 'strangeness' to one's penetration of this hidden reality. Machen is more interested in the idea of shadows than in their actuality and in the effect that they have on the mind of the perceiver. This shift foreshadows Harman's re-characterization of realism in 2007: '…realism is always in some sense *weird*. Realism is about the strangeness in reality that is not projected onto reality by us. It is already there by dint of being real. And so it [weird realism] is a kind of realism without [Kantian] common

[18] Ibid, 44.
[19] Machen (1922), 135. Machen cites the works ('extravagant dreams') of Lewis Carroll ('a master of logic') as examples of this phenomenon. Machen makes this comment as an aside during his recollection of his first years in London, compelling the reader to question how many of these memories are more akin to 'extravagant dreams'.
[20] Machen (1922), 42.

sense.'[21] Like the weird tale, Machen's equivocal philosophy is defined as much by affect as content. The thrill of the mind's 'surrender' to strangeness is what makes the shadows 'real'.[22]

Machen's definition of truth is similarly self-serving. Truth is not the 'truth' of science, which he derides as a 'figment of the brain' and a 'non-existent monster', but rather commensurate with the Keatsian notion of beauty: truth is a form of the miraculous.[23] In this fashion, Machen permits himself to declare that empiricism is a deceit and scientific truth a misnomer, with the scam extending from the grand narratives of science and history down to the terminology itself. And so, as Machen summarizes, 'The fact is, that what we commonly call life is not life at all.'[24]

Like the later speculative realists, Machen's philosophy shifts away from anthropocentric ways of knowing towards systems like object-oriented ontology or eliminative materialism that 'subtract the ''human touch'' from reality.'[25] Machen relocates truth from the here-and-now to the extremes of time and space. This is most clearly indicated in Machen's portrayal of 'the Little People' as beings whose pre-historical, extra-linguistic powers offer new and superior ways of conceiving reality. If 'the amoeba and the snail' have abilities that enable them to explain things which to humans 'seem wholly inexplicable', then it is only rational for the epistemological supremacy of Machen's Little People to stem from

[21] Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux, 'Speculative Realism', in *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development Volume 3*, ed. Robin Mackay (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2007), 367.
[22] Lovecraft (1973), 15-16.
[23] Machen (1922), 154-156. In this passage, Machen again invokes the moral perspective that truth not only cannot be expressed in words but should not.
[24] Machen (1923), 46. Machen similarly redefines terminology in his comparison of Jane Austen with Edgar Allan Poe, arguing that, contrary to public opinion, Austen is 'unnatural' and 'inhuman' whereas Poe is 'natural' and 'human'. See Machen (1960), 181.
[25] Simoniti, 144. This shift in weird fiction is applied to ecological relations in Jonathon Turnbull and Benn Platt, 'For a New Weird Geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 46.5 (2022), 1207-1231.

their non-humanness. In *The Novel of the Black Seal*, it is the 'hissing' and 'ghastly jargon' of Jervase Cradock, a boy whose mother was raped by the Little People, that provides Professor Greg with a new 'signification', allowing him to 'read the awful transmutation of the hills' (i.e., to perceive the noumenal).[26] Machen thus shares with speculative realism the conjecture that a deeper reality may be accessed through a kind of exotic speculation.

This weird, speculative worldview had a profound effect on Machen's conception of life-writing. His despair in empirically based life-writing is a prominent theme in his autobiographies:

> Here am I, not trying to write literature, but doing my best to tell a true tale, and I find that I can make nothing of it. I can set down the facts, or rather such of them as I remember, but I am quite conscious that I am not, in the real sense of the word, telling the truth; that is, I am not giving any sense of the very extraordinary atmosphere in which I lived in the year 1900, of the curious and indescribable impression which the events of those days made upon me…..I can give no true picture, dealing as I am with what are called facts.[27]

In the end, it does not matter whether an account is supported by the so-called facts because life-writing for Machen offers no more than 'an approximation of the truth', and academic publications rest on plausibility rather than proof.[28] And so, whether or not his own words are true is irrelevant because ultimately 'it is all nonsense'.[29]

There are parallels here with modernist theories of life-writing which Machen, a devoted anti-modernist, would not have appreciated. For example, it is common for art to be

---

[26] 'The Novel of the Black Seal' in Machen (2011), 57-64. Machen believed the superior perceptive powers of survivals to be dormant in modern man. It is the element in us that has survived 'from the rites of the black swamp and the cave' that suggests 'an anticipation of a wisdom and knowledge that are to come, transcending all the science of our day.' See Machen (1923), 15-17. Graham Harman has coined the term 'productionist' to refer to weird authors whose flirtation with non-anthropocentric ontology arises from their frustration with 'the gap between objects and the power of language to describe them'. Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2012), 3.

[27] Machen (1923), 150.

[28] Machen (1923) 154.

[29] Ibid, 23-25. Machen gives an outline in this passage for an article he would like to (but will not) write called 'The Aryan Kabbala'.

perceived to varying degrees as a translation of at least part of an artist's self, with biography functioning as a method of translating art back into life's original terms to arrive at some historical truth. But in Machen's worldview, this process is reversed: we fictionalize life to approach the historical. It is the duty of artists 'to realise' or 'to actualize' the facts of life 'by inventing a tale' about them.[30] In the shaping of a methodology that blends 'truth' with 'personality', Virginia Woolf wrote similarly of the need for biographical facts to be 'manipulated', 'brightened', and 'shaded'. This allows the biographer to become an artist rather than a mere 'chronicler', with Woolf's contempt for the latter analogous to Machen's for the scientist.[31]

What Woolf and Machen granted biographers was a license for alteration or elaboration which, however minute or benign, is a form of invention. The biographer is 'bound by facts', but those boundaries are only ever as constricting as are proverbial guidelines. What matters is what Woolf calls the biographer's '*sense* of truth', rather than truth itself.[32] Where Machen and Woolf differ is the extent to which invention is considered acceptable. Though she extolled the synchronization of fact with invention, Woolf was critical of biographers who leaned too far in either direction and of studies in which 'fact and fiction refused to mix'.[33] For Machen, there is no quota placed on the artist's use of invention in pursuit of truth. Fact, fiction, reason, and speculation are interchangeable in his

[30] Machen (1922), 23-25.
[31] Virginia Woolf, 'The New Biography', in *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*, ed. Wilhelm Hemecker and Edward Saunders (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 119-121.
[32] Virginia Woolf, 'The Art of Biography', in *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*, ed. Wilhelm Hemecker and Edward Saunders (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 128. In *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), Woolf writes that 'only those who have little need of the truth, and no respect for it – the poets and the novelists – can be trusted [with it].' See Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 184.
[33] Woolf (2017), 127 [emphasis added].

terminology. As far as Machen is concerned, 'we can only proceed [in our pursuit of truth] by the guidance of analogy, proceeding from the known to the unknown.'[34]

Though they differed in their preferred ratios, Woolf and Machen were both searching for a methodology that would blend fact with fiction in order to imbue a subject with *presence*, with (a sense of) realness. Machen referred to this as a subject's 'essence' or 'quiddity' which, rather than being merely fanciful, is the very element that 'makes them to be what they are'. It is not the facts but the 'unsearchable and ineffable' aspects of a man that endow him with realness.[35] We know the unknowable through the unknown, through the abandonment of our critical, sceptical faculties – or, in Machen's words, 'I divined the majesty I could not comprehend.[36]

That Machen often contradicts himself is beside the point because contradiction is conveniently factored into his system. Here, we encounter the playful element of his speculative thought. This is readily apparent in Machen's own life-writing as, for example, when he cheekily concludes a memory of the Usk Valley:

> That is my vision of the place where I was born; no doubt the recollection of driving home beside my father on some shining summer afternoon of long ago; but of later years another vision of the same white town and white road has come to me. I have 'made this up', as the children say, though, no doubt, it is all true.[37]

[34] Machen (1918), 24. Isabella van Elferen observes a similar disintegration of these categorical distinctions in the context of modern Goth, a contemporary relative of the weird. See Isabella van Elferen, 'Goth Music and Subculture', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music*, ed. Christopher Partridge and Marcus Moberg (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2017), 319-320.
[35] Machen (1923), 73-74. Compare this to Oscar Wilde's scheme for a 'conversion of fact into effect' which he stresses is not to be equated with a 'disregard of truth'. Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Volume 4*, ed. Josephine Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 222-223.
[36] Machen (1923), 30.
[37] Machen (1923), 8. Machen seems to view objects that have a 'shining' to them as triggers for speculation. See his use of the word in explaining the origins of *The Bowmen* in Arthur Machen, *The Angel of Mons: The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1915), 8.

This excerpt is from the memoir's opening scene. Machen leaves the matter unresolved, inviting the reader to wonder whether all of the memories in the succeeding pages, factual or fictive, are likewise equally 'true' in their author's eyes. Similarly, in a later reflection on the fallibility of memory, 'So well was I convinced of all this when I fell to comparing the London of my boyhood with the London of my middle age that at first thought there must be a fallacy somewhere, and I was very willing to believe that those early impressions of mine were illusions.'[38] But again, he leaves the matter unresolved.

The same playful uncertainty surrounds Machen's fiction. The fallibility of memory, the possibility of bias or fabrication, the subjectivity of written correspondence and memoir – these are all present in Machen's writing. His books abound in the chance meetings that contradict biography's illusory sense of logical sequence that is imposed on life ex post facto. Characters happen upon one another, only to disperse. Narratives are left unresolved. Details hang before the reader like a harvest of unfulfilled promises. The impossibility of total knowledge and of making complete sense – of establishing a systematic, scientific, interpretative system for life – is at the heart of the weird.

Machen's short stories often feature a pseudo-documentary surface and real-time chronology that undermine the text's fictional identity. Like biography, his narratives 'orchestrate a factual pattern' by using factual materials that are already rich with fictional elements. A hallmark of his tales is the adoption of a reportorial tone to lend credence to imaginative elements. By the time the reader notices these tricks, if indeed they are noticed at all, one is already too far in, too invested in the story to care – they have submitted to the

[38] Machen (1951), 78.

fable. Northrop Frye calls such techniques 'displacement', meaning the ways in which a writer makes a story seem credible in order to 'indirectly mythologize' its content.[39]

Of course, the most famous instance of Machen's fictional work being re-classified as non-fictional concerns *The Bowmen*. Published in 1914, this story features ghosts from the Hundred Years' War who aid the English army in its retreat from the Battle of Mons. The story was an international sensation. Its events were believed by many readers to have actually happened, inspiring a slew of false witnesses and conspiracy theories, and historians continue to debate the circumstances surrounding the story's creation.[40]

In some ways, the reaction to *The Bowmen* can be interpreted as just one of a 'plethora of very un-modern superstitions' that appeared during the First World War as a consequence of hysteria and propaganda.[41] Nevertheless, it is important to note that Machen is at least partially responsible for the controversy that *The Bowmen* unleashed. *The Bowmen* was published in a newspaper, *The Evening News*. At the time, Machen was known primarily to readers as a non-fiction journalist. Curiously, the text was not identified as a 'short story' when printed, unlike a tale by Alexander Cornford that appeared in the same edition. As Joshi notes, *The Bowmen* features a tone of 'plain-spoken sobriety' that is reminiscent of Machen's factual news stories. This may therefore be an instance of Machen attempting to 'pass off' a fictional narrative as factual, an accusation that Joshi has made regarding several of Machen's works.[42]

---

[39] Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (London: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1963), 36.
[40] The most famous one, to which Machen responded, is Harold Begbie, *On the Side of the Angels: A Reply to A. Machen* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915). Machen involves the controversy surrounding 'The Bowmen' in his later story 'Out of the Earth', where the unnamed narrator is on assignment for *The Evening News*, like Machen. See Machen (2011), 265-271. For a general overview, see David Clarke, *The Angel of Mons: Phantom Soldiers and Ghostly Guardians* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2004).
[41] Fussell (1975), 115.
[42] Joshi (2019), 24.

In light of this, David Clarke's statement that *The Bowmen* was written and marketed as 'unambiguous fiction' may be overly generous.[43] It is true, as Clarke observes, that Machen publicly denied the verity of 'the Angels of Mons', but the note on which Machen's denial ends is problematic and indicative of his broader conception of the real. Asking how a nation 'plunged in materialism' has come to be so credulous, Machen claims that 'it is precisely because our whole atmosphere is materialist that we are ready to credit anything – to save the truth.' The misinterpretation and the lie are pardoned as long as they are utilized to supplant the materialist 'phantasmagoria'. Once one is aware of Machen's belief that truth is uncovered by proceeding from the known to the unknown – the factual to the fictive –*The Bowmen* reads like yet another instance of Machen sieving 'truth' from fact. After all, one recalls that Machen was inspired to write *The Bowman* after reading an account of the Battle of Mons in *The Weekly Standard* and that he did not dismiss the possibility of 'superphysical intervention' in the whole affair.[44] In his so-called denial, Machen may therefore be as much pardoning (explaining) himself as his readers. Either way, a contempt for non-speculative ways of knowing and representing the real is evident.

At times, the games in Machen's life-writing similarly blur the line between slight mischaracterization and outright lie. As James Machin has shown, A.N. Wilson's assessment of Machen's early years in London as 'limited by the crushing restraints of petty bourgeois semi-poverty' is not supported by the record. Inheritances allowed Machen to enjoy financial stability for nearly a decade; he and his wife holidayed annually in France and even became shareholders in a Touraine vineyard; and Machen was able to devote his time exclusively to writing for nearly a decade. James Machin rebukes Wilson for indulging in a common

[43] See David Clarke, 'Rumours of Angels: A Legend of the First World War', *Folklore*, 113 (2002), 151-173.
[44] Machen (1915), 22-25.

misreading of the neglect and poverty endured by Lucian in *The Hill of Dreams* as semi-autobiographical.[45]

However, it is important to note that Machen's own life-writing encourages this same (mis-)interpretation. Machen described himself as a young man in London as 'a shabby, sorry figure; and always alone'. Many passages in *Far Off Things* read as if they had been lifted from *The Hill of Dreams*:

> …I am amazed at the utter loneliness of it all…And I, all alone in my little room, friendless, desolate; conscious to my very heart of my stuttering awkwardness whenever I thought of attempting the great speech of literature; wandering, bewildered, in the world of imagination, not knowing whither I went, feeling my way like a blind man, stumbling like a blind man, like a blind man striking my head against the wall, for me no help, no friends, no counsel, no comfort.[46]

Such readings are further spurred by Machen's frequent citation of the uncanny overlap between his life and his fiction. In an extended passage from *The London Adventure*, for example, Machen portrayed the atmosphere in which he lived as 'remarkably like' the atmosphere of *The Three Imposters*, referring to people he interacted with by the names of his own fictional characters and stressing their physical and behavioural resemblance.[47] In the same memoir, he likens one of his quasi-hallucinatory, spiritual visions with his short story, *The Great Return*: 'Thus in the story, and thus it was with me in fact'.[48]

---

[45] James Machin, 'Arthur Machen and Decadence: The Flower-Tunicked Priest of New Grub Street' in *The Scarlet Ceremonies: Critical Essays* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2019), 95.

[46] Machen (1922), 127-134. The seeds of a self-pitying characterization are planted towards the beginning of Machen's memoir with its recounting of a 'lonely' childhood marked by feelings of isolation and 'exile'. Ibid, 22-23 & 104. This tone has potential parallels with Max Beerbohm's simultaneously sentimental and bitter 'camp nostalgia'. See Kritsin Mahoney, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 25-56.

[47] Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 13-14 and 147-149.

[48] Ibid, 125-143. Additionally, see page 32 in the same volume for Machen's memory of the 'miraculous' reconciliation of two elderly men that is remarkably like that described in 'The Great Return' in Machen (2011), 244-245.

These overlaps have led Sam Wiseman to characterize Machen's fiction as the 'mirror image' of his non-fiction, a conception that helps move the discussion beyond the surface issue of critical (mis-)readings that James Machin noted above, though, because of the likeness, one must add to Wiseman's reading the caveat that it is not always clear which figure is the reflection.[49] Boris Tomashevsky identified this as an obstacle for biographical subjects from the late Romantic century onwards: the author is transformed into a 'participant' in his/her fictional work, igniting a 'double transformation' whereby the fictional characters are interpreted as copies of non-fictional characters, fictional narratives are interpreted as biography, and vice versa. It therefore becomes increasingly difficult for biographers (and readers) to decide 'whether literature recreates phenomena from life or whether the opposite is in fact the case'.[50]

Because of this blurred distinction, one cannot blanketly dismiss Machen's fictional characters as wholly non-existent, however much one may stress that elements of them are indeed fabrications. It would be more appropriate to describe Machen's fictional avatars as 'ontological troublemakers.' In the context of speculative realism, Markus Gabriel proposes this as a term to describe fictional objects or characters who intrude upon the landscape of 'our otherwise well-behaved logical systems.' If the difference between them is really so slight, the realness of a fictional person can cause a real person to seem fictional.[51]

---

[49] Wiseman has further shown how *The London Adventure* plays with the reader's sense of reality concerning the text itself: the narrative constantly refers to an 'imagined version' of the very text that the reader is reading. See Sam Wiseman, 'Finding Infinity Round the Corner': Doublings, Dualities, and Suburban Strangeness in Arthur Machen's The London Adventure', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 16 (2017), 94-107.

[50] Boris Tomashevsky, 'Literature and Biography' [1923], trans. Herbert Eagle in *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries*, ed. Wilhelm Hemecker and Edward Saunders (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 86.

[51] Markus Gabriel, 'On the Essence and Existence of So-called ''Fictional Objects'', in *New Realism and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Gregor Kroupa and Jure Simoniti (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 186-189. Gabriel points out that a character's imaginary existence does not disqualify him from realism. The character 'exists' in imagination to a degree that is *sufficient* to be classified as 'neutral realism'. As Gabriel reiterates in a later publication, fictional characters 'are not *completely* determined, but they are *satisfactorily*

Machen's critique of the relationship between history and literature is a logical extension of his speculative weirdness as can be seen in his comments on *King Lear*. It would be a truism to say that the setting of a fictional play is not entirely factual, but Machen goes further in claiming that all fiction derived from history is really fiction derived from fiction in that both forms are a kind of 'printed legend'. The historical Britain on which Shakespeare's fictional work is based is itself already 'a bit of pseudo-history'. For Machen, all history is play, and all play is history. Shakespeare's play is 'a play within a play' which itself is equally 'unreal.' The 'storm' in one's own life is no more real than the 'storm' in *King Lear*. It is all theatrics: 'The moon in the sky may be just such an illusion as the moon which the master-electrician causes to rise so convincingly [in the play] over the dusky garden.' The whole of life is postulated as a string of fictions existing in 'the dreams of the Supreme Artist', of whom the individual artist (Machen) is merely an imitator.[52]

The larger point is that Machen is toying with readers. By refusing to distinguish clearly between the facts and fictions, reality and 'truth', the disorientation weakens one's assurance in what is or is not real. In other words, he is creating a mask. This is another aspect in which Machen sits close to modernists like Henry James, W.B. Yeats, and T.S. Eliot who preferred to scaffold their life-writing with a convoluted, allegorical aesthetic system rather than resort to autobiographical exegesis. For all of these men, the life and persona of the artist are a creation. As Yeats explained, the real artist is 'more *type* than man'; he is a historical

determined.' With Machen, there is a *sufficiency* of realism in his fictional avatars to support this reading. Theories of existence in speculative realism are further explored in Markus Gabriel, *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 43-71.

[52] Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 32-33 and 53. Machen's use of Shakespeare's plays to illustrate this point about historical accuracy is strikingly similar to Wilde's comments in 'The Decay of Lying', 219-223.

figure who has 'been re-born as an idea', and it is this 'idea' that renders the man 'intelligible'.[53]

Joshi submits that Machen's biography 'is perhaps his greatest creation' because 'it is exactly the life we might expect a poet and a visionary to have lived.'[54] This statement brings to the fore two elements: 1) the uncanny aura that surrounds Machen, and 2) the implication that Machen is perhaps not the only party invested in its maintenance. The weird, speculative philosophy outlined above provides the foundation for Machen, and subsequently Ireland, to erase himself into something other than a historical figure, offering some justification for his construction of an a-historical avatar who has elements of his fictional and non-fictional self but is at the same time neither. It is the socio-cultural forces involved in the creation and maintenance of this otherized biographical subject to which we now turn

Enchantment, Consecration, and Myth

If the weird is an attempt to re-enchant the world, then the life-writing of a weird artist according to Machen is an attempt to re-enchant the individual. In a review of Maynard Solomon's *Mozart: A Life* (1995), Matthew Head pointed out that biographical myths appeal to biographers and readers because, once the myth is 'dispelled' or 'under control', the narrative is able to proceed towards the historical reality or 'truth'.[55] The biographer

[53] W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 509. Emphasis added. Compare this with Machen's contention that the human form is 'a symbol which stands for an idea', irrespective of the 'real or imaginary' facts. See Machen (1960), 88-89. It should be noted that Machen's interest in the 'realisation' of identity through art is indebted to Victorian figures preceding literary modernism, with Oscar Wilde, through his personal association with Machen and his influence on the Decadent circles in which Machen mixed, serving as a conduit. The playful 'slipperiness' that overhangs Wilde's use of the terms 'art' and 'life' prefigures Machen's own. See Julia Prewitt Brown, *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 1-5 & 23-50.
[54] Joshi (2019), 15.
[55] See Matthew Head, 'Myths of a Sinful Father: Maynard Solomon's *Mozart*', *Music & Letters*, 80.1 (February 1999), 76.

Humphrey Carpenter spoke similarly of the itch to discover some 'hidden story' or 'clue' that would allow him to 'unravel' a subject: 'You still won't get the *complete* truth about that person, but you'll get a kind of truth, which works within its own terms.'[56] The weird reverses this process, keeping the story hidden and the myth untamed so that our understanding of the individual never advances beyond that auratic stage as identified by Houellebecq. It spools a life.

The implication here is that something vital is lost in a biography's unravelling. Richard Taruskin's rebuke of the late-twentieth-century's demystification of Mozart is illustrative of this difficulty in maintaining a balance between idolization and popularization within a capitalist context. He decries the conversion of Mozart ('our musical Christ') from 'a connoisseur's taste' to an object for 'commercial and cinematic exploitation'.[57] Demystification is not wholly denounced, but Taruskin makes it clear that it ought to be done *in the right way* – that is, in a manner that disseminates the sacred image without relinquishing the calculated otherness that funds its aesthetic value. This is a distinction between popularization and proselytization.

Taruskin's complaints about marketing, over-exposure, and misrepresentation reflect a broader concern with disenchantment, with the effects of a commercially bent, post-Enlightenment discourse, which Adorno and Horkheimer understood as fundamentally 'demythologizing, secularizing, or disenchanting'.[58] For Machen, the seed of commercialized disenchantment is planted by a philosophical system that exercises too much

[56] Humphrey Carpenter, 'Learning about Ourselves: Biography as Autobiography', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. John Batchelor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 268.
[57] Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 263-272.
[58] Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), 24.

scepticism and flirts with what he perceived as the danger of knowing too much – in short, a discourse that lacks mystery and credulity. He repeatedly advises the researcher to 'beware of over-thoroughness': 'Let him dip lightly from the vellum quarto into the leather duodecimo, glancing at a chapter here, a sentence there; but let him avoid all deep and systematic study…For if you go too far you will be disenchanted.'[59]

Disenchantment returns our understanding of Machen's worldview to the politics of Enlightenment discourse which, as characterized by Kant, is critical and negative. Like Taruskin's, Machen's fear corresponds to the notion that Enlightenment discourse has no positive content of its own to offer. To use Machen's term, it has no 'quiddity' and merely negates the myths for whose reconstitution Machen is appealing.[60] In this sense, Machen's understanding of Enlightenment discourse aligns with that of Rüdiger Bittner, who described it as a process of 'desecration'.[61]

Pierre Bourdieu argued that the reputation of an artist – analogous to Houellebecq's 'aura' – is not made by influential figures or by art itself but rather by the field of production, meaning both the relations between artists and institutions as well as the competition between these forces for 'the monopoly of the power to consecrate'.[62] 'Consecration' is a word to which Bourdieu often returns in his writings on the artist's 'charismatic legitimization' and the public's 'cultural competence', but the larger aspects of sanctity in relation to our perception of the artist are not explored in his text. Nevertheless, the foundation for a study

[59] Machen (1923), 21. Machen is drawing in this passage on his own experience of researching alchemy while working on a catalogue called 'The Literature of Occultism and Archaeology'.
[60] J.M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 91.
[61] Rüdiger Bittner, 'What is Enlightenment?', in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (London: University of California Press, 1996), 352.
[62] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. Randal Johnson (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993), 78. James Machin is the first scholar to have discussed weird fiction in relation to Bourdieu's literary theory. See James Machin, *Weird Fiction in Britain: 1880-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

of artist-biography concerned with the effect of consecration, re-enchantment, or mythologization on the perception and reception of an artist is there.

Consecration – the elevation of the historical person to a sacred (i.e., a-historical) status – gives some indication of the scale and tenor of legacy that Machen and Ireland are after. Once consecrated, an artist accedes to the unique and paradoxical position wherein they are generically known in the sense of a well-known myth or legend – the content of which is transmitted anecdotally and whose meaning is derived through intuition – and considered to exist outside the realm of empirical study. In other words, they are regarded as both known and unknowable.

Consecration is not merely a title, nor is its condition static. Its definition refers to the active *setting apart* of a person.[63] Consecration is a process; a worldview; a back-and-forth way of interpreting and re-interpreting the substance of a life; a shuffling of the so-called facts to the point where *historic truth* is either subsumed by or made indistinguishable from *mythic truth*. The struggle for 'the monopoly of the power to consecrate' is never-ending; as one gathers from the litany of deflated legacies, threats of deconsecration loom. It is also a philosophical game, a status-giving phenomenon that riffs on the tension between the verifiable and the unverifiable that defines and restrains empiricism. The evidence (if one can call it that) that backs the consecration of an artist is necessarily anecdotal and speculative. It is also spectral because an artist's participation in this game continues after their death. Self-promotion is counterbalanced by acts of self-negation. Whether living or dead, artists engage in a revolving play of disclosure and concealment, taking advantage of

[63] *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'consecrate', *v.*, as 'To set apart (a person or thing) as sacred to the Deity; to dedicate solemnly to some sacred or religious purpose, and so give the object itself a character of holiness; to make sacred or holy and so fit for a religious use.' *Oxford English Dictionary: Vol. III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 758.

empiricism's blind-spots, in particular the limits of biography, as they attempt to semi-erase themselves into something other: a kind of myth.

The imagery of biographical literature is often quasi-religious. While sacred imagery and sanctity are not necessarily the same thing, Hermione Lee argues that the intersection of biography and popular culture reflects 'a longing for latter-day saints and heroes in an increasingly secularized society.'[64] Something in us prefers myth to history not because it is false but because it conveys something that the facts have missed. Machen disclosed the same belief in his confession to being more fascinated by fictional characters than historical ones: fiction is deemed 'so much more impressive' than 'solid and majestic fact'. He considered the 'glorified projection' of Dickens's father as Wilkins Micawber in *David Copperfield* to be 'infinitely more real' than the man himself, a statement that is reminiscent of the speculative realist literary theories of Gabriel Markus. Machen's explanation for this preference is illuminating: 'Perhaps, the explanation may be that the historic people are actual people, creatures of fact, not of fancy; and that fancy is infinitely more impressive than fact, partaking, as it does, not of actuality but of reality.'[65]

When it comes to composers, something in us likewise prefers myth to history. In his discussion of Beethoven life-writing, K.M. Knittel proposes that the problem with composer myths is not a lack of awareness of them amongst scholars but rather 'that the myth is so compelling'. Knittel explains how scholars have continued to repeat anecdotes about Beethoven's life despite our having long known them to be false; to recall Carpenter, they

[64] Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.
[65] Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 46-48. Again, compare with Woolf: '…it would seem that the life which is increasingly real to us [in biography] is the fictitious life; it dwells in the personality rather than the act.' For Woolf, the biographer 'has neither the freedom nor the substance of fact' in his art. Like the theory of Markus, Machen's aesthetic 'solves' the insolvability of this problem by simply embracing it. See 'The New Biography', 122-123.

overlook inconvenient truths in order to get at 'a kind of truth.'[66] Our understanding and appreciation of Beethoven's music seems to demand complicity in a fabrication that, in its objective, represents 'something more than a simple opposition of truth and falsehood.' The result of this procedure is a kind of pseudo-biography that, as Carl Dahlhaus explained, provides a cryptogram for 'insight' into Beethoven's music.[67]

As both a method of transmission and as a legitimizing force, biography is a powerful determinant in this landscape. It is significant that Taruskin places the blame for the perhaps unmanageable descent of Mozart's image from Romantic legend to 'glorified…boorish bumpkin' on a biography: Wolfgang Hildesheimer's *Mozart* (1977).[68] Biographies filter a subject into the public space, and, however earnest or honest its intent, a biography executed in the 'improper' tone can desecrate its subject. This makes biographers examples of what Bourdieu called *symbolic bankers*, meaning those who 'trade in the sacred'. Like a biographer, the symbolic banker is 'the creator of the creator [i.e., the artist]'. In the context of bourgeois culture, it is vital that these individuals regulate their subject's publicity so that it never becomes 'sordidly commercial'.[69] From this perspective, it is a lack of discretion in the field of promotion that causes figures like Taruskin's Mozart to 'turn yuppie'. By way of damage control, the challenge becomes how one might defamiliarize a composer in order to restore his or her consecrated status.[70]

---

[66] K.M. Knittel, 'The Construction of Beethoven', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 116-117.
[67] Dahlhaus (1989), 75-81.
[68] Hildesheimer's book is one of the first texts to have been described as 'metabiography'. See Edward Saunders, 'Defining Metabiography in Historical Perspective: Between Biomyths and Documentary', *Biography*, 38.3 (Summer 2015), 325-342.
[69] Bourdieu (1993), 76-77.
[70] Taruskin (1995), 263-272.

In an effort to avoid over-exposure and retain aesthetic legitimacy, a curious phenomenon emerges among weird practitioners: a balancing act between images of the artist as both a success and failure that is endemic to the genre. In Britain, the cultural roots of this phenomenon have been traced by Peter D. McDonald to publishing practices of the 1890s. The commercial battle enacted by the divide between small avant-garde publishing firms and large public ones formed the basis for an aesthetic feud about the nature of legitimate artistic value and identity. Published by smaller firms such as John Lane, Elkin Matthews, and Martin Secker, weird fiction of the *fin de siecle* is an example of what McDonald describes as a genre that 'measure[s] value primarily, if not exclusively, in aesthetic terms.' Weird culture rejects the hierarchy of popular commercial value in favour of an exclusive critical system where the only legitimate success comes from within one's own industry – from 'peers or accredited connoisseurs.'[71]

This goes some way towards explaining the unusual relationship that Machen and Ireland had with failure, its subsequent effect on their artist-images, and the challenges it presents for biography. Both men were obsessed with failure and made calculated efforts to be perceived as such. Machen cast all of his published works as failed ventures. He considered his prose style defective, blaming himself for having 'clumsily' transliterated 'awe, at worst awfulness' into a kind of literature that could too easily be misconstrued by uninitiated readers as 'evil'.[72] He spoke at various stages of a lifelong ambition to craft a truly 'great book'. It was an ambition that admittedly 'languished', but even if the project had materialized, Machen still expected that he would have somehow failed: '...it would not

[71] Peter D. McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice: 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13-14.
[72] Machen, (1922), 123-124.

have been a great book if it had been ever so prosperously continued and ended' but rather 'a curious book'.[73] Machen often referred to the 'gulf between the idea…and its cold and faulty realisation in words'.[74] He lamented 'the sorrowful consideration of how much lower is the book than the dream behind it.'[75] Age only sharpened this realization. In a 1924 letter to the author Colin Summerford, Machen gave a bleak assessment of his own achievement: 'It is very bad; and very sad for me. You in your day will find out the misery of failing or failed powers.'[76] He lampooned himself as 'a past master in the Lodge of Disappointment'.[77] Whatever 'minor' success he may achieve, time gradually reveals to the artist the undeniable fact of 'his final sorrow': the chasm 'between the emotion that thrilled him to his very heart and soul, and the sorry page of print into which that emotion stands translated.' As Machen summarized, 'We dream in fire, we work in clay.'[78]

Machen reiterated many of these points in his correspondence with Ireland, whose ostensible pessimism he shared. A quotation from John Dryden included in one of Machen's letters to Ireland serves as a fitting epigraph for the tone of their exchanges regarding creativity and success: 'Do not from the dregs of life hope to receive what the first sprightly running could not give.'[79] In their exchanges, Machen likened the misery that overhung his creative life to 'waves' of 'heavy sorrow' that 'tumbled into wreck and ruin', leaving him despondent: 'when the end comes, I am too bruised and broken to take any pleasure in it.' In the same letter, he used the metaphor from *Far Off Things* again: 'By this time, I hope you have brought your work to a happy and triumphant end. As happy and triumphant that is, as

[73] Ibid, 8.
[74] Ibid, 100-101.
[75] Machen (1993), 22.
[76] Quoted in Valentine (1995), 119.
[77] Machen (1918), 12.
[78] Machen (1922), 100-101.
[79] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (27 September 1937) fol. 7.

any work can be here below: one dreams of living flame and makes images of dead clay.'[80] Almost precisely a year later, Machen commiserated with Ireland about the 'painful' nature of art, this time likening it to one of the 'savage sports.'[81]

This is all despite the fact that Machen *was* a commercial and critical success. James Machin has documented thoroughly how Machen's classification as a 'lost writer' is utterly inaccurate. Machen's most celebrated texts have never been out of print; during his lifetime, he was a well-known public figure; his work received endorsements from some of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century's leading writers (Oscar Wilde, Jorge Luis Borges, Henry Miller, etc.); and, as noted previously, his financial compensation was nothing like the poverty he claimed to suffer. In the twenty-first century, Machen continues to cast a long shadow on contemporary culture, with his work being promoted by popular figures as diverse as Stephen King and Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury.[82] As such, the reasoning behind Machen's projection as an unfairly neglected writer must be reconsidered.

Ireland occupies the similarly problematic condition of being routinely regarded as a marginalized figure who was simultaneously one of the most widely recognised English composers of his generation and whose popularity has continued to flourish in the twenty-first century. In some ways, Ireland's own claim to being a marginalized composer was never entirely valid despite the continuing trend of critics to describe him as 'forgotten' and 'undeservedly neglected'.[83] Ireland remained a public figure from the sensational premiere of his second violin sonata in 1917 until his death in 1962. His work was performed and promoted by some of the twentieth century's most prominent musicians, including John

[80] Ibid (14 December 1933), fol. 3.
[81] Ibid (13 December 1934), fol. 4.
[82] Machin (2018), 125-134.
[83] See 'Composer of the Week: John Ireland', BBC Radio 3, 18 June 2014.

Barbirolli, Adrian Boult, Benjamin Britten, Clifford Curzon, Percy Grainger, Yehudi Menuhin, Peter Pears, and Arthur Rubinstein. As the footnotes of the present thesis have documented, Ireland was the subject during his lifetime of numerous articles, lectures, broadcasts, and concerts both in England and abroad.

Ireland's evidently unfounded reputation as a neglected composer began with himself. He regarded himself as a failure: 'Looking back, I think my life has been pretty much a failure. I have not been really successful in any direction – either as a Church musician, a teacher, an executant[,] or a composer.'[84] His letters are littered with similarly self-denigrating comments. He portrays himself as 'not a composer of the first rank' and 'a minor composer…[with] only a limited amount to give to the world';[85] a composer who has 'failed to reach the general public' and who in any case does not 'have anything more to say';[86] a 'completely ignored and forgotten' man who 'has quite ceased to count, except as a writer of one or two songs and piano pieces – and <u>one</u> popular hymn-tune!'[87]

Ireland's explanations for his failure varied. He blamed the fact that he had 'never been at all a prolific composer'[88]; if composers did not continue to produce new material, then 'one is likely to get put entirely on the shelf'.[89] He blamed audiences; his music was 'limited in its appeal'[90]; its 'Victorian' and 'Edwardian' manner was stylistically anathema to an 'atomic age' that 'doesn't lend itself to art';[91] and, as noted in Chapter One, 'it does not

[84] MS. 60535 (27 February 1944), fol. 77.
[85] Ibid (13 January 1949), fol. 86.
[86] MS. 60535 (6 September 1944), fol. 78.
[87] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (22 July 1955), fol. 66.
[88] MS. 60535 (8 March 1943), fol. 71.
[89] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (4 March 1950), fol. 117.
[90] MS. 60536 (22 October 1952), fol. 36.
[91] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (February1954) [exact day unspecified], fol. 32. Arthur Bliss recalled the difficulty he encountered in convincing Ireland to perform his own music: 'He seemed to have convinced himself that his music could not possibly interest a post-war audience.' Bliss described Ireland's behaviour as a kind of 'morbid distrust in his own ability.' See Arthur Bliss, *As I Remember* (London: Thames Publishing, 1989), 54.

appeal to women' who 'form the majority of listeners'.[92] He blamed his having failed to produce more large-scale orchestral works[93] and what he believed to be a peculiarly English tendency to regard a composer who writes 'well for the piano' as merely a 'miniaturist' whose others compositions 'don't count for much': 'If Chopin were alive, I expect he would be regarded as a miniaturist in this country!!'[94]

He blamed the radio industry. In 1950, when Maurice Johnstone was appointed Head of Music at the B.B.C., Ireland commented that 'It will not do me much good, quite the contrary', going on to imply that Johnstone, as a 'minor and disappointed' composer himself, would be disinclined to promote Ireland's music out of petty jealousy.[95] If it was not the radio industry, then it was the medium itself: when Ireland's music was broadcast on the radio, he complained about the performance issues in his music that made it, in his opinion, incompatible with modern technology. Reacting to a broadcast of *The Forgotten Rite*, Ireland wrote that his music 'does not broadcast well' because 'it is too intimate in character, and [it] moves too slowly'. Radio transmission, he explained, 'is really only suitable for music of the most extrovert kind'.[96] Ireland had made similar comments two years earlier regarding the same piece:

> Anyhow, The Forgotten Rite is useless over wireless: the Rite does not happen at all over a machine – you must be present to be conscious of what is created by the sounds – the actual real sounds, I mean – of the instruments. The Rite is a religious ceremony – and you can't hear that by wireless telephony![97]

[92] MS. 60535 (25 November 1943), fol. 75.
[93] Ibid.
[94] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (3 June 1955), fol. 61.
[95] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (16 May 1950), fol. 12. Ireland reiterates this assessment of Johnstone fourteen months later. See MS. 60535 (29 July 1951), fol. 6.
[96] MS. 60535 (15 November 1951), fol. 15.
[97] Ibid (23 January 1949), fol. 90.

In bitterer moments, Ireland resorted to racial, religious, and political conspiracy theories involving the British Council and the Arts Council to explain their purported lack of support for his work during the 1940s and 1950s:

> …I am not surprised to find the whole thing is a colossal piece of jobbery and corruption…[I]f you are not inside this ring of musical gangsters and conspirators, there is not a hope for you if you are a composer. They have no use for such as Bax or myself, who are neither Jews, Communists, or Roman Catholics, and have not spent our lives licking the right a***-holes [sic]. Without at least <u>one</u> of the above qualifications, you can stop in the garden and eat worms till the cows come home. If you can boast of two or three, or best of all, the lot, you will be knighted, obtain wide publicity, and become a lavish surtax-payer.[98]

The litany of excuses is unremitting. Each iteration positions Ireland as a neglected figure against whom the status quo and the establishment forces are hell-bent.

Of course, many of Ireland's protestations do not hold up under scrutiny. His demonization of the B.B.C., for example, is not supported by the public record. Following Maurice Johnstone's appointment, Ireland's music continued to be broadcast and was included in every year of the B.B.C. Proms during the 1950s. His statement in 1951 that '<u>one</u> of the <u>best</u> names – i.e. my own' had been omitted from the programme of the following year's Proms is demonstrably false. Ireland would in fact have four compositions performed in the 1952 Proms, following the six that had been performed in 1951. One is astonished to note that Ireland's *Piano Concerto* was performed at the Proms *every year* from its premiere in 1933 until 1959. Johnstone's appointment may not have expanded Ireland's reach, but neither did it diminish it.[99]

---

[98] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (20 August 1952), fol. 8. Later in this letter, Ireland predicts that Longmire, then living in New Zealand, will soon become acquainted with Peter Racine Fricker (1920-1990), a composer whose reputation Ireland described as growing 'rapidly' and threatening 'to take some of Britten's share of the limelight.' Ireland illustrated Fricker thusly: 'He is between thirty and forty, I believe. Said to be a Jew and a Communist.'

[99] MS. 60536 (29 July 1951), fol. 6. For a record of Ireland's performances at the Proms and for a more balanced picture of Ireland's relationship with the B.B.C., see Lewis Foreman, 'John Ireland and the BBC' in Foreman (2011), 79-115. Ireland is also identified as one of numerous British composers who benefited from national,

There is an amusing incongruity about a composer who claims to be a failure for reasons such as his being 'not a composer of the first rank' and a hopeless reactionary yet who also describes himself as 'one of the best names' in British music. Similarly, while he conceded that he may not have been a 'great composer', Ireland nevertheless insisted that he was at least 'a significant one.'[100] There is further disparity between Ireland's close relationships with various professional organizations and high-ranking individuals within the industry and his description of himself as a composer who was 'quite out of touch with the musical world.'[101] Composers who are offered knighthoods are bold to depict themselves as devastatingly side-lined.

In an interview conducted by the Canadian composer and musicologist R. Murray Schafer, Ireland seemed to contradict his narrative of self-pity entirely. He claimed to have had no regrets about having not composed more large-scale works, he insisted that he was not bothered by his lack of productivity in later years, and he did not begrudge the fact that 'fashions have changed so much lately' and revealed him to be unable to write in a more contemporary idiom 'with anything approaching sincerity.' In his concluding questions, Schafer returned to this thread:

> SCHAFER: Are you satisfied with what you have accomplished?
> IRELAND: Oh, well, yes, I suppose so. It's very difficult to say exactly. I've not written a great many large-scale works[,] but I have always written what I wanted to write when I had something to say, and have always tried to express myself sincerely.
> SCHAFER: Have you any complaints?
> IRELAND: Complaints? Oh no. I listen to everything that is new and find a good deal of it interesting. Whether I could say I really like it or not is another matter. At least I'm still keenly interested in musical trends.[102]

---

propagandistic programming during the interwar period in Emily C. Hoyer, *Broadcasting Englishness: National Music in Interwar BBC Periodicals* (DPhil Thesis: Northwestern University, 2016), 216-268.

[100] Quoted in Bruce Philips, 'John Ireland: A Personal Discovery' in Foreman (2011), 20.

[101] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (February 1954) [exact day unspecified], fol. 32.

[102] Murray Schafer, 'Interview with John Ireland', in Foreman (2011), 60-61.

Just as the cultural rarity of an object increases its economic value, the aesthetic value of art in the politics of bourgeois culture is often inversely proportional to the size of its audience. Exclusivity is an aesthetic virtue. The same may be said of artists themselves. However sweeping their material success actually is, the legitimate capital of an artist – the prestige or authority that funds what Bourdieu calls an artist's 'capital of consecration' – entails a calculated effort by concerned parties to make the artist *seem* marginal.[103]

It is significant that Ireland felt it necessary to provide so many different excuses throughout his life for problems that were arguably non-existent and that his various assessments of his own achievement are often contradictory. It suggests that Ireland is not imparting an honest evaluation of his situation but instead crafting a narrative that aligns with the type of exclusive legacy he wants to maintain. Machen's contradictory comments on his own 'failure' invite similar scepticism. In 1924, Machen published *Precious Balms*, a collection of negative reviews of his work that he had compiled over decades. He alleged to be 'uplifted' by negative reviews: 'I treasure [them] with reverent care.'[104] In a letter to Ireland, Machen testified to the disappointments of their craft but hastened to add that one still at times finds 'a pleasure and strange satisfaction in the work.'[105]

This is the tension among weird artists between their desire for material gratification from the public and for a legitimization conferred by exclusive class sectors. This kind of legitimacy, corresponding to bourgeois taste, was defined by Bourdieu as 'the consecration bestowed by the dominant fractions of the dominant class and by private tribunals.' The issue for weird artists and connoisseurs is that the size of an audience is often considered inversely

[103] Bourdieu (1993), 48.
[104] Machen (1923), 118-122.
[105] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (13 December 1934), fol. 4.

proportional to its *social quality*. Bourdieu wrote of the negative relationship between economic profit and 'symbolic profit': as the popularity of an artist's work grows and the competence of its average consumer consequently declines, the symbolic value of the artist's work often decreases.[106] In other words, the consecration of an artist is made possible by virtue of his or her restricted audience.

This negative relationship is especially pronounced in genres associated with connoisseur culture, of which weird fiction is a preeminent example. In part, weird fiction is a genre defined by its opposition to large-scale production and dissemination. James Machin has written brilliantly on this subject, explaining how connoisseurs, publishers, and critics of weird fiction ('a dedicated and dogged cognoscenti') have played an active role in maintaining Machen's aura of neglect and his aloofness.[107] This is again despite the fact that Machen no longer qualifies as a 'lost writer', if indeed he ever did.

In his introduction to a collection of Machen's work for Oxford University Press, Aaron Worth writes that Machen is nowadays broadly considered to be 'a foundational figure', perhaps '*the* foundational figure', in the formation of modern horror fiction. Worth contends that the reason for this regard has less to do with popular acclaim than 'aristocratic consensus': 'Machen is, as Dante said of Aristotle, a ''maestro di color che sanno'' – a master of those who know, a high priest retroactively canonized by later practitioners of his weird art.' As Machen's popular success continues to grow in the twenty-first century, however, Machen's 'acolytes' find themselves at risk of ceding their 'propriety claims' on both him and his work.[108] The protective activities that result from this risk may be traced back for

[106] Bourdieu (1993), 48-51.
[107] Machin (2018), 130-134.
[108] Aaron Worth, 'Introduction', in Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), xi.

decades. Early biographical sketches of Machen were criticized for failing to unwrap the subject, reminding readers 'how puzzling a figure Machen actually is' and leading one to suspect whether maintaining obfuscation of the author was the intention.[109] Wesley D. Sweetser, one of Machen's 'acolytes', criticized other writers for presenting Machen's biography in terms that he considered overly factual. These writers, according to Sweetser, make the mistake of disregarding Machen's advice: they look to the 'surface realities' rather than the 'true realities' within the biographical subject, and their studies therefore fail to 'transmute the dross of fact into the essence of spirit.'[110]

In Bourdieu's parlance, it is the exclusivity of weird art, sustained by a restricted audience, that sparks not only its prestige but its creator's 'charismatic legitimation'. Only through the mediation of weird material by dominant fractions who are dominant by virtue of their being private can the artist qualify for consecration.[111] Thus, in the words of John Longmire, Ireland is cast as a figure who is beyond the understanding of the general public: his art and person can only speak to initiated connoisseurs – to those with ''ears to hear.''[112]

In this context, for both Machen and Ireland, the process of consecration may be traced back to the artist himself. The disinterestedness and contempt of Machen and Ireland towards their own work fosters part of their appeal to the connoisseur, laying the foundation for a narrative of neglect and misunderstanding that may be taken up by 'acolytes'. Nothing else convincingly explains the consensus that 'Ireland has never sought popularity', the demonstrably false statement that '[Ireland] has, with few exceptions, not found it', or the

[109] Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Review: *Arthur Machen* by Wesley D. Sweetser', *The Modern Language Review*, 62.1 (January 1967), 123.
[110] Wesley D. Sweetser, 'Review of *Arthur Machen: Surface Realities and Essence of Spirit* by Aidan Reynolds and William Charlton', *English Literature in Transition*, 7.1 (1 January 1964), 40-41.
[111] Bourdieu (1993), 50-51.
[112] Longmire, 6.

self-sabotaging propaganda of Ireland's own words.[113] Nothing else convincingly explains the aridity that Machen felt towards those 'monotonous song[s] of praise' for his work as contrasted with the 'opposition' towards him which he defined as 'one of the chiefest [sic] zests and relishes of life'.[114] Symbolic capital is something that is gained through disavowal. The weird artist is legitimized by their rejection of economic or political capital, a move that allows them to subsequently use economic or political institutions as scapegoats.[115] Machen's elation comes from the belief that, through the restriction of his audience, he is preserving his legacy for those who are deemed worthy. Machen and Ireland made short-term rejections that they hoped would yield long-term gains, but only gains of a certain kind.

Knighthood

Nowhere is this pursuit of a legitimate marginality more pronounced than in Ireland's peculiar quest to obtain a civic honour, a story that involves elements of curatorship, mischaracterization, and self-negation. Civic honours become a frequent topic of conversation in Ireland's correspondence from 1950 until 1959. The first extended reference to the topic appears in a letter to John Longmire in which Ireland catalogues at considerable length artists, both living and dead, who held knighthoods or peerages. He concludes the

[113] Peter Crossley-Holland, 'John Ireland', ed. Lewis Foreman, in *Manchester Sounds*, Vol. 4 (2007-2008), ed. David Fallows (Manchester: The Manchester Musical Heritage Trust, 2008), 65. It is important to note that Ireland saw the proofs for this article and made editorial comments in his correspondence with Crossley-Holland. Tension between English composer and public is not exclusive to Ireland, of course, but the reason in this context is unusual. Compare Ireland's case with that of Elgar, whose attitude towards popularization was not restrictive but educational, calling for investment in civic institutions so that music, including his own, could have an ''ennobling'' effect on the general public – this is an elevation of audience rather than a sieving of it. See Leon Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography: The Cultural Context of Sir Edward Elgar's Career', in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 310-311.
[114] Arthur Machen, *Precious Balms* (London: Spurr & Swift, 1924), x.
[115] Bourdieu (1993), 75-76.

letter by writing that, 'I expect I shall remain plain J.I. (D. Mus.)…to the end of my days.' To this, Ireland adds that he does not 'really much care, now' about this rebuff, a remark that becomes increasingly unconvincing as the letters progress.[116]

Ireland's correspondence is often marked by cynicism and by a begrudging attitude towards the success of his contemporaries, but Ireland reserves some of his most vitriolic language for musicians who are holders of a knighthood or a peerage. In 1950, following a visit to Arnold Bax in Storrington, Ireland described the Master of the King's Music, a title that Bax had held since 1942, as 'bloated' and discoloured, features that Ireland jokingly surmised to be the 'result of Devonshire air; he expressed some incredulity that such a disreputable figure ('Eh-das Bax devil?') had managed to secure a knighthood.[117]

Ireland's epistolary style evolved to reflect his attitude. When referencing knighted musicians in his letters, even if only in passing, Ireland developed a habit of always prefacing their names with 'Sir'. As time progressed, this 'Sir' became underlined,[118] or written in capital letters, and at times both.[119] In an amusing letter from 1950, Ireland made a word-game out of the fact that Arnold Bax, Arthur Bliss, and Adrian Boult shared the initials 'AB':

> What do you think of <u>Sir</u> Arthur Bliss?
> Sir Arnold Bax = Sir AB
> Sir Arthur Bliss – Sir AB
> Sir AB = Sir AB
> AB X AB
> = $(AB)^2$ = (AB squared)

[116] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (26 January 1950), fol. 112.
[117] Ibid (16 May 1950), fol. 122. No mention in Ireland's surviving correspondence is made of Bax's election in 1953 to the Royal Victorian Order.
[118] See, for example, MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (6 August 1951), fol. 183, where Ireland refers to multiple composers as '<u>Sir</u>'.
[119] See Ibid (13 November 1951), fol. 191 and John Ireland, letter to MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (23 April 1953), fol. 19, both of which include references to '<u>SIR</u> William Walton'.

> Find the values of A + B expressed in terms of cash. As there is also a Sir Adrian Boult, there is another Sir AB. Therefore, I suggest forming an AB Society for the promotion of back-scratching activities.[120]

Ireland disapproved or was perhaps simply jealous of the obsequious efforts he assumed to be behind each civic honour. He was particularly disdainful of composers who actively sought civic honours. He accused Benjamin Britten of 'trying hard' to be 'hand in glove with Royalty' in order to inherit the Order of Merit left vacant by Vaughan Williams's death in 1958.[121] Of course, the hypocrisy of this stance is exposed by the fact that the entire movement to get Ireland a civic honour was orchestrated by Norah Kirby.

Upon reading the announcement of a knighthood for a fellow composer, Ireland often described his reaction as somewhat divided. In 1951, following the knighthood of William Walton, Ireland professed to be both 'rather taken aback' yet also unsurprised: '…I suppose one might have expected it!'[122] With each knighthood that was awarded to someone else, Ireland believed his own probability of ever receiving one to be dwindling. His contemporaries and immediate predecessors had after all been considerably younger when they received their honours: Granville Bantock (62), Bax (54), Bliss (59), George Dyson (58), Elgar (47), Howells (61), Hubert Parry (50), Charles Stanford (50), Arthur Sullivan (41), Vaughan Williams (63), Walton (49), etc. By the time civic honours were first mentioned in his surviving correspondence, Ireland was already in his eighth decade.

---

[120] The initial '<u>Sir</u>' given to Arthur Bliss is actually underlined by two pen-strokes. MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (19 July 1950), fol. 132.

[121] MS. 60536 (19 October 1958), fol. 134.

[122] To this he added, 'I suppose Britten will be next'. Ireland included a press cutting about William Walton's knighthood (1951) with this letter. See MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (1 January 1951), fol. 151. In 1952, he made a similar statement, writing that he considered Herbert Howells's knighthood to be imminent and claiming to have heard 'rumours' that it would be announced by the following year. See MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (24 September 1952), fol. 10.

Ireland variously expressed resentment, indifference, and confusion regarding these knighthoods. His gibes are frequently punctuated by an almost comical insistence that he did not 'really mind very much.'[123] A typical example of his consternation may be gleaned from his comparison of Britten's success with the establishment versus his own relative neglect:

> Not that I mind very much, but I wonder why!! I have not consciously made enemies in the musical profession, yet something of that kind must be the explanation of my exclusion from the recipients of all civic honours. During the last 50 years practically every British composer of any distinction has eventually been offered [a] knighthood.[124]

In 1956, Ireland continued to despair that he would 'ever be offered any civic honour', and he specified, for the first time, that he considered the Order of Merit to be 'the only one worth having'.[125] From this point onwards, the Order of Merit becomes the sole focus of Ireland's correspondence on civic honours. This sudden shift in the letters is curious. Along with the contradictory opinions towards civic honours that he expressed and his hypocritical perspective about their attainment, it complicates Ireland's narrative of the affair.

Specifically, given his ambivalent relationship with civic honours and those who held them, one must also consider the possibility that Ireland never actually wanted a civic honour. The fact that he discussed knighthoods for six years in his correspondence without ever enumerating that what he really wanted was an Order of Merit, and that he would accept nothing less, raises suspicions. Why did the narrative change in 1956? As more of Ireland's contemporaries were awarded knighthoods, he may have felt the possibility of being offered this civic honour himself to have been uncomfortably probable if in fact it was a distinction he did not actually want. This would explain his sudden specification that the highly

[123] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (1 January 1951), fol. 151. Ireland is talking again about William Walton.
[124] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (February 1954) [exact day unspecified], fol. 32.
[125] John Ireland, letter to Kenneth Thompson, 23 December 1956.

improbable Order of Merit was the only civic honour 'worth having', a stance for which there is otherwise no explanation offered in the record. Significantly, Ireland observes in this same letter that the Order of Merit would remain unattainable 'as long as V.W. is alive.'[126] In a way, Vaughan Williams's possession of an Order of Merit safe-guarded Ireland's self-image by providing him with an excuse for why he himself had not received this distinction and allowing him to remain the underappreciated, anti-establishment composer. Being only seven years younger, it was not guaranteed that Ireland would outlive Vaughan Williams, and despite his light-hearted jest that he 'fully expected' Vaughan Williams 'would live to write nine more symphonies,' Ireland's 'shocked response' to the latter's death in 1958 appears to have been genuine.[127]

There is reason to suspect that Ireland may not even have confided his actual intentions for civic honours to Norah Kirby. In a letter to George Parker in 1958, Norah claimed that several individuals had attempted to secure the Order of Merit for Ireland ten years previously, only to be told by the government that 'only one [Order of Merit] would be available for music' at any given time. As Kirby went on to explain, the recent death of Vaughan Williams had renewed their effort.[128] Two days prior, however, in a letter reflecting on Vaughan Williams's death, Ireland was already predicting that not only would Vaughan

[126] MS. 60536 (23 December 1956), fol. 110. The Order of Merit is limited to being held by twenty-four individuals at any one time.
[127] Ibid (4 September 1958), fol. 130.
[128] London, British Library, John Ireland: Norah Kirby Papers, MS. Mus. 1749/4 (6 September 1958), fol. 76. There is no surviving evidence for this characterization of the situation (i.e., that Ireland had sought the Order of Merit rather than a knighthood from the beginning) other than Norah's letter. It is somewhat contradicted by a typed letter from Kenneth Thompson to Harold Macmillan, then the Prime Minister, seven years prior which makes no mention of the Order of Merit. Thompson was one of Ireland's most intimate correspondents and a frequent confidante; had Ireland considered a common knighthood to have been beneath him, Thompson almost certainly would have framed his letter of support to reflect this. See Ibid (22 January 1951), fol. 23.

Williams's 'mantle' not be passed onto him, but that he did not wish to assume it: 'It just wouldn't fit, as it is too bulky.'[129]

Even this strategy of seeking an Order of Merit rather than a knighthood is somewhat dubious. When Norah approached him to solicit a letter of support, Peter Pears cautioned her in October 1958 about requesting an O.M. rather than a C.B.E., explaining that there was a distinct possibility the request would be denied.[130] This may have been the whole point for Ireland. Furthermore, with the once supposedly unreachable Order of Merit now within the realm of possibility, however remote, Ireland was already rehearsing lines for yet another shift: 'Did you know that A.E. Housman…actually refused the Order of Merit when it was offered to him?'[131] This is not the language one would expect from a man with a suddenly 'renewed' drive to obtain this civic honour, suggesting as it does the possibility that Ireland himself might have acted the same as Housman.

It is important to note that in his first surviving letter to mention civic honours, Ireland was already contemplating whether he was ultimately unfit for any public recognition; he agreed with Longmire that the latter was 'maybe right in pointing out the obstacle to my being given any recognition of that kind.'[132] This close proximity of unquestionable suitability and implausible success is reflected in the letters of support that were sent to government officials on Ireland's behalf. By November 1958, Norah claimed that fifty-two people had already written letters of support for Ireland's candidacy, including herself, John Longmire, Kenneth Thompson, John Barbirolli, Eugene Goossens, Alan Rawsthorne, George

[129] MS. 60536 (4 September 1958), fol. 130.
[130] MS. Mus. 1749/4 (30 October 1958), fol. 109. Norah's reply to Pears claimed that her Member of Parliament had advised her to specifically request an O.M. See Norah Kirby, letter to Peter Pears, 8 November 1958.
[131] MS. 60536 (4 September 1958), fol. 130.
[132] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (26 January 1950), fol. 112. The obstacle is not stated, but one assumes that it refers to Ireland's sexuality.

Parker, Peter Pears, and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji.[133] Guided by Norah, Ireland was portrayed by these individuals as 'our greatest (and senior) composer', a teacher of significance, and 'the Stanford of his generation' to whom public recognition was long outstanding.[134] Even Maurice Johnstone – the Head of Programming for the BBC, an organisation with which Ireland did not, as previously noted, enjoy a cloudless relationship – condescended to describe a formal public recognition of Ireland as 'scandalously overdue'.[135] Sorabji's letter to 10 Downing Street hailed Ireland as 'the greatest of living English composers' and the 'undoubted doyen' following the death of Vaughan Williams the previous month.[136] Yet even in these letters of support, the excuses for Ireland's lack of recognition were being prematurely given. Ireland was described as 'in every way a suitable candidate' for a civic honour whose music, though various, was 'deeply felt and moving' and including 'some beautiful and excellent Church music'; but he was nonetheless 'in many cases too serious to be immediately popular'.[137] The most awkward letter of support came from Kenneth Thompson who speculated at-length why Ireland had not already received a civic honour. Thompson provided two reasons: Ireland's divorce and rumours of his having entertained 'communist sympathies'. Though Thompson proceeded to object to both potential reasons as untrue, the mentioning of them at all in a letter of support for such a distinguished and politically sensitive honour is striking.[138]

[133] MS. Mus. 1749/4 (8 November 1958), fol. 110.
[134] MS. Mus. 1749/4 (6 September 1958), fol. 76.
[135] Ibid (10 October 1958), fol. 4.
[136] Ibid (9 September 1958), fol. 115.
[137] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (6 November 1958), fol. 122.
[138] MS. Mus. 1749/4 (22 January 1951), fol. 39.

When Ireland was finally offered a C.B.E in 1958, he declined, thus contradicting every reference to the subject in his correspondence prior to 1956.[139] To Longmire, Ireland concurred with his local Member of Parliament that it was 'a damned insult' and that such honours were demeaned by being regularly doled out to persons of far inferior achievement: 'even the Nursey man' in Ireland's constituency had managed to secure a C.B.E. merely by 'sitting on some charitable committee', or so Ireland alleged. Ireland was indignant: 'Fancy offering me the C.B.E. in my 80th year.'[140] Four weeks later, he denounced the government for their 'impudence' in offering him this lesser honour, characteristically hastening to add, 'Not that I value those things', and again reminding his recipient that Housman had 'declined the O.M.'[141]

In the end, the civic honours affair provided Ireland with just what was needed: first, a slew of supporting statements from distinguished individuals that lent credence to his belief that he was a 'significant' composer who deserved an accolade, and second, an opportunity to claim that, once again, he had been unjustly slighted by 'the Powers That Be' in a situation that was ultimately beyond his control.[142] Ireland could therefore retain his self-image as a misunderstood, underappreciated artist and increase his symbolic capital. In a manner

[139] The letter declining the proposed honour was written by Norah Kirby to the private secretary of 10 Downing Street on Ireland's behalf. It conspicuously lists all of Ireland's titles: 'D MUS, HON R.A.M., F.R.C.M., F.R.C.O.' MS. Mus. 1749/4 (29 November 1958), fol. 86.

[140] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (3 December 1958), fol. 123. In 1959, six months after this affair, Ireland was still chronicling the civic honours of others in his correspondence. He noted that Peter Pears and Herbert Dawson, the organist of Saint Margaret's Church (Westminster) were 'amongst the hundreds of nobodies' granted an O.B.E. in the Birthday Honours. He concluded by quoting W.S. Gilbert from *The Gondoliers*: 'When everybody's somebody, then no-one's anybody.' MS. 60536 (28 June 1959), fol. 140. Ireland's characterization is unfair. One recalls the many distinguished English composers who were never offered a civic honour, including York Bowen, Frank Bridge, Gerald Finzi, Gustav Holst, Ernest John Moeran, and Cyril Scott.

[141] MS. 60536 (30 December 1958), fol. 136.

[142] The sense that Ireland was owed this honour appears throughout Norah's correspondence. In the same letter to Pears, she claimed that the Order of Merit was 'the only possible amends' that the government could make for Ireland's lack of prior recognition. See MS. Mus. 1749/4 (8 November 1958), fol. 110. To George Parker, she stated that 'this belated recognition can best be made by the above-mentioned award [i.e. the O.M.]'. See MS. Mus. 1749/4 (6 September 1958), fol. 76.

notably similar to that of Machen and other weird artists, it was a way of trying to reconcile the tension in Ireland's self-image of being both esteemed and obscure – a distinguished outsider.

There is more at stake in this affair than mere vanity. A civic honour is not merely an award for the individual recipient. A civic honour is an admittance of the recipient into the fold of the state; it claims the recipient as a representative of the nation through his or her individual achievements. It is a writing of the individual into the nation's biography. However unintentionally, Ireland's rejection of the C.B.E. is a statement about both his identity and preferred biographical image.

It is important to understand the kind of life-narrative that Ireland is renouncing here because biography, myth-making, and national identity are closely intertwined. The myths that are told about composers – most often anecdotes from their biography that are transformed into tales of cultural significance through repeated telling and variation – are products of the time and national concerns of the biographer.[143] Isaiah Berlin's identification of 'the exfoliation of a particular self' as the central concern of Romantic imagination acknowledges these same political and national implications within the individual-collective dynamic. The self is grafted onto 'some super-personal entity' (i.e. Church or State) that reduces and, if necessary, re-shapes the individual personality into one of many components that support a larger, 'more historically persistent personality.'[144]

One must be careful not to mistake an argument for Ireland's mythologization as a wish for his inclusion in the idealized fold of national biography. This would be to overlook

[143] For example, see Christopher Wiley, 'Myth-Making and the Politics of Nationality in Narratives of J.S. Bach's 1717 Contest with Louis Marchand', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 38.2-4 (2019), 193-215.
[144] Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 109.

the fact that elevation for Machen and Ireland is not about acceptance but about removal – it is about otherness. Additionally, Ireland's own characterization of his country would not help biographers seeking to portray him in a national-myth manner. His comments in this area are as problematic as his criticism of English institutions. A letter to Longmire from 1944 gives an example of the unease Ireland felt when forced to remain in England during the Second World War:

> I am extremely anxious to get back to Guernsey, and to St. Stephen's – in fact, I would be quite happy to do the work there for nothing, if that is necessary. One would be so very much happier there that I do not think one would mind taking on a modest salary. I do hope you will not change your mind about this [i.e. their plans to move to Guernsey after the war], as it really is all I am living for. This country is horrible, and will be much worse after the war. I may not have many years to live, and I want to spend such as there are in the Channel Islands. I have no ties in England at all – except yourself.[145]

After the war, Ireland's perspective did not change. In 1946, he confessed that he would 'feel…better off in Guernsey, away from all this.'[146] It was not only the scenery and quietude of Guernsey that attracted Ireland but also specifically its un-Englishness. A 1947 postcard from The Royal Hotel in Guernsey – decorated in the top right corner by a map of England, the Channel Islands, and France – features a quote from Victor Hugo, underlined by Ireland in red-ink: 'Guernsey is L'ile Bicheureuse – a fragment of France dropped into the sea, picked up by England, and whose people are contented and happy.'[147]

Curatorship, Queerness, and Fragments

The disavowal of artists like Ireland and Machen is always suspect because their guided disinterestedness may be read as a bid to gain institutional acceptance or power while

[145] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (1944) [no day or month specified], fol. 40.
[146] Ibid (7 August 1946), fol. 96.
[147] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (4 November 1947), fol. 106.

retaining the prestige of seeming to be above or beyond them. The artist is thus consecrated as an image worthy of symbolic capital – and therefore of a certain economic capital, too, especially among connoisseurs – yet spared the travesty, like Taruskin's Mozart, of going commercial. In the case of biography, this enterprise requires the repression of not only an artist's personal interest in their legacy but also the suppression of material evidence. Restricted evidence is used to explain and legitimize restricted production. Just as an overabundance of popular success condemns the weird artwork as commercial, an overabundance of evidence discredits the weird artist as accessible. In both cases, the public is pruned, and the object/subject retains the allure of exclusivity.

Consequently, the crafting of a narrative extends beyond Ireland's words and into the material record. The 'gaps' to which Foreman and others refer are the result of several potential parties. Most unexceptionally, Ireland moved at various points in his life, most frequently during the 1930s and 1940s, and it has been suggested that these moves were seen as opportunities for 'spring-cleans'.[148] Furthermore, there is a strong suspicion among those who knew Norah Kirby that she trimmed the paper archive (i.e. correspondence and manuscripts) after Ireland's death.[149] Bruce Philips, the former director of the John Ireland Trust, had the opportunity to see a large number of Ireland's papers and manuscripts while spending a summer living with Norah at Rock Mill as an assistant after she suffered a series of strokes and required some domestic assistance. Philips recalls having the impression that some items he had seen during those months were later not present in the archive as inherited

[148] Richards (2000), 6.
[149] Foreman (2011), xxiii.

by the Trust following Norah's death and which therefore do not appear in the John Ireland Collection at the British Library.[150]

Ireland's epistolary conversation is awkwardly one-sided. There is not a single letter in the John Ireland Trust's archive written by Kenneth Thompson to Ireland, or from Longmire, except in rare instances when Thompson and Longmire retained copies of the original. Precisely what happened to these letters, surely not all of which contained incriminating or insensitive information, remains a mystery. In fact, the only correspondence to have been received by Ireland from any individual that was preserved in its entirety for the Trust is that from Machen.[151]

Additionally, there is the fact that Ireland condoned acts of sanitisation by those affiliated with his record. In 1952, Ireland asked Kenneth Thompson if he would consider acting as the executor, emphasizing that 'I should hate the idea of all my papers, letters, etc. passing through the hands of a normal ____ person.'[152] Ireland implies that Thompson would have to not only execute his legal will but also serve as a sympathetic curator of his personal archive. A letter from 1953 was more explicit, asking Thompson to 'please <u>destroy</u>' their correspondence.[153]

There is a limit to an artist's control of their posthumous legacy. Their wishes are reliant on the acquiescence of executors. Michael Millgate observes how it is often a minor figure from the artist's life who comes forward after the artist's death to 'exercise a

[150] Bruce Philips, Personal Interview, 2 March 2020. Philips explains that, because of the legal proceedings involving Norah's estate, Ireland's paper archive was stored for nearly three years in 'a collection of bin bags' at a storeroom in a local police station, and it may also be the case that evidence was unintentionally misplaced during this time.
[151] Ironically, Machen appears to have kept none of Ireland's letters. Machen was notorious for throwing away correspondence. Valentine (2020).
[152] MS. 60536 (30 December 1952), fol. 39.
[153] MS. 60536 (19 June 1953), fol. 45.

substituted intentionality' that is at times difficult or impossible to discriminate from the author's actual wishes.[154] In Ireland's case, that figure was primarily Norah Kirby, but the correspondence with Thompson suggests that other figures were involved in the purge of evidence. This process may even have begun prior to Ireland's death. As Ireland aged and his faculties withered, Norah took increasing control of his activities, including his correspondence. This is evident in the letters 'from John' that appear in the John Ireland Collection from 1959 to 1962 that were written or typed by Norah. How many of these letters were dictated and how many were written on Ireland's 'behalf' is a matter for speculation, lending Ireland's living voice as displaced a quality as its posthumous Doppelgänger.

We will never know how much of Ireland's correspondence that Thompson, Kirby, and others destroyed, but the letters that have survived are often considerably disfigured. Extensive passages in letters, especially from the 1950s, are obscured in black ink, as are the dedicatory words in some of Ireland's musical manuscripts. It is not apparent who carried out these editorial acts.[155] Unsurprisingly, considering the politics of the time, the obliterated passages are often (but not always) framed by references to young boys or Ireland's scathing views regarding heterosexual matrimony, giving some indication as to their content though not of course a definitive one.[156]

---

[154] Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1995), 4.

[155] Lewis Foreman favours accusing Norah Kirby, who 'took it upon herself to destroy any of Ireland's papers which she considered doubtful', resulting in the 'ambivalent' nature of Ireland's sexuality to posthumous commentators. See Foreman (2011), 205.

[156] See, for example, the two excised paragraphs following a reference to 'an old St. Luke's choir boy of mine' in MS. 50356 (19 November 1954), fol. 77; the excised paragraph preceding comments on the dangers of heterosexual matrimony in Ibid (23 December 1956), fol. 110; the five excised paragraphs following references to boys in Ibid (15 December 1957), fol. 120; the excised paragraph following a reference to choirboys in Ibid (28 December 1957), fol. 123; and the excised paragraph in the middle of an extended diatribe on heterosexual matrimony in Ibid (4 May 1958), fol. 126.

Of just as much interest is what has *not* been excised from the record, especially some of the more untoward passages. In a letter posted from Fort Saumerez in Guernsey in 1940, Ireland gave a description of the choir at St. Stephen's, the Anglican church in Saint Peter Port, meticulously separating into different categories and then numbering the boys, teens, adult teens, and men before wistfully noting that 'Boys and men are very difficult to get on this island.' In the succeeding paragraph, he mentions 'Michael'. The eighteen words following Michael's name have been individually excised in black ink, but the letter then resumes unobstructed as follows: '…beautiful, clever[,] and alert, with perfect manners – and he is well educated at one of the best schools here. Not, sadly, musical. But lovely, long, curling eyelashes. Here comes out the stifled paternal instinct!'[157] It does not take much imagination to assume what may be going on here. If Thompson and others had wanted this problematic aspect of Ireland's life completely expunged from the record, they could quite easily have done so. The numerous extant references to Ireland's sexuality in correspondence raise questions as to what kind of legacy for the composer his closest associates were trying to preserve.[158]

Because of these things, the difficulty with Ireland is that he does not fit comfortably into either of these models: a disinfected subject for national biography, or a 'warts and all' subject for popular biography. He is too degenerate to qualify as a subject for national biography, and, despite occasional and brief intimations, there is not enough scandalous or pornographic evidence to satisfy the gossip-hungry preferences of a consumer market.[159]

---

[157] MS. 50535 (25 April 1940), fol. 42. For a similar instance, see Ibid (19 November 1939), fol. 36, where Ireland writes 'The other day I met [eleven words here are blacked-out], but they are moving to the other side of the island tomorrow! Just my luck!! Commiserate with me.'

[158] Jane Stevenson has connected a preference for alterity to queer sensibility in English society between the First and Second World Wars. See Stevenson, 121.

[159] For a discussion of moral virtue in relation to national biography, see the beginning paragraphs of Oscar Wilde's 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', *Fortnightly Review*, 45.265 (January 1889), 41-54.

There are keys in Ireland studies, including his obsession with Machen, but there are none of the 'keyholes' that Oscar Wilde decried yet conceded as 'essential parts' of modern biographical methods.[160] On both fronts, the biographical record only reveals enough to suggest that something further and potentially crucial is being concealed. Contra Wilde's delineation in *The Critic as Artist*, we can neither 'canonize' nor 'vulgarize' Ireland to anyone's apparent satisfaction.[161] And even if we were, the veracity of the resulting image would remain in question.

Artists are instinctually suspicious of biographers, and some seek to frustrate as thoroughly as possible 'the post-mortem exploiter' by destroying extensive parts of their own archive.[162] Some artists' reputations are so immense that they may reasonably expect a strong posthumous interest in their life and work, and this partially explains their vested interest in curating legacies that either aid or foil posthumous parties. But with Ireland, one wonders what the point of curating a legacy is if one is indeed a self-described 'minor' composer in whom, as he alleged, no one would take any interest. If that is truly the case, one wonders why Ireland and his associates went to such efforts to hide and distort evidence and whether the explanation might involve more than mere discretion.

There is no denying that these excisions advocate a queer biographical reading of Ireland, though this would bring its own complications. The reliance on contestable sources, an individual's idiosyncrasies, and the convenient 'protections afforded by plausible deniability' is partly what qualifies all biographical portraits of Ireland as examples of what Kristin M. Franseen calls the 'old' queer musicology. As will be discussed later, pseudo-

[160] Oscar Wilde, 'Two Biographies of Keats', in *Complete Writings of Oscar Wilde: Reviews* (New York: The Nottingham Society, 1909), 181-186 [Originally published in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 September 1887].
[161] Oscar Wilde, *Intentions* (New York: Brentano's, 1905), 98.
[162] Lee (2009), 2.

biographers like Muriel Searle and John Longmire served as 'gatekeeper[s] of musical-sexual knowledge' by succeeding in 'denying or obscuring the truth' about a queer biographical subject.[163] But though it is relevant to the narrative, Ireland's sexuality cannot be claimed as the main culprit in the marginalization of his biography or as the sole explanation for his weird persona. Searle's and Longmire's behaviour is partly explainable by the social and legal environment of the 1960s and 1970s and by the practice of musical biography during that period. In the twenty-first century, however, queer musical biography has become a mainstream genre. The explicit identification of a subject as queer is nowadays more likely to advance rather than impede a biography's social cachet and commercial value. And yet, Ireland's biography has still not received the attention that his purely musical achievement and impact on English musical culture would seem to warrant.

As with the multiplication or dilution of a literary self, this non-disclosive biographical method may be perceived as another protective screen, preserving the sanctioned, legitimate reading of Ireland's life required by the restricted audience. By not directly confronting Ireland's life through the lens of his sexuality, one is perhaps attempting to spare him the nest of binarisms with which this thesis began and that can especially plague a homosexual composer: the 'craft/cleverness' and 'sincerity/sentimentality' labels that underlie so much of musicology's attitude towards Britten, for example, reductionist as they are to the point of error. As Judith Ann Peraino cautioned with regard to our 'unspoken

[163] Kristin M. Franseen, 'Queering Musical Biography in the Writings of Edward Prime-Stevenson and Rosa Newmarch', *19th-Century Music*, 44.2 (Fall 2020), 101-102. Franseen is responding to the identification of a 'New' queer musicology by Philip Brett. She contrasts the speculative and half-hesitant tone of Handel and Schubert studies with the biographical literature surrounding Tchaikovsky, the perception of whose music 'largely depended on one's reaction to the disclosure of his homosexuality.' For a notorious counterargument regarding the importance of a composer's sexuality to one's understanding of his life and work, asserting that the 'emphasis on discussions of sexuality…tends to obscure rather than reveal' a composer, see Barbara Heyman, 'Gay Composers; Barber: No Need Of Any Label', *The New York Times*, 10 July 1994), section 2, 2.

fascination' with Britten's homosexuality, '[t]he more a composer's non-normative sexuality is apprehended by the public, the more the composer's talent will be understood to be flawed, giving way to artifice and technique.'[164] Keeping Ireland's biography sexless is perhaps an attempt to keep him pure.

And yet, as observed in Chapter 1, Ireland's music is highly homoerotic, especially when read in tandem with Machen's texts. For both men, the authenticity of sexual desire, or at least the intensification of an erotic tone, was 'measured by the prohibition against its disclosure.' In a historical-biographical context, to be gay is to be not-gay; to disclose would paradoxically be to deny. For biographers following a life-and-works model, Ireland thus exhibits the same contradiction as Tchaikovsky: as a homosexual, his life 'necessarily deceives' while his music 'obviously confesses.'[165] Such composers provide intriguing case studies for how one might balance the non-disclosure of homosexuality against the perception of music as one of the most disclosive artforms. But the more salient point is that non-disclosure is here a variant of the connoisseur's exclusivity: the 'truth' about Ireland's sexuality, meaning an enormous part of his life, is only known by those who should know, those who are legitimate.

The tattered record itself ensures that Ireland's sexuality is known but never acknowledged. This is the point of the curious balance between what is and is not excised: everything is kept just within the realm of 'plausible deniability.' We can never know for sure, but we feel *as if* we do know. The record entices us to indulge credulity. The mind swivels back and forth between evidence and possibility, encouraging the construction of an

[164] Judith Ann Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 108.
[165] Peraino (2006), 82.

unverifiable, speculative inner life for Ireland akin to queer-focused biographies of Schubert or Handel that compensate for the (supposed) lack of details pertaining to their subject's private life through conjecture.[166] The blacked-out words in Ireland's correspondence become a breeding ground for such biographical speculation. The excisions are blanks to be filled. And so, a queer approach to Ireland's biography ultimately returns us to the speculative field of revealing-by-concealing or showing-by-not-showing, which as we have already seen is integral to queer aesthetics but not exclusive to it. For the biographer, Ireland's queerness is a smokescreen. Ireland is not weird because he is queer – he is queer because he is weird.

Whatever the intent, the non-existence of a biography of Ireland is due in part to the efforts made by these parties to destroy or mar the evidence. Millgate evocatively describes the behaviour of artists who tamper with evidence as betraying an 'element of the chimerical'.[167] There is a tension in many such figures between evasion and expression. With Ireland, the difficulty stems from his broader pursuit of that balance between recognition (legitimization) and obscurity.

At the same time, even if one declines Ireland's prompt to speculate, alterations or obfuscations need not necessarily represent an impasse to potential biographers. The presence of unanswerable questions or gaps in a record can provide its own kind of framework for a biographical 'story', and a non-canonical figure whose minor life is regarded as a failure, whether by himself or others, may still prove a viable candidate for biography.[168] There is a strong tradition of such books, largely stemming from the legacy of Victorian

[166] Franseen (2020), 102.
[167] Millgate (1995), 183. Millgate refers to Somerset Maugham, who initially gave his executor instructions to destroy evidence, only to retract that request several years before his death. As Millgate addresses in this section, the second thoughts of subjects are a point of confusion for those trying to pursue a biographical method that accords ethically with the subject's wishes.
[168] Lee (2009), 7.

biographers for whom failure was a significant preoccupation given that success can only fully be understood in relation to its antithesis.

But if the primary business of biography is to be complete, then the supposed emaciation of Ireland's record alone would seem to bar the composer from being a fit biographic theme. This is in addition to the fact that his sexuality and anti-normative behaviour would certainly not only strip him of Sydney Lee's adage of 'seriousness', with all the associations of social respectability and morality that such a term carries, but also deny him the claim to that overall 'magnitude' which Lee considered essential to an appropriate biographical subject. The frequent dismissal of Ireland as a 'minor' composer in the musical world here finds its biographical equivalent in Lee's repudiation of 'mediocrity' as an unfit biographic theme.[169] Foreman's representative comment regarding Ireland's biographical candidacy may therefore, however unconsciously, be seen as a descendant of Thomas Carlyle's 'Great Men' theory of history.[170]

Juliette Atkinson has written brilliantly about failed lives and how they may be read as lives of 'quiet influence' in which the failure to achieve greatness is 'positively trumpeted'. Through a so-called failed life, one may reconfigure the discourse between biography, subject, and reader – traditionally rooted in elucidation, advocacy, and a celebration of the collective through the achievements of an individual – into a relationship where important

[169] See Sidney Lee, *Principles of Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 10-17. In a later essay, Lee conceded the successful treatment of biographical subjects of 'small magnitude', exemplified for him by Samuel Johnson's *Life of Savage*, so long as the study be a 'faithful yet candid narrative, extenuating nothing, and of course setting nothing down in malice.' Lee's abiding interest in morality with regard to biography is evident in this third point, as it is in the reiteration that moral character and social achievement remain the qualifications for commemoration on any grander scale: 'No person deserves a biography unless he be, in the literal sense, distinguished.' See Sidney Lee, *Perspectives of Biography* (London: The English Association, 1917), 8-21.

[170] See Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus and On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1908), 251-266.

information is intentionally withheld, the author bemoans his or her subject's lack of recognition while simultaneously seeking to vouchsafe him or her from over-exposure, and the public is incriminated for contributing to the subject's lack of success. This is biography serving as a different kind of propaganda. For our purposes, its methods prove three things. First, one may disregard public and institutional expectations and devise a biographical method that is tailored to, and is even perhaps exclusively appropriate for, a single biographical subject. Second, one may make the problematical nature of a biographical subject the core of a study, rather than regarding it as a deterrent. And thirdly, by erecting a 'buffer' between subject and public, biographies of failed or minor lives allow biographers to argue, or at least imply, that part of their subjects' appeal would evaporate if that aura of hiddenness were entirely dispelled.[171]

As with general biography, the presence of 'minor lives' in musicology has increased markedly during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as the spotlight on squarely canonical figures produces gradually diminishing returns. In the field of British musicology alone, this has included recent biographies of William Alwyn (Boydell, 2008), Arthur Bliss (Crowood Press, 2022), George Dyson (Cambridge University Press, 2014), Gerald Finzi (Boydell, 2010), Ivor Gurney (Princeton University Press, 2021), Constant Lambert (Boydell, 2014), Cyril Scott (Boydell & Brewer, 2013), and others, including a multitude of life-and-works texts. All of these composers have at various points been described as 'minor' in relation to the mainstream, and their biographical records, ranging from sparse to voluminous, contain the same gaps and discrepancies that frustrate all biographers. And yet, despite their respective challenges, not one of these composers has

[171] Juliette Atkinson, *Victorian Biography Reconsidered: A Study of Nineteenth-Century 'Hidden' Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 116-135.

been dismissed as unbiographable, nor were their biographies received by the critical press with complaints about patchwork narratives. On the contrary, the reception of these books has been largely positive, bordering on grateful, even when they are considered to ultimately confirm the relegation of their subjects to the margins of twentieth-century British music.[172] On the whole, there has been agreement in the press that the world had been waiting far too long for just such a book.[173] Seen in this context, the pretext that the 'gaps', 'failure', or 'minor status' in Ireland's case present either structural and marketability deadlocks does not convince.[174]

The difficulty of a biographical subject may be part of his or her appeal to both reader and biographer. For the former, an atmosphere of mystery invades, shading the biography with elements of a detective story. For the biographer, there is the excitement of uncovering truth *despite* a subject's efforts to withhold evidence from posterity. Besides, as Lytton Strachey declared in *Eminent Victorians*, biographers 'quail' before a surplus of evidence: 'For ignorance is the first requisite of the historian – ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies,

[172] See, for example, Arnold Whittall, 'Review of *Dweller in Shadows: A Life of Ivor Gurney* by Kate Kennedy', *Musical Times*, 162.1956 (Autumn 2021), 113-116. Inevitably, not all of these biographies have been met with approval, and some have been criticized for the same disconnect between 'facts' and 'the man' that have plagued Ireland studies, though for different reasons. See David Wright, 'Review: *Sir George Dyson: His Life and Music* by Paul Spicer', *The Musical Times*, 155.1929 (Winter 2014), 91-97.

[173] A review by Stephen Banfield, though not without its criticisms, praises such biographies for their ability to 'succeed in reclaiming for us highly important musical figures and [to] do so in ways that begin to alter the history of music in Britain.' See Stephen Banfield, 'Review – *Constant Lambert: Beyond the Rio Grande* by Stephen Lloyd and *Sir George Dyson*: *His Life and Music* by Paul Spicer', *Music & Letters*, 96.2 (May 2015), 297-304.

[174] This is not to deny that prejudices still exist in the biography industry. In an opposing view, John Worthen argues that biographies claiming 'less than omniscience' may be difficult to public as the desire for comprehensiveness, however delusive, outstrips a recognition of scholarship's limitations. Biographers are sometimes 'pressured' by publishers to expunge references in their text to even the possibility of ignorance. The result is a genre sustained by the illusion of omniscience. See John Worthen, 'The Necessary Ignorance of a Biography' in Batchelor (1995), 228. Miranda Seymour makes the same observation, writing that the illusion or 'cheat' of not presenting life in its actual 'inchoate, multifaceted form' is a necessary move for both formal cohesion and marketability. See Miranda Seymour, 'Shaping the Truth', in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, ed. Peter France and William St. Clair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 255.

which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art.'[175] In this sense, a fragmentary record may indeed be preferable. As Coleridge warned, too many 'minutiae' might 'render the real character almost invisible, like clouds of dust on a portrait.'[176] One would not wish it otherwise, exchanging the tease for the tell-all – whose lack of inhibition in any case is always suspicious – and there is little thrill in chasing a criminal who cuffs himself.

Ireland's 'Biographers'

With these circumstances surrounding such an unruly subject, one critiques with some sympathy the existing studies of Ireland that address his biography. The merging of biography with memoir exhibited in John Longmire's *John Ireland: Portrait of a Friend* (1969) and Muriel Searles's *John Ireland: The Man and His Music* (1979), or of biography with analysis in Fiona Richards's *The Music of John Ireland* (2000), is an attempt to patch the very same 'gaps' that discouraged Foreman. Indeed, a hallmark of Ireland life-writing is the habit of authors themselves to admit as much.[177] Like the evidential record, Ireland's biographical portraits, which are not to be confused with biography proper, are distinguished by a sanitisation that presents readers with a semi-fictionalized version of the subject. Before discussing the implications of this process, an overview of these portraits is necessary.

Longmire's inaugural book remains a popular introduction to Ireland's life. The narrative is structured chronologically. Despite considering himself a qualified musician,

[175] Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1918), v.
[176] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Volume 4 (Part 1): The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 356. I am grateful to Gregory Leadbetter, Professor of Poetry at Birmingham City University, for identifying the source of this quotation.
[177] Richards (2000), 5-7.

Longmire avoids any musical analysis and does not include any musical illustrations. He confirms in his opening remarks that the book is not a biography but a memoir; as the subtitle declares, it is very much a *Portrait of a Friend* and not a *Portrait of a Composer*.[178] For Longmire, the writing of the book represented a kind of grieving. In a passage reminiscent of the connoisseur's condition described earlier, Longmire writes that '[t]he pattern of his [Ireland's] life has become inextricably woven with mine, so that the gap torn in its texture by his passing can only be mended by sharing what little I know of his life with others.'[179]

Longmire's own impressions of Ireland therefore drive the text. Although a number of articles and excerpts from personal correspondence are referred to, the evidence in the book is frequently anecdotal with quotations from conversations between Longmire and Ireland or between Ireland and third parties interspersed liberally. In its tone, the book is not biographical but hagiographical. It is a book that 'had to be written' and concerns itself equally with information about Ireland and 'what he has meant to me'.[180] Ireland is presented as a man who can do no wrong, or at least no wrong that is not justifiable. Any reference to 'meanness' (Ireland's 'impish quality'), of which no explicit examples are given, is quickly outweighed by praise, all of which is supported by illustrations: Ireland is sensitive, full of 'childlike simplicity', possessing a brilliant 'analytical' mind, fiercely loyal, generous, etc.

There is no hermeneutic lens provided by Longmire for either Ireland's life or music. Instead, stories are recounted as individual episodes, culminating in a book that gives a cursory overview of Ireland's life – the narrative's brevity is assisted by its eschewal of

[178] Longmire optimistically wrote of how much he looked forward to the time when Ireland's biography would eventually appear. See Longmire (1969), vii.
[179] Ibid, 3.
[180] Ibid, vii.

Ireland's problematic features – and testifies through its bowdlerized content and endearing tone to Longmire's admiration and affection for Ireland as a friend.[181]

Searle similarly claimed in her book that Ireland the man and Ireland's music are 'inseparable', and that the latter is not a 'formal separate study' but rather 'an extension of his mind and character.' Ireland's biography is an integrative 'symphony of life'. These are curious statements to be found in a book that does not contain any musical illustrations, but it does explain why Searle organises the chronology of her study according to Ireland's compositions. For Searle, the date of composition should be matched with contemporaneous events in Ireland's life in order to explain to us the music that 'spontaneously wells up and out'.[182]

Searle's utilization of portraiture is more literal than Longmire's. For additional narrative scaffolding, she turned to the John Ireland Memorial Window, designed by Brian Thomas and installed in 1963 in the Musicians' Chapel of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in London. To Searle, the Memorial Window is a 'biography in glass' in which one may find 'clues' to Ireland's 'symphony of life'.[183] The narrative returns to this window whenever it seeks to introduce a new topic. For example, Searle's chapter on Ireland's liturgical music begins by observing that the opening bars of the anthem *Greater Love Hath No Man* are inscribed on the Memorial Window.[184] At times, these connections appear strained: for Searle, the herd of 'lean, tough steers' in the central right-hand panel of the Memorial

[181] The affection appears to have been reciprocated. In a letter, Ireland called Longmire 'my best, in fact my only friend'. MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (27 September 1953), fol. 27.
[182] See Searle, 2-4. This structural decision is also a consequence of Searle's idealization of Ireland. Dahlhaus made clear the political implications of this fixation in biographies of composers with their tendency to portray 'decisive music events' as 'the exploits of heroes', a practice that requires a rigidly chronological framework because a work's significance, and therefore the composer's achievement, is often closely associated with its date of composition. See Dahlhaus (1989), 131-132.
[183] Searle, 4.
[184] Ibid, 26.

Window are reminiscent of Ireland's music for *The Overlanders* (1946), a film set in Western Australia, despite the fact that these steers are grazing in a landscape more reminiscent of south-central England.[185] In any case, the attraction of Searle's model is that her repeated flashbacks to the Memorial Window, however dubiously linked, allow the narrative to transition between a wide range of subjects while giving a more unified sense to the book than it actually has. Back and forth, the window helps distract readers from the 'gaps' in Ireland's life-narrative.

But what one often sees in a portrait, and perhaps especially in a memorial window, is as selective and idealized a version of the subject as that encountered in Longmire's *Portrait of a Friend*. Portraiture is another form of hagiography. It is no coincidence that the Memorial Window is installed in a place of worship. Problematic aspects of Ireland's biography are excluded from the Memorial Window as are, less understandably, any references to the literary material that Ireland considered so integral to his work. The 'biography in glass' that Searle discerned is not Ireland's biography per se but a filtering of the subject through at least two entities: Brian Thomas, who made it, and Norah Kirby, from whose 'roughly sketched' ideas the window was designed.[186] The Memorial Window therefore tints the biography towards those elements that Norah considered most important and appropriate in a public setting, resulting in a curated and incomplete account of Ireland's life.

[185] Ibid, 116.

[186] Searle, 152. One can see the influence of Ireland and Kirby in Searle's parroting of the idea that Ireland was a figure of 'neglect'. Her description of Ireland's eightieth birthday concert at the B.B.C. Proms in 1959 is followed by her statement that Ireland received no performances at the Proms in 1960. This is false. *A London Overture* was performed on 25 July 1960 under the direction of Malcolm Sargent. Of course, the source cited by Searle for this information is Ireland himself. See Searle, 115.

In laying out her methodology, Fiona Richards quotes a letter from Machen to Ireland where he recommends that a reader approach his own literary works through his autobiographical ones: 'The notion is to interest the desired reader in the author, in the concrete; before you lead him to the author's imagined works.'[187] Richards logically uses this as justification for commencing her book with an overview of Ireland's biography. However, Richards does not quote the succeeding line in Machen's same letter: 'I should always recommend a reading of Mrs. Gaskell's ''Life of Charlotte Bronte'' as a preface to the works of Charlotte Bronte.'[188] Machen referred to Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë throughout his life. In *Far Off Things*, Machen remembers the contents of his father's library: '…a complete set of Brontë books, including Mrs. Gaskells' ''Life,'' all these in yellowish linen covers, being, I imagine, the first one-volume edition issued by the publishers. And here again Llanddewi in the woods may claim to have been in advance of its age, for we were devoted to the name of Brontë.'[189]

It is important to understand the kind of biography to which the reader is being referred, which will help explain why the book was of such paramount importance to Machen. The novelistic and protective tone of Gaskell's book has been credited for constituting much of its lasting appeal. This is largely the result of a methodology that was deeply engaged in the suppression of evidence.[190] Michael Benton writes that reading the opening chapter of the biography is 'like reading the start of one of her [Gaskell's] novels.' The cause of this sensation relates to the fact that the concurrent development of biographies

[187] Quoted in Richards (2000), 9.
[188] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (17 September 1941), fol. 8.
[189] Machen (1922), 34. In his later memoir, Machen describes Gaskell's 'wonderful' book as 'one of the saddest books in the world.' Machen (1923), 100.
[190] Lee (2009), 59-62.

and novels led both genres to adopt elements of the other: novels included quasi-documentary items in their narratives such as letters and diary entries, while biographies increasingly utilized 'the creative eye of novels'.[191] The product is a biography that moves away from unadorned evidence towards the rhetoric of drama. This creative license is further displayed in Gaskell's handling of 'inconvenient facts.' Gaskell curated evidence to the point of mischaracterization, resulting in a biographical subject that 'maintains an image of respectability' as necessitated by her agenda.[192] As we have seen, all these techniques are also prominent in Machen's fiction and non-fiction.

In a letter, Machen reflected at length on Gaskell's achievement:

> I have long been sure that if it had not been for Mrs. Gaskell, the whole family of Brontës would by this time have become obscure & dim…But Mrs. Gaskell, by the exercise of the highest biographical art, has created a Brontë legend, & a true legend, & so living & quickening a legend that the Brontë household has become almost as real as the great characters of fiction. And let me tell you that it is a high compliment to pay to *actuality* to compare it with *reality*; to say of a friend he is almost as real as Micawber. And so, in a sense, a good deal that Charlotte wrote is now read almost as notes & commentaries on Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life'. I cannot away with 'Shirley', for example, as a work of art; it interests me as a description of the surroundings of Mrs. Gaskell's heroine.[193]

This remarkable passage reiterates the heart of Machen's approach to life-writing and its relation to the artistic product. Like Lydall Gordon, he admires Gaskell's book not for its veracity but for the 'lasting imaginative truth' that it bequeaths to a biographical subject.[194] The point to be taken from Machen's mentioning of Gaskell in his correspondence with Ireland is not, as Richards presents it, that one must start with the life of the artist but that the reader must specifically start with the 'true legend' of the subject. The reader who would, as

[191] Michael Benton, *Literary Biography: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 5.
[192] Michael Benton, *Towards a Poetics of Literary Biography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 21-23 and 174.
[193] Machen (1993), 26-27.
[194] Lydall Gordon, *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 329.

Machen writes to Ireland, be given a 'dose' of the 'mysteries' in his art must first surrender to the aura of the consecrated artist – they have to buy into Machen's *actuality* of the constructed, composite artist-image.[195]

If one is to adhere to the biographical subject's own preferred method of introduction, then one must note that Ireland himself objected to life-and-works treatments of the sort Richards presents. In an article for *The Listener*, the writer Norman Charles Suckling speculated about autobiographical content in Ireland's piano music:

> A number of these [piano miniatures] followed in the nineteen-twenties, reaching the greatest height perhaps in the intensity of 'For Remembrance' – and then a period of three years which seems to have produced nothing. What had happened? Do the works of the later 'twenties give any clue to it? Is there, for example, any guide to a private meaning in the black despair of 'We'll to the woods no more'? One would not wish to surprise these privacies unduly, but Dr. Ireland has himself given us a half-invitation to do so by such comments as the retrospective date on 'Spring will not wait' (or is it on the whole cycle?), and by his curious habit of self-quotation – a habit appearing sometimes even in works written within a very short time of each other….[F]rom 1927 onwards it becomes a phenomenon.

For Suckling, Ireland's reticence to disclose the autobiographical context of his work hampers both critical assessment and accessibility. Suckling concluded his otherwise largely complimentary article by declaring that Ireland's piano music strongly suggests 'a less than half-revealed personal programme'.[196] By itself, this article is of little distinction, being representative of numerous texts that have made similar comments. What makes this article significant is that it is the only critical statement regarding the relationship between Ireland's life and music for which Ireland's response exists. Four days after its publication, the article was the subject of a letter from Ireland to Kenneth Thompson. Ireland first took issue with the article's tone, which struck him as having been written by 'a young know-all (who thinks

[195] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (17 September 1941), fol. 8.
[196] Norman Suckling, 'John Ireland and the Piano', *The Listener*, 50.1295 (24 December 1953), 36.

he knows all) but knows only in patches.' He then accused Suckling, referred to in the letter as 'Mr. Suckling-Pig', of being 'musically obtuse' as well as 'ambiguous' and 'contradictory' in his 'loosely constructed remarks.' Finally, in a characteristic move, Ireland implies that while there is some truth to Suckling's remarks he refuses to assist in its elucidation: 'As to my personal history as apparently reflected in my music – well – well? I could explain all he hints at, to you, but not in my memoir!!!'[197]

Ireland and Machen are both always revealing to the reader that they could (but will not) disclose more. They only disclose to the initiate, to the 'acolyte.' This is what Longmire meant when he wrote that Ireland was 'against profanation of the mysteries'.[198] This hesitancy to disclose forms the primary subject of Machen's first letter to Ireland: 'It is, indeed, hard to deal with the mysteries. Hard, as you and I know, to express them in art; hard even to speak of them. It was St. Paul, I think, who heard things which it was not lawful to utter. And it is to be remembered that only a hairsbreadth divides the mysteries from the blasphemies.'[199]

Ireland's and Machen's statements 'orchestrate a factual pattern' by using materials that are already rich with subjective elements.[200] For another example, following Vaughan Williams's death in 1958, Ireland penned a brief tribute for *The Musical Times* that gives some indication of his negative attitude towards musicology.[201] In a somewhat jumbled

[197] MS. 50536 (28 December 1953), fol. 58. Compare the tone of this letter with John Ireland, letter to Kenneth Thompson, 4 May 1958, where Ireland writes, 'I suppose the article on British music you quote [not identified in the letter] was written by one of the young so-called ''musicologists''!!'. Ireland's statements have an affinity with Machen's in *Hieroglyphics* where a 'Learned Pig' is mocked for expressing opinions on art of no merit and with whom 'it were idle to contend.' Machen (1960), 168-169. For another appearance of Machen's 'Pig', see Arthur Machen, 'Happiness and Horror', *The Academy*, 1871 (14 March 1908), 561-563.
[198] Longmire, 6.
[199] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (15 September 1933), fol. 1.
[200] Richard Holmes, 'Biography: Inventing the Truth', in Batchelor (1995), 17.
[201] Ireland referred to musicologists as 'musiCOLLEGEists'. Searle (1979), 35.

manner, Ireland reflected on his days with Vaughan Williams as a student of Stanford's, their shared association with the Church of St. Barnabas (South Lambeth), and the fact that they both owned properties along the Chelsea Embankment. The tribute concludes with an amusing anecdote about two similar-sounding tunes in Ireland's and Vaughan Williams's early work which the latter speculated as having been lifted by both men from an earlier composer. This tribute is of interest for three reasons. First, Ireland lightly chides scholars for failing to 'disclose' the fact that No. 13 of Cheyne Walk 'was once the residence of England's great and famous composer [i.e., Vaughan Williams].' Second, neither the name of the corresponding 'song' by Vaughan Williams or the identity of the third composer is given, and Ireland takes some pleasures in stating that, to his knowledge, no one has yet identified the link between these works. Third, and most provocatively, Ireland writes in a letter to John Longmire about this article that, 'Of course [,] only a contemporary of his [Vaughan Williams's] could have written it – and there is no-one to contradict my remarks.'[202] This statement raises serious doubts about the veracity of Ireland's tribute. Is the anecdote fact or fiction? Was the camaraderie of their student days as Ireland described it? As Ireland says, with no one left to contradict him, one can only speculate. The pattern suggests that speculation is precisely what Ireland is after.

And yet, Suckling is correct: Ireland *does* extend a 'half-invitation' to investigators. Ireland's correspondence about *Sarnia* alone contradicts his claim for an artistic separateness between the life and work.

> I think you referred to Michael in connection with my new piano pieces. Well, of course he was just a part of the whole flood of beauty in Guernsey – those last 6 or 7 weeks were really an extraordinary revelation - here was <u>everything</u> at <u>once</u> – the unbelievable beautiful of the Channel Islands in Spring, the delightful surroundings and feelings of heart's ease – the joy of the lovely Church were I played the organ –

[202] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (8 October 1958) fol. 120.

> and Michael constantly about the house and garden, fitting in so well with everything – it was wonderful, too wonderful to be true, and certainly far too wonderful to last. Still, in this world gone mad with ugliness, and violence, it is something to remember and to cherish. But alas, how fragile, how transitory! And yet, how eternal and true!
>
> Well, I have expressed some of it in my new piano work, 'SARNIA'….[203]

Eleven years later, Ireland expressed the same sentiment:

> I often think of those days in Guernsey with Joyce and yourself. It was a magic time – like a dream, now. And particularly those days when we were at St. Stephen's. How strange to think of, now! Well, at any rate, they produced ''SARNIA'', which is no inconsiderable achievement. What a lot of our personal history, yours and mine, is in those pages. So much that words alone could never express…..[204]

Even Ireland's re-direction of critics towards the writing of Arthur Machen implies a necessary degree of autobiographical involvement by asserting that Ireland's art should be approached through some awareness of his own personal tastes because the music itself is not self-sufficient and requires some reference to the man.

Like Machen, Ireland is toying with readers. They are both playing on an awareness that biographers will conflate biography with fictional/musical works. This allows for Ireland's musical works in turn to play on the potential (unverifiable) reality of a biographer's subjective impressions, which Ireland's letter to Thompson shows to have been his intention. The result will be what Tomashevsky called 'an artificial legendary biography' that is born from the speculation concerning real (life) and imaginary (musical) events. In other words, musical pseudo-facts will be used to buttress a biographical legend.[205]

---

[203] MS. 60535 (26 June 1941), fol. 56. The concluding periods are Ireland's. The lack of female muses is another problem for Ireland biography. Female muses are often adopted as signifiers in biographies to explain the creative decisions or productivity of a heterosexual male composer. They are both structural aids and explanatory tools. But with Ireland, the muses are not only not female but not of legal age. Unless one is willing to risk compromising the biographical subject's veneer of respectability, this problem takes away yet another pillar to support a traditional biographical approach. See Christopher Wiley, 'Musical Biography and the Myth of the Muse', in *Critical Music Historiography: Probing Canons, Ideologies, and Institutions*, ed. Vesa Kurkela and Markus Mantere (London: Routledge, 2016), 215-261.

[204] MS. Mus. 1749/2/5 (20 August 1952), fol. 8. The concluding dots are again Ireland's.

[205] Tomashevsky in Hemecker and Saunders (2017), 84-90.

Ireland's refusal to write a memoir is of its own interest. Christopher Wiley has written about the importance of autobiography to socially repressed groups, in particular women and homosexuals. These texts allow repressed individuals to give their documentary record a permanence that society denies them, allowing them, if only posthumously, to 'resist hegemony and gain cultural ground'.[206] Autobiography thus becomes a power mechanism within our cultural dialogue; it is a genre rooted in control. Despite being a member of a socially repressed group and despite his frequent complaints about being marginalized, Ireland's not having written a memoir – and indeed his expressed wish to 'frustrate the postmortem explorer' – may be read as an attempt to control his life-narrative by instead relinquishing something, or rather by simply not doing anything. Silence grants Ireland the authority of a spectre. In this, he adheres to the advice which Machen gave him, paraphrasing Thomas à Kempis: 'Learn to be unknown and to be thought of no account.'[207]

What Longmire, Searle, and Richards have in common is an insistence that the 'real' Ireland exists beyond the evidential record. The facts alone will not suffice. Taxonomy or meticulous scholarship do not dispel this sense. In Strachey's words, the more distinctly we perceive the biographical subject, the more remote the individual's 'singular universe' becomes.[208] In an essay on postmodernism and biography, Diane Wood Middlebrook suggests the same when she reminds readers that, though the biographical genre requires a subject to be placed at the centre of a narrative, the actual materials of biography are not life but documents; biography is thus not about life but about discourse.[209]

---

[206] Christopher Wiley, 'When a Woman Speaks the Truth about Her Body: Ethel Smyth, Virginia Woolf, and the Challenges of Lesbian Auto/Biography', *Music & Letters*, 85.3 (August 2004), 411-412.
[207] MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (13 November 1933), fol. 2.
[208] Lytton Strachey, *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), 8.
[209] Diane Wood Middlebrook, 'Postmodernism and the Biographer', in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, ed. Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 159.

Drawing on Middlebrook's work, Ruth A. Solie likens the tension between life and documents to that between internal and external evidence which has become a hallmark of contemporary biographical theory, in particular its interest in the relation between postmodern theory and psychoanalysis.[210] By uncovering the stories that a subject directs toward himself or herself as coping strategies, whether through their artistic work or elsewhere, psychoanalytic theory provides biographers with a method for finding the 'life-myth(s)' within the work of an artist.[211] At first glance, psychobiography may seem to offer a solution to Machen's and Ireland's biographical problems, indulging as it does in the creative fact to allow for what Ira Bruce Nadel calls 'authorized fictions'. But if one is trying to use a biographical methodology of which Machen and Ireland would have approved, psychobiography will not do. Machen's objection to psychobiography is that it runs counter to his 'dogmatic prejudices'. His concern is not that psychoanalysis is incapable of uncovering facts but that it will reveal too much or reveal things in the wrong way. Thus, he condemns psychoanalysts as 'those who profane these [i.e., life's] holy mysteries'.[212]

From a practical perspective, psychoanalytical approaches to Ireland are hindered by a lack of information concerning his childhood. Ireland was hesitant to talk about his youth (his 'unsmiling childhood'), and when he did divulge, Longmire described the experience as 'so depressing' that he 'felt compelled to avoid the subject.' The nearest Longmire comes to a psychoanalytical diagnosis is this: 'The ghosts of his childhood pains and lack of affection coloured his personality throughout his life.'[213] Ireland claimed to have had 'a very

[210] Ruth A. Solie, 'Changing the Subject', *Current Musicology*. 53 (1993), 58-59.
[211] James Walter, 'The Solace of Doubt? Biographical Methodology after the Short Twentieth Century', in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, 324.
[212] Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 56.
[213] Longmire, 2-3 & 7-8. The paucity of evidence has not stopped other commentators from speculating. See Andrew Burn, liner notes to John Ireland, *String Quartet* (Naxos, 8.557777: 2006), 2 and Bruce Philips, liner notes to John Ireland, *A John Ireland Collection* (ASC Records, 150: 2011), 1.

unsatisfactory childhood' that was marred by 'no home life or affection or care'.[214] In a letter to his nephew, Silvio, Ireland recalled that he was bullied at school and that his older brother Alleyne would beat him 'mercilessly every night on my way to bed.'[215] To Longmire, Norah Kirby recounted Ireland's memory of having his camera, his most cherished possession, taken away from him by his older sisters.[216] In terms more vague, Searle alludes to certain 'financial upheavals' that disrupted the Ireland household.[217] Psychobiography takes us back to the subject's childhood in order to find the explanation for why the adult is the way they are. These fragments are interesting, but they do not provide enough evidence to draw any significant or reliable psychoanalytical conclusions regarding either Ireland's work, his personal development, or his artist-image.

An emphasis on discourse rather than evidence in postmodern biographic theory has greatly influenced contemporary discussions of weird artists. For example, in his essay on the 'historic' H.P. Lovecraft's representation in academia and cinema, Steffen Hantke clarifies that by 'Lovecraft' one is never signifying 'a clearly defined biographical entity' but rather 'a discursive construct.' Each reader or analyst constructs their own 'Lovecraft' in accordance with their own 'personal or institutional investment' in the subject, and each generation of academic and commercial activity therefore produces new iterations of 'Lovecraft'.[218]

---

[214] MS. Mus. 1749/2/4 (13 November 1951), fol. 191.
[215] London, British Library, John Ireland: Personal Correspondence (Family Correspondence), MS. Mus. 1749/2/10 (30 March 1948), fol. 102.
[216] Longmire, 8. Longmire refers also to Ireland's childhood 'strappings.'
[217] Searle, 9-10.
[218] Steffen Hantke, 'From the Library of America to the Mountains of Madness: Recent Discourse on H.P. Lovecraft', in *New Critical Essays on H.P. Lovecraft*, ed. David Simmons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 133-137.

In Ireland's case, there is something *other* in his character that recommends such a reading to Longmire, Searle, and subsequent commentators. Following the sale of Rock Mill, Norah Kirby relocated to Steyning in West Sussex where she turned her residence into The John Ireland Memorial House. Bruce Philips recalls the 'dark' and 'musty' interior as 'a shrine' to Ireland's memory. Ireland's own furniture and artwork were positioned exactly as Ireland had arranged them in Rock Mill: Norah's two front rooms were nearly exact reproductions of Ireland's dining room and music room. Every surface was cluttered with photographs, press cuttings, books, manuscripts, and correspondence pertaining to Ireland. Philips remembers the atmosphere as 'creepy' and 'weird', giving the impression of 'a kind of Ireland Mausoleum.'[219]

Searle provided her own description of the Memorial House in her book's closing pages:

> In the Chelsea Room [i.e., the dining room] is the polished table damaged by his fist in berating Hitler, together with some lovely chairs and favourite antiques. The walls are hung with pictures by Chelsea artists…In the long, low Music Room are his two grand pianos, his metronome, the portrait bust of a chorister representing *The Holy Boy*, the Chelsea China smashed by Smokey [Ireland's cat] and restored by Mrs. Kirby, and photographs of Ireland at all ages. In a drawer are wads of letters; the butcher's angry missive which so amused him is as carefully kept as those from famous musicians. His gold medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians is there together with the hated black-bound notebook in which, as a student, he was ordered to keep account of every penny spent from his guardian's allowance.

Then, in softer words than Philips, Searle testifies to the strangeness of the residence and its evocation of Ireland's *presence*:

> Even though this was never Ireland's home, there is an indefinable aura about it. It is easy to imagine, sitting at his own table with every article and picture around it arranged as at the Mill, that his small, courtly, slightly old-fashioned figure is about to walk through from the music room, with an astringent but unmalicious quip on his lips.[220]

[219] Bruce Philips, Personal Interview, 2 March 2020.
[220] Searle, 155-156.

Like their musical works, dead composers are in dialogue with the present. They *exist* in the present despite having a historical context. As Dahlhaus contended, 'The subject does not simply ''have'' a history; it must produce one, and only in so doing does it become a subject at all.' The relationship between the biographical subject and historical narration is therefore 'circular'.[221] This is literally true in the case of curatorship, but it is also true in the uncanny sense: certain subjects give the impression of being posthumously interactive with biographers and listeners. Searle quotes an anonymous and 'perceptive' choirboy as having observed that Ireland's was ''a personality that came out and got you''.[222]

This is not to be mistaken for the sense of realness that Woolf sought in her own methodology nor with the 'there-ness' that Hermione Lee considers the mark of a biographical portrait's authenticity.[223] The uncanny biographical subject is more akin to the living-dead who blurs the categories of life/text, here/there, and then/now into a weird, impossible unity. To put it a different way, the deceased biographical subject *responds* to analysis; the subject *resists* the biographer; the back-and-forth movement of this resistance generates the mask-image of the artist; and our rejection of Enlightenment discourse – our nostalgic 'surrender' to the historical subject's unknowability – sustains Houellebecq's 'aura of strange pathos' with which this chapter commenced. In Ireland's case, the material record

[221] Dahlhaus distinguished along these lines between the idea of music as a 'work' rather than a historical 'event', with the former implying a continuation instead of a fixed point. He argued for an abandonment of the biographical model altogether, describing historical hermeneutics – i.e., the method of interpreting texts so as to 'acquire a sympathetic understanding of their authors' – as an unsalvageable tradition that tried to impose 'continuity' on history. Dahlhaus is aware that the alternative practice of narrative history will be accused of contriving 'imaginary subject[s]', but he advocates this abandonment nevertheless. See Dahlhaus (1983), 4 and 45.

[222] Searle, 156. Compare this with Richard Holmes's conception of biographical research and writing as a 'pursuit' and 'haunting.' See Batchelor (1995), 27.

[223] Lee (2009), 3.

is not the basis for empirical biography but the formula for a kind of conjuring, rooted in nostalgia.[224] Ireland is not *in* the record but *about* it.

As Derrida argued, to create a myth one must first achieve a 'decentring' of the subject. This process begins with what might be called a *spectralization* of the subject's nature. Biographical subjects, like myths, have no absolute source or unity but rather consist of shadows and 'virtualities' that continually elude, if indeed they ever existed in the first place.[225] The foregoing explorations show Ireland's biography to be fully engaged in this process. Machen's opinions on this topic further legitimize a spectral, mythic approach to his life and by extension to Ireland's: one must approach the so-called rational subject through his or her irrationality, through his so-called contradictions, which Machen believed to be embodied by 'the mysterious companion that walks beside each one of us on the earthly journey.' Treading a path 'parallel with but different from' the subject's own, this 'spiritual' companion is a hermeneutic guide who, while never exceeding the confines of the 'shadowy, unknown, or half-known', allows the reader to realize, as far as one can, 'the image of a man'.[226] In a sense, Machen is Ireland's 'mysterious companion.'

---

[224] In an article on J.S. Bach and Gothicism, Isabella Van Elferen argues that the historic 'Bach' who underpins our obsession with historical performance practice and traditional musicology is 'as much a ghost from an irretrievable past as are Dickens' Christmas ghost'. He is a 'conjuration'. The attempts to reconstruct the historic Bach from this 'distorted' Bach are marked by a kind of haunting, again rooted in nostalgia, which qualifies them as excursions in the uncanny. See Isabella Van Elferen, 'The Gothic Bach', *Understanding Bach*, 7 <https://bachnetwork.org/understanding-bach/ub7/>, 20 [accessed 18 January 2022]. In defending his methodology for *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (1903), a study noted for its flexible structure and peripheral approach, Henry James wrote that the biographical subject did not 'lend itself' to a 'pure and simple' biography. From James's perspective, the material required a non-traditional treatment because the subject itself was 'a little ghostly.' An uncanny biographical method was therefore 'imposed with absolute logic' because it was sanctioned by the subject. Henry James, *The Letters of Henry James: Volume I*, ed. Percy Lubbock (London: Macmillan, 1920), 420-421.

[225] Derrida (2007), 225-226. This evasion through the spectral is another way in which Machen's life-writing approach contrasts with Woolf's, who criticized Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* for portraying the queen as moving 'in an ambiguous world, between fact and fiction, *neither embodied nor disembodied*.' See Woolf, 'The Art of Biography', 127. The emphasis is mine.

[226] Machen (1960), 25-31. Machen states that his conception of 'the mysterious companion' was inspired by his reading of Edgar Allan Poe's character C. Augustine Dupin.

As with his comments on science and the empirical, Machen contends that the historical biographical subject is both insufficient and fallacious. What is required is the subject's double. For Machen, this spectralization began with his autobiography. The autobiographical self is a kind of double, defined by Georges Gusdorf as 'a ghostly image' of a life that becomes 'invested with a sacred character'. In language akin to Machen's, Gusdorf submitted that autobiography, and by extension all life-writing, should be understood as functioning 'beyond truth and falsity'; like Machen's method of approaching the rational via the irrational, it is a medium in which the author 'realizes himself in the unreal.'[227] Or, to recall Humphrey Carpenter, deviation from fact is tolerated in one's pursuit of 'a kind of truth'.

To illustrate this principle, one turns to *Hieroglyphics*, Machen's aesthetic treatise presented as a work of fiction – in other words, life-writing posing as pseudofiction. The introductory note, signed with Machen's initials ('A.M.'), explains that the book has been assembled from conversation notes transcribed in Barnsbury ('an almost mythical region' where Machen once lived) with an 'obscure literary hermit' who answers to Machen's description. About the biography of this hermit, Machen is amusingly curt: '…I never gathered much of his past history. But I believe that 'something had happened' many years before.'

As the hermit (Machen) talks, the narrator ('Machen') watches him pace back and forth across the room. Whenever the hermit nears the far end, the narrator notes how 'his shape would almost disappear' so that all that remained in the room was 'the voice': '[I] used to wonder for a moment whether the man had not vanished for ever, having been resolved

[227] Georges Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 32-40.

into the shadows about him.' When it comes time for Machen to ask the hermit's permission to publish these notes, the reply given is worth quoting in full:

> His reply allowed me to take my own way, 'with all my heart, so long as you make me sufficiently apocryphal. I am not going to compete with ''real'' critics whose names are printed in the papers; but if you can maintain the *incognito* and allow your readers (supposing their existence) to believe that I am a mere figment of your brain, you can print my *obiter dicta* ''with ease of body and rest of reins.'' Here is a suggestion for a title: what do you say to ''Boswell in Barnsbury''? But I really had no notion that you were taking notes all the time. Remember: keep the secret, *and the secrets*.'[228]

In biography, the biographer only ever encounters a double of the biographical subject, whether through text, audio, or image; it is not the life itself but 'only the presence in spirit' of something that is forever gone. The second reading of one's own life is truer than the original experience (a double that is 'more clearly drawn') because 'it adds to experience itself consciousness of it'; and so, as Gusdorf does, one might reason that the biographical subject becomes likewise 'truer' because it wins 'a new and more intimate relationship to the individual life' the further away from it one stands. The mulching of fact is perhaps not destructive but digestive as the biographer recomposes rather than recounts material, which Gusdorf declares the 'anthropological prerogative' of knowledge of the self. What remains is the truest form of a life not because it is original or factual but because it is composite.[229] The composite aura consumes the historical author. The figure vanishes across the room, but the voice lingers. The hermit's psychic impress remains and summons the pseudo-physical self into the field of discourse. Voice (story) resurrects body.

---

[228] Machen (1960), 1-6. Italics are in the original.

[229] Gusdorf, 32-40. Gusdorf uses the concept of a 'mirror image' to illustrate this, reminding us that the 'mirror image' is not an exact reproduction but a production. As Sweetser noted in 1958, it is interesting that the work of Machen's to have achieved the most success, *The Bowmen*, is also that which most 'obscured the name of the author.' See Wesley Duaine Sweetser, *The Works of Arthur Machen: An Analysis and Bibliography* (DPhil Thesis, University of Colorado, 1958), 53-57.

There is a truth conveyed in this ritual that the facts alone can never articulate. Machen is not dabbling in the 'untruths' decried by Hermione Lee as resulting from a lack of scepticism by truant researchers.[230] He is engaged in a kind of *paratruth*. The result is what Gusdorf identifies as a 'parable of a consciousness in quest of its own truth', returning us to the roles of consecration and myth.[231] Machen's central contention in *Hieroglyphics* is that great literature is the highest form of truth, and that great literature is allegorical, not historical. Facts 'have no existence at all', representing merely the 'mode of expression.' It is the allegory (the '*idea* behind the facts') that transmutes the 'gibberish' of facts into 'the language of the Shadowy Companion.'[232] Thus, the movement of the body back and forth from light to shadow until all that remains is voice is a dynamic allegory for the gradual, pendulum erasure of self into myth. The artist is 'resolved' (i.e., erased) into myth – or rather, he is weirded into something other.

Andrew McCann has written brilliantly on the relationship between Machen's literature and notions of authorship, arguing that Machen's texts endorse a mode of alterity in their displacement of authorship that both undermines and reinforces their relationship to commercialization. This alterity, made possible by the rejection in Machen's work of empirically and materially based worldviews, proceeds from the compromise in Machen's work of 'the contours of the self upon which rationalized notions of authorship were based.' The result of this compromise – which is perhaps better understood as a rejection of the pragmatic, similar to Gusdorf's embroiled composite image – is likened by McCann to a

[230] Lee (2009), 7.
[231] Gusdorf, 43-44. Like Woolf before him, Gusdorf calls this a piece of life-writing's 'artistic value'. Gusdorf makes these comments in his analysis of Chateaubriands' *Voyage en Amérique*.
[232] Machen (1960), 77-78 and 92. The emphasis is mine.

'terrifying formlessness'.[233] Like the text, the author becomes an avatar of something supra-material that allows him, like his characters, to morph from material to immaterial, from literal to allegorical, and from historic to mythic.

Like Bourdieu, McCann sees the weird aura of authors like Machen as a consequence of their 'defiance' of commercialization.[234] For weird artists and connoisseurs, Adorno's conception of art's 'truth-content' as a consequence of art's antagonism towards society may here be applied to the artist himself: the 'substantive content' of an artist can 'vanish' once it is 'positively asserted, as soon as existence is claimed for it.'[235] By negating and evading, the artist remains substantive, legitimate, and consecrated. Biography is a genre that attempts to *open*, thus tainting the truth-value of the weird artist-image. Machen's writing is an effort to remain *closed*. This is not the death of the author but a displacement.

One of the most important elements that connects McCann's reading of Machen with Machen's speculative philosophy and the cultural theories of Bourdieu is this idea that the purity of an artist emerges from the abstraction of identity. The artist disintegrates from his

---

[233] Andrew McCann, *Popular Literature, Authorship, and the Occult in the Late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 161-162. McCann's discussion makes frequent comparisons between Machen's characterization of authorship and mediumship. My decision to not involve mediumship or Spiritualism in the present chapter is based on Machen's own dismissal of those practices' relationship to creativity: 'How can a man who is confessedly honest and straightforward conjure himself into the belief that when he takes up a pencil an intelligence apart from himself guides his hand as he writes?' Machen mocks the idea as being rooted in multiple personalities. He scolds the medium for making the same mistake as scientists of claiming to know too much, to know 'all the whole frame and scheme of the universe so thoroughly and completely.' This is in contrast to Machen, who proudly declares his worldview to be validated by the simple fact that 'I do not understand the universe', See Machen (1923), 18-20. Machen elsewhere refers to mediumship as 'Conandoylery.' See Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 27. This dismissal is not addressed in McCann's book. Machen told Ireland his position on this subject, writing that whatever name they went by – spiritualists, mystics, or occultists – 'they are all in utter darkness'. See MS. Mus. 1749/2/6 (15 September 1933), fol. 1.

[234] As McCann points out, the ability of 'great' literature to distinguish itself from forms of discourse governed by commercial or communicative pragmatism is a centrepiece of Machen's discussion of 'the differentia of literature' in *Hieroglyphics*. The 'discursive alterity' Machen displays runs counter to the idea of literary democratization that, especially during the time at which Machen was writing, was hotly debated. McCann, 3-4.

[235] Theodor Adorno, 'Reconciliation Under Durres', in *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: New Left Books, 1977), 161.

or her empirical form into something other. This is most clearly shown through Machen's characterization of the creative process in *The Hill of Dreams*. Lucian's earliest effort at writing is a book dedicated to his infatuation with Annie Morgan, a farmer's daughter. When the book is completed, Lucian develops a nocturnal ritual wherein he intones the text while carrying out masochistic acts on a bed of gorse thorns. He decides to imprint 'a curious sign' in those passages of the book 'where he was to inflict on himself this sweet torture.'[236]

From this point, describing Lucian as 'the author' becomes increasingly problematic. This ritual begins the gradual displacement in *The Hill of Dreams* of the authority and identity associated with authorship from Lucian to something other – in this first instance, the book. Through those curious signs, Lucian cedes creative power to the text; the text becomes its own kind of 'author' through those masochistic acts whose scars render Lucian's body like that of 'a tortured martyr'. The location of 'the author' has been destabilized to the point where one can no longer say whether it is wholly in the body or the text.[237] This blurring extends to the ink itself with which Lucian writes; he tints the black ink with 'red earth' and 'the unctuous juice of a certain fern', resulting in a 'glossy' dark red whose resemblance to blood is obvious, extending the metaphor of a body transferring itself through writing into something else. In any case, each of these sources refers us to the other: the body writes the text, the text writes the body, and so on. The author in this situation is now something other than the empirical 'Lucian' – he (it) is an abstraction.

[236] Machen (2010), 48-49. McCann's reading of this episode focuses on the somatic element of authorship, describing it as 'a fairly extreme account of Machen's sense of authorship as the translation of a corporeal stratum that finds its way into signification only in an extremely esoteric manner.' McCann, 166.
[237] Even if it were wholly in the body, one recalls Barthes's observation that 'my body does not have the same ideas I do.' Barthes (1975), 17.

By the book's end, this abstraction has reached its furthest limit. Lucian's body is discovered by his landlady and a man, Joe, who spot 'a little empty bottle of dark blue glass' on the desk. The landlady assumes that Lucian has died of an overdose, but the contents of this bottle is never disclosed.[238] It is mentioned only once before in the novel when Lucian resolves to 'hide his heart' and 'seek once more for his true life in the work', only to catch a glimpse of 'a dark blue bottle' on his mantelpiece that causes him to shudder, 'as if it were a fetish'.[239] The pain-induced pleasure refers us to the fetishistic ritual of the novel's beginning, and it is clear from this passage that Lucian's sense of identity is again relational to both text and instrument. Given its colour and the circumstances surrounding its appearance in the narrative, there is no more reason to assume that the content of the bottle is poison than that it is ink. Either way, the nature of creativity is connected through this symbol to the destruction (abstraction) of self: the bottle aids in the disintegration of the author, both literally and metaphorically.

To return to the novel's end, Lucian's manuscript is found on his desk next to the bottle. The papers are described as 'covered with illegible hopeless scribblings' and dismissed by the landlady as 'dreadful nonsense'. The novel concludes:

> The man took up the blazing paraffin lamp, and set it on the desk, beside the scattered heap of that terrible manuscript. The flaring light shone through the dead eyes into the dying brain, and there was a glow within, as if great furnace doors were opened.[240]

McCann considers *The Hill of Dreams* to thematize 'the dissonance between the disposition (aesthetic and psychological) of the individual author and the broader social and economic

[238] Machen (2010), 129-130. When asked if she has evidence that Lucian died of an overdose, the woman responds: 'Yes, to be sure I have. The doctor told him he would be certain to do for himself…I heard Dr Manning myself tell 'im [sic] in this very room that he'd kill 'imself [sic] one of these days.' But all this proves is that the doctor believed Lucian to be suicidal. It does not verify the contents of the bottle, let alone stand as evidence for Lucian's cause of death.
[239] Machen (2010), 104.
[240] Ibid, 129-130.

context into which all authors were thrown.' He reads the novel as the story of 'the impossibility of reconciling the imagination and the world of empirical experience' and therefore as an example of the relationship between authorship and alterity that drove the emergence of modernism during the *fin de siècle*.[241] Using McCann's reading as a foundation, one sees how the author has become totally abstracted from both body and text in the novel's final pages; his identity, behaviour, or intention cannot be descried from the text's illegibility any more than they can from Lucian's dead body. When we look for the man in either body or text, we are referred back to the other, and then to the other, and so on.

Back and forth, the author becomes both bounded and unlocatable. In this sense, Lucian is a precursor to Foucault's conception of the author as a 'function' or 'figure' rather than a person: the 'figure' acts as a functional principle by which one 'impedes' the free circulation of the work. Thus, the 'author' is in fact a figure made to represent an ideological production under the guise of fixed historicity. Foucault's call for a form of fiction that is not limited by the author parallels the present discussion of a form of the author that is not limited by empirical biography, just as his distinction between 'writer' and 'author' parallels Bourdieu's delineation between the consecrated and the unconsecrated.[242] In any case, Lucian aligns with Foucault's theory of the author as a character who is 'manifested or exemplified, though not depicted or described, in texts'. As with Lucian, the identity of Foucault's 'author' is a *movement*; it is the interaction between text and critic that produces him.[243]

---

[241] McCann, 147.
[242] See Michel Foucault, 'What Is An Author?', in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 217-229.
[243] Alexander Nehemas calls this reciprocal relationship outlined in Foucault's theory '*transcendental*'. See Alexander Nehemas, 'What An Author Is', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 83.11 (Nov. 1986), 688.

Back and forth, the pendulum swing is the only thing sustaining the illusion of an authorial image, like the pacing of the hermit in *Hieroglyphics* whose person dissolves to a disembodied voice in the shadows of the room. Crucially, in both instances, the system is closed: the author's identity is abstracted yet never refers to anything outside of itself, meaning that the only evidence of its existence must be derived by intuition, by a personal experience of this to-and-fro movement. At this point – analogous to the 'neither flesh nor fleshless' identity emanating from the paradoxical non-fixity of Eliot's 'still point' – the myth emerges.[244] It is the metamorphosis of the artist-character into an abstract pattern that enables this new identity. Northrop Frye explained how characters inhabiting an abstract story-pattern no longer needs to be 'plausible' or 'logical'. Once mythologized, the logic of the identity becomes 'self-contained' in the myth's pattern, in its movement.[245]

In all, Machen's scuttling and containment of the subject is an emphatic rejection of commercial models of authorship because it associates literary consecration with a disavowal of the marketplace forces and values on which popular notions of commercial pragmatism are based.[246] The biographical subject has collapsed. The author – and one recalls that the hermit and Lucian are both manifestations of Machen's semi-autobiographical avatar – is both here and not-here, altered from an empirical self into something other. 'Machen' has become another version of Hantke's 'Lovecraft.' He has become 'a glow within'.[247]

[244] T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), 5.
[245] Frye (1963), 30-31.
[246] McCann, 172.
[247] The 'glow within' of the novel's ending has also been interpreted as an illustration of the stalemate between vitalist and materialist readings of life. See Anthony Camara, 'Abominable Transformations: Becoming-Fungus in Arthur Machen's *The Hill of Dreams*', *Gothic Studies*, 16.1 (May 2014), 15-17.

Conclusion

Since the mid-twentieth century, life-writing apologisms have become a flourishing subspecies of the biographical genre. The limitations and problems of life-writing are nowadays widely acknowledged. Biography is subjective, constrictive, misrepresentative, hampered by structural concerns, plagued by questions of morality regarding what one should and should not know about a subject, subject to the fallibility of memory and the chance survival of evidence, and much else. But apologists for life-writing often merely chronicle these problems; if they do not ignore them, they dismiss them by explaining that they are necessary or endemic to the discipline and hope that no one pauses too long to wonder if the genre's problematic nature has really altered all that much since Boswell.

In this area, as in many others, musicology lags even further behind its sister disciplines. There is nothing in the musicological literature to compare with the enormous catalogue of self-directed criticism in literature towards literary biography, for example. This is partly the consequence of the boundary lines resulting from genre: biography is generally classified as a literary, historical, or psychoanalytical exercise to which music opportunistically attaches itself when in need of evidence for interdisciplinary, intertextual, psychoanalytical, or hermeneutic readings. Biography is not a purely musical enterprise but a kind of parasite; it is an analytical crutch upon which musicology, an invariably hybrid discipline, often leans.

The real challenge confronting the biographer of a weird artist is that their chosen subject endorses a worldview that exposes all of this, that runs counter to the foundations upon which the biographical genre is built. The weird endorses a not-knowing, a 'surrender' to those alternative systems of thought and analysis. That is why Machen remains such an

allusive and problematic figure in life-writing contexts. That is why Ireland 'the man', whatever the popularity of his music, will remain a marginal figure as long as musicology remains connected to Western and Enlightenment modes of discourse. Ireland and Machen are dangerous figures.

Canonical composers are a mix of both fact and fiction, served up wholesale to the public's imagination. Our perception of their music cannot be disentangled from the mythical image. Beethoven the man has become 'subsumed' by Beethoven the demigod.[248] When one listens to Beethoven's music, 'one is in the presence of something more than music', just as Beethoven himself becomes more than a historical figure of human proportions for his advocates. This sense of a suprahuman presence, which Scott Burnham calls 'the fundamental metaphor' of Beethoven's heroic style, buttresses the myth-making process regarding composers and their music: they are something more than what they are.[249]

Figures like Beethoven have been so deeply engrained into the collective imagination that their myths operate without assistance. Ireland has no such tradition. To achieve mythologization, his biography requires a more involved approach whereby one not only imagines what is missing from the record but reimagines what is present. The result is not a world-changing, heroic figure of the sort that Burnham describes but a mythical, consecrated entity nonetheless.

In fact, the trick is to mythologize Ireland *without* making him heroic, without neutralizing his alterity, because, as this chapter has shown, that is the biographical construct that Ireland sought. To use Machen's distinction, the weird artist can never be seen as a success, no matter how successful he or she is in *reality* because the *actuality* of the weird

[248] Burnham (1995), xvi.
[249] Ibid, 147.

artist is that of a failure, an outsider, an anomaly. The mythologization of the weird artist thus runs in the opposite direction of Beethoven by consecrating the artist-image in order to *reduce* its perceived accessibility. As restricted products, Machen's and Ireland's biographical acrobatics align with elements of Bourdieu's theory of field:

> Works produced by the field of restricted production are 'pure', 'abstract' and 'esoteric'. They are 'pure' because they demand of the receiver a specifically aesthetic disposition in accordance with the principles of their production. They are 'abstract' because they call for a multiplicity of specific approaches…They are 'esoteric' for all the above reasons and because their complex structure continually implies tacit reference to the entire history of previous structures, and is accessible only to those who possess practical or theoretical mastery of a refined code, of successive codes, and of the code of these codes.[250]

In summary, the value of the weird artist and their art is linked to the amount of effort required to establish value.

Ironically, the solution to the dis-enchantment of Taruskin's Mozart is contained in Taruskin's own essay. Towards the conclusion, Taruskin refers to recordings of Mozart by Glenn Gould. He purrs over Gould's non-traditional performance style, described as resulting from an 'uncanny…disembodied touch' and providing an example for Taruskin of how these too familiar works by this too familiar composer might still provide 'refreshment'. [251] Taruskin does not say so, but, when applied to biography, the aesthetics and methods of the uncanny may allow musicology a means of re-weirding a composer's over-popularized, demythologized image. This aligns with Machen's injunction to the writer who would capture the *actuality* of a life: 'You are to make wonder credible.'[252] Comprehensiveness is deemed just as futile and misleading as exactitude. The more one tries to tell the whole truth, 'the more the secret [i.e., truth] escapes from it'; and 'the more openly he [i.e., the writer]

[250] Bourdieu (1993), 120.
[251] Taruskin (1995), 304.
[252] Machen (1924), *The London Adventure*, 95.

reveals, the more deeply he conceals the mysteries.'[253] The more one learns about a subject, the less he knows.

In an essay on Bram Stoker, an author of whom Machen was in awe, William Hughes investigated the contrast between biographical and fictional portrayals of the author, providing a possible solution to how to treat the weird artist in biography. However much it may have originally been rooted in truth, the attention of biographers and literary critics has made Stoker 'a fiction rather than a reality, a character rather than an author.' Once the fictional version of the artist is let out, there is no putting the cat back in the bag, there is no 'easy containment.' Perhaps irrevocably, and in a manner which far exceeds the confines of academia, biography and fiction have transformed Stoker into a character in a mythology.[254] In his monumental, two-volume *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft*, S.T. Joshi reaches the same conclusion as Hughes. Lovecraft's ambiguities are reinvoked in the biography's final pages and left open-ended, confirming that the preceding one-thousand pages have resolved none of them, and not through any lack of thoroughness. As Joshi writes, 'there is still the half-mythical figure of Lovecraft himself', and it is this 'half-mythical figure' who drives society's continued and ever-growing interest in Lovecraft studies.[255] The same phenomenon appears in the foreword to *The John Ireland Companion*, where Julian Lloyd Webber asks what John Ireland's name 'mean[s] to music-lovers fifty years after his death?'[256] By the book's conclusion, the question remains unanswered.

---

[253] Machen (1923), 73-74. Machen is writing in this context about Casanova's memoirs, his translation of which for many decades remained the standard edition.
[254] William Hughes, 'The Un-Death of the Author: The Fictional Afterlife of Bram Stoker', in *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations*, ed. Catherine Wynne (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 211 and 220.
[255] S.T. Joshi, *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft – Volume II* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2013), 1057.
[256] Foreman (2011), xxi.

To destroy the myth would be to destroy the *realness* (i.e., Machen's *actuality*) of the man. Ireland and Machen are not historical persons. They are characters. Their personas have been weirded into the unknowable. As Otto Kurz and Ernst Kris argue in their contrarian study of biography and the mythologized artist, the question of what happened, what is true, becomes irrelevant. All that matters is that the story (the construction) is retold, that the anecdote recurs until it recurs so frequently so as 'to warrant the conclusion that it represents a typical image of the artist.' The fictional anecdote is the 'primitive cell' of biography which 'taps [into] the realms of myth and saga, from which it carries a wealth of imaginative material into recorded history.'[257]

Again, in Machen's words, 'I divined the majesty I could not comprehend.' The delight that the weird artist takes in his contradictions and schemes is part of his charm. Moreover, the success of the scheme depends upon our not looking too closely. Ireland's biography embodies the same principle. If you want to *know* Ireland, the unknowable, then do not look at him. Look first at Machen, as Ireland wished, and then accept that Machen directs one's gaze to the unfathomable mystery of the self; back and forth, a circular mode of discourse that leads – nowhere. And so, the most accurate biography of Ireland's life would also be the shortest, leaving us precisely where we started: he is weird. As Machen believed, and as his weird speculative worldview proselytizes, there is no 'therefore' to the story, no '*ergo*', no progression: '*Omnia Exeunt in Mysterium*.' That this flies in the face of all the principles of standard biography and musicology is the whole point because the weird is antagonistic – it is anathema to what we think we know and to the systems with which we presume to know it. It is, Machen writes, 'just dimly possible' that the 'real pattern and

[257] Otto Kurz and Ernst Kris, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981), 11-12.

scheme of life' is in fact inaccessible by the world of common sense and rationalism or 'reasoned deductions', but it is rather 'a secret pattern, an ornament which seems to have but little relation or none at all to the obvious scheme of the universe.'[258] What remains is story, lie, fiction, myth: the techniques that weird the weird artist into something other. If you surrender to the unknowing of the biographical subject, not as a form of ignorance but as an alternative and paradoxical way of knowing, if you are willing to play on his terms, then the real Ireland just might come out and get you.

[258] *The London Adventure*, 26.

Conclusion: The Cryptogram

Administering literary judgments in *Hieroglyphics,* Machen begrudgingly admitted R.L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) to the shelf of great literature but only 'by the skin of its teeth.'[1] Machen's hesitation indicates much of his concern regarding the relationships between art, analysis, and meaning. Readers might reasonably assume that the central theme of Stevenson's book – that 'man is not truly one, but truly two' – would have received Machen's unqualified recommendation because it is a subject with which Machen was obsessed throughout his entire career: the dual nature of knowledge and being, the mystery of humankind's sacramental nature.[2] But for Machen, such a theme requires something beyond Stevenson's 'mechanical' execution. It is not enough for art to convey an idea; it must convey that idea in the appropriate way. For Machen, no matter how profound it may be, an idea whose execution is unsuitable or insufficient will perish in transit. This is because the execution of the idea is inextricable from the idea itself; the essence of artistic meaning is irreducible.[3]

In *Hieroglyphics,* Machen argued that great literature is analysis-proof. Stevenson's mistake was therefore his literalisation of this sacramental theme. By disclosing too much, the novel disrespected the mystery it presumed to understand. In Machen's view, this made *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* unworthy of a second reading.

> …the secret once disclosed, all the steps which lead to the disclosure become, *ipso facto,* insignificant, or rather they become nothing at all, since their only significance and their only existence lay in the secret, and when the secret has ceased to be a secret, the signs and cyphers of it fall also into the world of nonentity. You may be amazed,

[1] Machen (1960), 81-82.
[2] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 107-108.
[3] Machen (1960), 81-82.

> and perplexed, and entranced by a cryptogram, while you are solving it, but the solution once attained, your cryptogram is either nothing or perilously near to nothingness.[4]

This is the same balance between revelation and concealment with which this thesis has been concerned from its beginning. For the analyst of weird art, the trick is to analyse without necessarily 'solving the cryptogram' and to bring the artwork into a larger cultural discourse without trespassing on the ground that the artist designates as inviolable.

This thesis fills a significant gap in Ireland scholarship, serving as both a counterbalance and a corrective to various non-academic commentaries that have dominated the field since the 1920s. It accords Ireland a hermeneutic analysis of a breadth and depth that is normally reserved for more historically celebrated figures and which is still a relatively recent enterprise in British musicology despite the progress of the last thirty years.

Chapter One demonstrated how Machen's work reveals new erotic aspects in Ireland's music, and it confronted the uncomfortable and often overlooked implications that surround Ireland's life and work in this arena. In turn, it provided an erotic counternarrative to the way in which Machen, described by his son as 'never anything but a High Church Tory', is popularly read.[5] Chapter Two brought Ireland's music into the realm of urban aesthetics, exploring numerous parallels between his London compositions and contemporaneous art and literature. The correspondence between the structures of *Ballade of London Nights* and *The Three Imposters* serves as a particularly useful model for how artworks engaging with the unfinished or unfinishable may be used to 'complete' or at least (partially) explain one another within an interdisciplinary context. Chapter Three included the most substantial analysis of Ireland's *Legend* to date, identifying specific passages in

[4] Ibid.
[5] Quoted in Machin (2017), 152.

Machen's texts exploited by Ireland for musical effects and allusions. This analysis credits Machen's literature with a degree of interdisciplinary influence that far exceeds his traditional allotment; in turn, Ireland's musical realisation of the sonic and physical references in Machen's texts both complements and intensifies our subsequent readings. And in Chapter Four, Ireland and Machen were used as case studies to examine the problematic nature of biography. This study employed a level of scepticism towards biography that, though widely utilized in literary studies, has traditionally been restrained in British musicology, thus challenging the ways in which Ireland and other British composers are perceived. For Machen, this chapter again shows the extent to which he served as a model for a significant artist outside of his field. It is furthermore the first study to identify parallels between Machen's worldview and later developments in the philosophy of speculative realism.

Through its case studies, this thesis has proved that Machen is not a surface-level influence in Ireland's work; he is not simply what Colin Scott-Sutherland called 'a catalyst' who revealed to Ireland something that he already possessed.[6] In short, this thesis has elevated the notion that Machen's work 'hovers…[like] a winged epigraph, over all of Ireland's mature music' from a supposition to a theory.[7]

For a hermeneutic reading, success is achieved if its propositions 'become part of the lore' surrounding its subject.[8] While Machen and Ireland, being weird, must always in some sense remain both marginal and disreputable, it is nevertheless hoped that this thesis will be

[6] Quoted in Foreman (2011), 126.
[7] Hold, 187.
[8] Kramer (2017), 456.

of interest to both academics and performers, both musicologists and literary critics, and that it will become part of the 'lore' surrounding the work and persona of these artists.

Hermeneutics is a continuous enterprise as each description 'establishes the potentiality of other descriptions.'[9] As such, the contributions of this thesis to the literature have also indicated possible directions for additional research. Within the frame of Machen's hermeneutic window, there is further ground to be covered: due to limitations of space, many of Ireland's compositions have not received attention here, even though they may benefit substantially from similar tandem readings. Ireland's chamber works are particularly deserving of this attention, suffering as they do from a near total lack of attention by musicology. At the same time, future studies of Ireland need not be tied exclusively to Machen. This thesis has indicated throughout how other figures – Arthur Symons, Alice Meynell, Sylvia Townsend Warner, George Egerton, Aubrey Beardsley, among many others – are relevant to Ireland's story, and not in a merely contextual way. They each deserve individual studies that more fully analyse and appreciate their unique contribution to Ireland's life and work.

The alignment of hermeneutics with the weird in this thesis represents a potential starting point for future interpretative models, one that indulges more significantly in the aspects of credulity, speculation, and paradox that inform these weird artists and their work. In particular, the intersection of the weird and the mystical demands further attention. Carl Dahlhaus believed that hermeneutics derives from 'textual criticism' rather than 'mysticism', but there is a potential danger, a myopia, in dismissing too glibly the claims of the mystical worldview.[10] The speculative model outlined in Chapter Four of this thesis poses the

[9] Ibid, 462.
[10] Dahlhaus (1983), 81.

question: is there a method of analysis that may seriously and productively consider the principles of weirdness and any other systems that revolve around the illuminating principles of unknowing rather than knowing? Even though we may reject the claims of some metaphysical systems, there might somehow be aspects of the *process* of mysticism that do relate to the musical product in a way extending beyond the stage of inspiration. How do we divorce analysis from enlightenment-bound systems of thought? Though beyond its confines, this question hovers over this thesis like a 'winged epigraph.'

One of the crucial words in Lovecraft's definition of the weird tale, with which this thesis began, is 'unexplainable'. As we have seen, if there is a common thread to the oeuvre of weird art, it is that our experience of the weird is beyond words; it necessitates a total submission to the forever unknowable – an ecstatic submission, in Machen's terminology. Thus, as a subjective and antitheoretical system, the weird always refers back to itself as the final proof of its claims. If, as Lovecraft believed, 'atmosphere is the all-important thing' in our understanding of the weird, then Jeff and Ann VanderMeer are probably correct: 'I know it when I *feel* it.'[11]

For Machen, great art was likewise 'a mysterious ecstasy,' our enjoyment of which defies 'rationalistic justification'; to talk about great art is to be consciously and deliberately 'nonsensical.'[12] In *Hieroglyphics,* Machen challenged his interlocutor:

> Explain, in rational terms, the 'Quest of the Holy Graal [sic].' State whether in your opinion such a vessel ever existed, and if you think it did not, justify your pleasure in reading the account of the search for it.[13]

[11] VanderMeer (2011), xvi.
[12] Machen (1960), 152-153.
[13] Ibid, 150.

While flushing out the affinities between Ireland and Machen as far as it can, this thesis has enhanced our understanding of both artists without necessarily 'solving the cryptogram.' As with Machen's Graal, it is hoped that the final proof of its propositions will be measured in some part by the pleasure that is afforded by their reading.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

British Library, London: Music Collections

The Papers of John Ireland Collected by the John Ireland Trust, MS Mus. 1749.

Alan Bush Collection: Correspondence with the composer John Ireland, MS Mus. 434.

The John Ireland Collection MS. Mus. 52871-52901.

John Nicholson Ireland, letters to Rev. Kenneth Charles Thompson MS 60535-60536.

Chapman Papers, Vol. III: Correspondence and papers relating to John Ireland, MS 61884.

Books and Articles

Aaron, Jane, *Welsh Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

Abbott, Helen, *Baudelaire in Song: 1880-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Ackroyd, Peter, *London: The Biography* (New York & London: Anchor Books, 2000).

Adams, Byron, 'The ''Dark Saying'' of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox', *19th-Century Music*, 23.3 (2000), 218-325.

_____'Save Me From Those Suffering Boys', in *Benjamin Britten Studies: Essays On An Inexplicit Art*, ed. Vicki Stroeher and Justin Vickers (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2017), 178-191.

Adorno, Theodor, 'Reconciliation Under Durres', in *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: New Left Books, 1977), 157-185.

Agawu, Kofi, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Albright, Daniel, *Panaesthetics: On the Unity and Diversity of the Arts* (London: Yale University Press, 2014).

Albright, Daniel, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Allcroft, A. Hadrian, *Downland Pathways* (London: Methuen, 1924).

Allis, Michael, 'Shared Concerts: Thoughts on British Literature and British Music in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 19.1 (2005), 1-33.

_____*British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).

_____'Reading Music Through Literary Scholarship: Granville Bantock, Shelley, and *The Witch of Atlas*', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 36.1 (2017), 6-28.

Almén, Byron, *A Theory of Musical Narrative, Musical Meaning, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008).
Asquith, Cynthia, *The Second Ghost Book* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1956).
Atkinson, Juliette, *Victorian Biography Reconsidered: A Study of Nineteenth-Century 'Hidden' Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
Auerbach, Nina, *Private Theatricals: The Lives of the Victorians* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990).
Banfield, Stephen, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century: Volumes 1 and 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
_____'Review: *Constant Lambert: Beyond the Rio Grande* by Stephen Lloyd and *Sir George Dyson*: *His Life and Music* by Paul Spicer', *Music & Letters*, 96.2 (May 2015), 297-304.
Barfoot, C.C, *'And Never Know the Joy': Sex and the Erotic in English Poetry* (New York: Brill, 2006).
Barthes, Roland, trans. Richard Miller, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1975).
_____*The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).
Batchelor, John (ed.), *The Art of Literary Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
Baudelaire, Charles, *Paris Spleen*, trans. Martin Sorrell (London: Alma Classics, 2010).
Beckson, Karl, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992).
Begbie, Harold, *On the Side of the Angels: A Reply to A. Machen* (London: Hodden and Stoughton, 1915).
Benjamin, Walter, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essay on Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Michael William Jennings (London: Belknap, 2006).
Bennett, Rodney, 'The Songs of John Ireland', *The Bookman*, 61.366 (March 1922), 282-285.
Benson, Stephen, *Literary Music: Writing Music in Contemporary Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
Benton, Michael, *Literary Biography: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
_____*Towards a Poetics of Literary Biography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
Berger, Arthur, 'Problems of Pitch Organization in Stravinsky', *Perspectives of New Music*, 2.1 (1963), 11-42.
Berlin, Isaiah, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
Bernstein, J.M, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
Besant, Annie and Charles Leadbetter, *Thought-Forms* (Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1969).
Blake, William, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W.H. Stevenson (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
Bliss, Arthur, *As I Remember* (London: Thames Publishing, 1989).

Blunt, Reginald, *Paradise Row: A Broken Piece of Old Chelsea* (London: Richard Clay & Sons, 1906).
_____*The Wonderful Village: A Further Record of Some Famous Folk and Places by Chelsea Reach* (London: Mills and Boon, 1918).
_____*Red Anchor Pieces* (London: Mills and Boon, 1928).
Blyth, Caroline (ed.), *Decadent Verse: An Anthology of Late-Victorian Poetry – 1872-1900* (London: Anthem Press, 2009).
Bonds, Mark Evan, *The Beethoven Syndrome: Hearing Music as Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
Botstein, Leon, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography: The Cultural Context of Sir Edward Elgar's Career', in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 365-406.
Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. Randal Johnson (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993).
Bowie, Andrew, 'What Comes After Art?', in *The New Aestheticism*, ed. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 62-82.
Brantlinger, Patrick, 'Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914', in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, ed. Lyn Pykett (London: Longman Addison Wesley Limited, 1996), 184-209.
Brassier, Ray, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux, 'Speculative Realism', in *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development Volume 3*, ed. Robin Mackay (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2007), 307-449.
Brook, Donald, *Composers' Gallery: Biographical Sketches of Contemporary Composers* (London: Rockcliff, 1949).
Brooke, Jocelyn, *The Birth of a Legend: A Reminiscence of Arthur Machen and John Ireland* (London: Bertram Rota, 1964).
Brown, Marshall, *The Tooth that Nibbles at the Soul: Essays on Music and Poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).
Buch, Esteban, 'Climax as Orgasm: On Debussy's *L'isle joyeuse*', *Music & Letters*, 100.1 (2019), 24-60.
Bucknell, Brad, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce, and Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
Burnham, Scott, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
Bush, Geoffrey, *Left, Right, and Centre: Reflections on Composers and Composing* (London: Thames Publishing, 1983).
Caldwell, John, *The Oxford History of English Music*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
Camara, Anthony, 'Abominable Transformations: Becoming-Fungus in Arthur Machen's *The Hill of Dreams*', *Gothic Studies*, 16.1 (May 2014), 9-23.
Carlyle, Thomas, *Sartor Resartus and On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1908).
Carruthers, Gerald and Alan Rawes, *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
Carter, Margaret, "*Fiend, Spectre, or Delusion?": Narrative Doubt and the Supernatural in Gothic Fiction* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986).
Cherlin, Michael, 'Schoenberg and Das Unheimlich: Spectres of Tonality', *The Journal of Musicology*, 11.3 (Summer 1993), 357-373.

Chesterton, G.K., *A Short History of England* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917).
Chrismas, Laura, *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003).
Churchill, Jonathan, *Form, Continuity, and Disjunction in Vaughan Williams's Symphonies* (DPhil Thesis: Duke University, 2022).
Clarke, David, 'Rumours of Angels: A Legend of the First World War', *Folklore*, 113 (2002), 151-173.
_____*The Angel of Mons: Phantom Soldiers and Ghostly Guardians* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2004).
Cogburn, Jon, *Garcian Meditations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).
Cohn, Richard, 'Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57 (2004), 285-323.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Volume 4 (Part 1): The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
Collins, Wilkie, *The Woman in White* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
Cone, Edward T., *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
Connerton, Paul, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
Cooke, Margaret Winifred, *John Ireland (1879-1962): A Biographical and Critical Study with Special Reference to the Work Involving Piano* (MA Thesis: University of Wales, 1972).
Cormac, Joanne, 'Introduction: Music and Biography', *19th-Century Music*, 44.2 (Fall 2020), 61-66.
Craggs, Stewart, *John Ireland: A Catalogue, Discography, and Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1993.
Crossley-Holland, Peter, 'John Ireland', in *Manchester Sounds Vol 4*, ed. David Fallows, (Manchester: The Manchester Musical Heritage Trust, 2008), 4-73.
Dahlhaus, Carl, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J.B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
_____*Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).
Dayan, Peter, *Music Writing Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
De Laurentiis, Allegra and Jeffrey Edwards (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).
Denisoff, Dennis, *Decadent Ecology in British Literature and Art, 1860-1910: Decay, Desire, and the Pagan Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
_____'Introduction', in *Arthur Machen: Decadent and Occult Works*, ed. Dennis Denisoff (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2018), 1-28.
Derrida, Jacques, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).
_____'Writing and Difference', trans. Alan Bass, in *Jacques Derrida: Basic Writings*, ed. Barry Stocker (London: Routledge, 2007), 210-234.
Dickens, Charles, *Little Dorrit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
Dickinson, A.E.F., 'The Progress of John Ireland', *Music Review*, 1.4 (November 1940), 343-353.
Dobson, Eleanor, 'Ruby Lips and Whitby Jet', *Gothic Studies*, 20.1 (May 2018), 124-139.

Dowling, Linda, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, ed. Lyn Pykett (London: Longman Addison Wesley Limited ,1996), 47-63.
_____*Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).
Drake, Kenneth, *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
Eggar, Kathryn, 'The Pianoforte Music of John Ireland', *Music Teacher* (June 1922), 465-467.
Elferen, Isabella Van, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).
_____'Goth Music and Subculture', in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music*, ed. Christopher Partridge and Marcus Moberg (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2017), 319-320.
_____'The Gothic Bach', *Understanding Bach*, 7 <https://bachnetwork.org/understanding-bach/ub7/> [accessed 18 January 2022].
Eliot, T.S., *The Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).
Ellis, Havelock, *Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915).
Foreman, Lewis, *The John Ireland Companion* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011).
Evans, Edwin, 'Mr. Edwin Evans on Eugène Goossens and John Ireland', *The Musical Times*, 59.905 (1918), 321-322.
_____'John Ireland', *The Musical Quarterly*, 5.2 (1919), 213-220.
_____'Modern British Composers: V. John Ireland, *The Musical Times*, 60.918 (1919), 394-396.
_____*The Margin of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924).
Evans, John (ed.), *Journeying Boy: The Diaries of the Young Benjamin Britten, 1928-1938* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009).
Fisher, Mark, 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, 66.1 (Fall 2012), 16-24.
Foucault, Michel, 'What Is An Author?', in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 217-229.
France, Peter and William St. Clair (eds.), *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
Frank, Alan, *Modern British Composers* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1953).
Franseen, Kristin M., 'Queering Musical Biography in the Writings of Edward Prime-Stevenson and Rosa Newmarch', *19th-Century Music*, 44.2 (Fall 2020), 100-118.
Freeman, Nicholas, 'Arthur Machen: Ecstasy and Epiphany', *Literature and Theology*, 24.3 (2010), 242-255.
Freud, Sigmund, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953).
Frogley, Alain, 'Vaughan Williams and Thomas Hardy: ''Tess'' and the Slow Movement of the Ninth Symphony', *Music & Letters*, 68.1 (January 1987), 42-59.
_____'H.G. Wells and Vaughan Williams's A London Symphony: Politics and Culture in Fin-de-Siecle England', in *Sundry Sorts of Music Books: Essays on the British Library Collections*, ed. Chris A. Banks, Arthur Searle, and Malcolm Turner (London: British Library, 1993), 299-308.

_____(ed.). *Vaughan Williams Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
_____'History and Geography: The Early Orchestral Works and the First Three Symphonies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, ed. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81-105.
Frye, Northrop, *Fables of Identity:* Studies in Poetic Mythology (London: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1963).
Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).
Gabriel, Markus, *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
Garcia, Tristan, *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*, trans. Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).
Germaine Buckley, Chloe. 'H.P. Lovecraft versus Sherlock Holmes in *Shadow Over Baker Street*', in *Sideways in Time: Critical Essays on Alternate History Fiction*, ed. Glyn Morgan and Charul Palmer-Patel (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 139-154.
Gironi, Fabio, 'Science-Laden Theory: Outlines of an Unsettled Alliance', in *Speculations*, ed. Paul J. Ennis (Earth, Milky Way: Punctum Books, 2010), 9-46.
Gordon, Lydall, *Charlotte Brontë: A Passionate Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994).
Gould, Warwick, 'The Mask before *The Mask*', *Yeats Annual No. 19: A Special Issue*, ed. Margaret Mills Harper and Warwick Gould (London: Open Book Publishers, 2013), 3-47.
Graham, Stephen, *London Nights* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1925).
_____*Twice Round the London Clock and More London Nights* (London: E. Benn, 1933).
Gratton, Peter, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).
Greene, Richard, 'A Musico-Rhetorical Outline of Holst's *Egdon Heath*', *Music & Letters*, 73.2 (1992), 244-267.
Grew, Sydney, 'A London Symphony by Ralph Vaughan Williams', *The British Musician*, 2.4 (December 1926), 149-156.
Grimley, Daniel and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
Grimley, Daniel,'Music, Ice, and the ''Geometry of Fear'' in Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91.1-2 (Spring-Summer 2008), 116-150.
_____'Landscape and Distance: Vaughan Williams, Modernism, and the Symphonic Pastoral', in *British Musical Modernism, 1895-1960*, ed. Matthew Riley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 147-174.
_____'Music, Landscape, and the Sound of Place: On Hearing Delius's *Song of the High Hills*', *The Journal of Musicology*, 33.1 (Winter 2016), 11-44.
Groves, Stephen, 'The Sound of the English Picturesque in the Age of the Landscape Garden', *Eighteenth Century Music*, 9.2 (2012), 185-212.
Gusdorf, Georges, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 28-48.
Guthrie, Kate, 'Propaganda Music in Second World War Britain: John Ireland's Epic March', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 139.1 (2012), 137-175.

Hantke, Steffen, 'From the Library of America to the Mountains of Madness: Recent Discourse on H.P. Lovecraft', in *New Critical Essays on H.P. Lovecraft*, ed. David Simmons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 133-156.
Hardy, Thomas, *Collected Poems of Thomas Hard, With a Portrait* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920).
Harman, Graham, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009).
_____*Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010).
_____'On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy', in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.Press, 2011), 21-40.
_____*Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2012).
_____*Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).
Harper-Scott, J.P.E., *Edward Elgar: Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
Harrison, Brian, 'Comparative Biography and the DNB' in *Comparative Criticism*, 25 (2004), 3-26.
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Scarlet Letter* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Grouup, 2014).
Head, Matthew, 'Myths of a Sinful Father: Maynard Solomon's *Mozart*' in *Music & Letters*, 80.1 (February 1999), 74-85.
Hemecker, Wilhelm and Edward Saunders (eds.), *Biography in Theory: Key Texts with Commentaries* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).
Henley, W.E., *London Voluntaries: The Song of the Sword and Other Verses* (London: David Nutt, 1893).
Hepokoski, James, 'Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss's *Don Juan* Reinvestigated', in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 130-146.
Heyman, Barbara, 'Gay Composers; Barber: No Need Of Any Label', *The New York Times*, 10 July 1994, section 2, 2.
Hill, Ralph, 'John Ireland', in *British Music of Our Time*, ed. A.L. Bacharach (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1951), 97-110.
Hold, Trevor, *Parry to Finzi: 20 English Song Composers* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002).
Howes, Frank, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966).
Howkins, Alun, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1987), 85-112.
Hoyer, Emily C., *Broadcasting Englishness: National Music in Interwar BBC Periodicals* (DPhil Thesis, Northwestern University, 2016).
Hughes, Meirion and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
Hughes, William, 'The Un-Death of the Author: The Fictional Afterlife of Bram Stoker', in *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations*, ed. Catherine Wynne (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 207-221.

Hurd, Michael, 'The Music of John Ireland', *Music & Letters*, 82.4, 674-675.
Hurley, Kelly, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
Jackson, Holbrook, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922).
Jackson, Kimberley, 'Non-Evolutionary Degeneration in Arthur Machen's Supernatural Tales', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 41.1 (2013), 125-135.
James, Henry, *The Letters of Henry James: Volume I*, ed. Percy Lubbock (London: Macmillan, 1920).
_____*Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. James. E. Miller, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972).
James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 2013).
Jander, Owen, 'Beethoven's ''Orpheus in Hades'': The ''Andante con moto'' of the Fourth Piano Concerto', *19th-Century Music*, 8.3 (Spring 1985), 129-212.
_____'A Ten-Year Retrospect on the Andante con moto of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto', *19th-Century Music*, 19.1 (Summer 1995), 31-49.
Jarvis, Simon, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998).
Jean-Aubry, G., 'British Music Through French Eyes', *Musical Quarterly*, 5, 192-212.
Joshi, S.T., *The Weird Tale: Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M.R. James, Ambrose Bierce, and H.P. Lovecraft* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).
_____ *The Modern Weird Tale* (London: McFarland, 2001).
_____*I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft – Volumes I & II* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2013).
_____'Arthur Machen: The Evils of Materialism', in *The Scarlet Ceremonies: Critical Essays on Arthur Machen*, ed. Mark Valentine and Timothy J. Jarvis (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2019), 10-20.
Jullien, Francois, *This Strange Idea of the Beautiful*, trans. Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London & New York: Seagull Books, 2016).
Kane, Michael, *Modern Men: Mapping Masculinity in English and German Literature, 1880-1930* (London: Cassell, 1999).
Kaye, Simon T., 'Challenging Certainty: The Utility and History of Counterfactualism', *History and Theory*, 49.1 (February 2010), 38-57.
Keir, Patricia *John Ireland: A Practical Guide to Selected Works for Piano* (MMus Thesis: Royal College of Music, 1990).
Kerman, Joseph, *Concerto Conversations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).
_____'Representing a Relationship: Notes on a Beethoven Concerto', *Representations*, 39 (Summer 1992), 80-101.
_____'Beethoven's Opus 131 and the Uncanny', *19th-Century Music*, 25. 2-3 (Fall/Spring, 2001-2), 155-164.
Killeen, Jarlath, *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).
Klein, Michael Leslie, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music, Musical Meaning, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

_____'*L'Isle joyeuse* as Territorial Assemblage', *19th-Century Music*, 31.1 (Summer 2007), 28-52.
_____'Intertextuality, Topic Theory, and the Open Text', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Literature and Music*, ed. Delia da Sousa Correa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 16-24.
Kobe, Zdravko, 'A Return to the Pre-critical? On Meillassoux's Speculative Realism and a More General Problem', in *New Realism and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Gregor Kroupa and Jure Simoniti (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 113-144.
Koestenbaum, Wayne, 'Wilde's Hard Labor and the Birth of Gay Reading', in *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*, ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden (New York: Routledge, 1990), 176-189.
Kramer, Lawrence, 'Music, Metaphor, and Metaphysics', *The Musical Times*, 145. (1988), 5-18.
_____'Dangerous Liaisons: The Literary Text in Musical Criticism', *19th-Century Music*, 13.2 (Autumn 1989), 159-167.
_____*Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
_____'Revenants: Masculine Thresholds in Schubert, James, and Freud', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 57.3 (September 1996), 449-477.
_____*Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
_____*Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
_____'Subjectivity Unbound: Music, Language, and Culture', in *Song Acts: Writings on Words and Music* (Leiden and Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2017), 451-463.
Kristeva, Julia, 'The Bounded Text', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 10-36.
Kroupa, Gregor and Jure Simoniti (eds.), *New Realism and Contemporary Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).
Kurz, Otto and Ernst Kris, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981).
Langer, Susanne K., *Problems of Art* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1957).
Leadbetter, Gregory, *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
Lee, Hermione, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
Lee, Sydney, *Principles of Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).
_____*Perspectives of Biography* (London: The English Association, 1917).
Lee, Vernon, 'Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art', *The Cornhill Magazine*, 42.248 (August 1880), 212-228.
_____*Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (Chicago: Leopold Classic Library, 1898).
Leslie, K., *The Chamber Music of John Ireland* (MA Thesis: University of Wales, 1976).
Levinson, Jerrold, *Music, Art, & Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
Longmire, John, *John Ireland – Portrait of a Friend* (London: John Banker, 1969).
Lovecraft, H.P., *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973).

Lubey, Kathleen, *Excitable Imaginations: Eroticism and Reading in Britain, 1660-1760* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012).
Luckhurst, Roger, 'The Weird: a dis/orientation', *Textual Practice*, 31.6 (2017), 1041-1061.
Machen, Arthur, 'Happiness and Horror', *The Academy*, 1871 (14 March 1908), 561-563.
_____'A Note on Asceticism', *The Academy*, 2038 (27 May 1911), 653.
_____'The Paradox of Literature', *The Academy*, 2108 (28 September 1912), 409-410.
_____*The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light* (London: Grant Richards, 1913).
_____*The Angel of Mons: The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1915).
_____*War and the Christian Faith* (London: Skeffington & Son, Ltd, 1918).
_____*Far Off Things* (London: M. Secker, 1922).
_____*The Secret Glory* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1923).
_____*Things Near and Far* (London: Martin Secker, 1923).
_____*The London Adventure: Or, The Art of Wandering* (London: M. Secker, 1924).
_____*Precious Balms* (London: Spurr & Swift, 1924).
_____'The Little Beings of the Forest', *The Graphic*, 112 (11 July 1925), 64.
_____'An Ancient Mystery', *The Bookman*, 70.420 (September 1926), 281-282.
_____'The Holy Kabbalah', *The Bookman*, 79.459 (December 1929), 184.
_____*Beneath the Barley: A Note on the Origins of Eleusinia* (London: printed privately, 1931).
_____*The Autobiography of Arthur Machen* (London: The Richards Press, 1951).
_____*Hieroglyphics: A Note Upon Ecstasy in Literature* (London: Unicorn Press, 1960).
_____*The Town of a Magic Dream: Arthur Machen in Whitby*, ed. Mark Valentine (Southampton: A Caermaen Publication, 1987).
_____*Strange Roads: With the Gods in Spring* (Green Round Press: Caerleon, 1990).
_____*A Few Letters* (Cheshire: The Ayelsford Press, 1993).
_____*The Three Imposters* (London: Everyman 1995).
_____*Ornaments in Jade* (East Sussex: Tartarus Press, 1997).
_____*Dreads and Drolls* (Leyburn: Tartarus Press, 2007).
_____*The Hill of Dreams* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2010).
_____*The White People and Other Weird Stories* (London: Penguin, 2011).
_____*The Great God Pan and Other Horror Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
Machin, James, *Weird Fiction in Britain: 1880-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
Mahoney, Kristin, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
Mantie, Roger, 'Thinking about Music and Technology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Technology and Music Education*, ed. S. Alex Ruthmann and Roger Mantie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 15-30.
Mason, Stuart, *Oscar Wilde: Art and Morality – a Defence of "The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Jacobs, 1908).
Matless, David, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion, 1998).
Maus, Fred Everett, 'Music as Drama', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 10 (Spring 1988), 56-73.
_____'Agency in Instrumental Music and Song', *College Music Symposium*, 29 (1989), 31-43.

McCann, Andrew, *Popular Literature, Authorship, and the Occult in the Late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
McClary, Susan, 'A Musical Dialectic from the Enlightenment: Mozart's *Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453, Movement 2*', *Cultural Critique*, 4 (Autumn 1986), 129-169.
McDermott, Paul, *The Whitby Ghost Book: Hauntings, Legends, & Superstitions*, Illustrated by Helen Walasek (Leicester: Anderson Publications, 1987).
McDonald, Peter D., *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice: 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
McGuire, Charles Edward, *Elgar's Oratorios: The Creation of an Epic Narrative* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2002).
Mellers, Wilfrid, *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1989).
Middlebrook, Diane Wood, 'Postmodernism and the Biographer', in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, ed. Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 155-166.
Miévelle, China, 'Weird Fiction', in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould (London: Routledge, 2009), 485-489.
Mighall, Robert, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
Miller, John MacNeill, 'Weird Beyond Description: Weird Fiction and the Suspicion of Scenery', *Victorian Studies*, 62.2 (2020), 244-252.
Millgate, Michael, *Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1995).
Monahan, Seth, 'Action and Agency Revisited', *Journal of Music Theory*, 57.2 (Fall 2013), 312-371.
Monelle, Raymond, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
Montani, John, 'The Rhythm of Hegel's Speculative Logic', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 36.2 (2022), 254-263.
Murray, Alex, *Landscapes of Decadence: Literature and Place at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
Nadel, Ira Bruce, *Biography: Fiction, Fact, and Form* (London: Macmillan, 1984).
Navarette, Susan Jennifer, *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1997).
Nehemas, Alexander, 'What An Author Is', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 83 No. 11 (Nov. 1986), 685-691.
Neubauer, John, 'Music and Literature: The Institutional Dimensions', in *Music and Text*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3-20.
Newton, Neil, 'An Aspect of Functional Harmony in Schoenberg's Early Post-Tonal Music', *Music Analysis*, 33.1 (2014), 1-31.
Nordau, Max, *Degeneration*, trans. Reinette M. Mccrea (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895).
Norris, John and Andrew Neill (eds.), *A Special Flame: The Music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2004).
O'Connor, Laura, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

O'Gorman, Francis, 'Ruskin's Aesthetic of Failure in ''The Stones of Venice'', *The Review of English Studies*, 55.220 (June 2004), 119-136.
Ohi, Kevin, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).
O'Higgins, Rachel, *The Correspondence of Alan Bush and John Ireland, 1927-1961* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
Ottaway, Hugh, 'The Piano Music of John Ireland', *Monthly Musical Record*, 84 (December 1954), 258-266.
_____'Review: John Ireland, Portrait of a Friend by John Longmire', *The Musical Times*, 110.1518 (August 1969), 838-839.
Owen, Alex, 'Borderland Forms: Arthur Conan Doyle, Albion's Daughters, and the Politics of the Cottingley Fairies', *History Workshop Journal*, 38.1 (1994), 48-85.
_____*The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
Owen, Ceri, *Vaughan Williams, Song, and the Idea of 'Englishness'* (DPhil Thesis: University of Oxford, 2014).
Paglia, Camille, *Sexual Personae*: *Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990)
Panofsky, Erwin, "Et in Arcadia Ego", in *Philosophy and History, Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Oxford 1936), 295-320.
Partridge, Christopher and Marcus Moberg (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2017).
Pater, Walter, *Renaissance: Studies of Art and Poetry* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2010). ProQuest ebook.
_____*Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (New York: Wallachia Publishers, 2015).
Peraino, Judith Ann, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
Peterson, Karl Marius, *Arthur Machen and the Celtic Renaissance in Wales* (PhD Thesis: Louisiana State University and Agricultural Mechanical College, 1973).
Pierce, Bernard, 'John Ireland', in *Creative Landscapes of the British Isles* (London: Ebury Press, 1983), 150-151.
Pile, Steve, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005).
Pilkington, Michael, *Gurney, Ireland, Quilter and Warlock* (London: Duckworth, 1989).
Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (New York and London: Penguin Classics, 2006).
Prewitt Brown, Julia, *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997).
Punter, David (ed.), *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
Rankin, W.D., *The Solo Piano Music of John Ireland* (DMA Thesis: University of Boston, 1970).
Ransome, Arthur, *Bohemia in London* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1907).
Richards, Fiona, *The Music of John Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
_____'An Anthology of Friendship: The Letters from John Ireland to Father Kenneth Thompson', in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 245-267.

_____'The Goat-God in England: A Musical Context for Lawrence's Fascination with Pan', *The D.H. Lawrence Review*, 40/1 (2015), 90-106.
_____'Ireland, John Nicholson (1879-1962)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/978> [accessed 23 September 2018].
_____'John Ireland's *Mai-Dun*: Composite Influences', in *The Symphonic Poem in Britain: 1850-1950*, ed. Michael Allis and Paul Watt (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), 278-304.
Riddell, Fraser, *Music and the Queer Body in English Literature at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
Ridenhour, Jamieson, *In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape in Victorian Literature* (Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2012).
Riley, Matthew, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
Robb, Graham, *Victor Hugo* (London: Picador, 1997).
Rosen, Charles, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).
Roethke, Theodore, *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1975).
Rutland, Harold, 'John Ireland', *Recorded Sound*, 50-51 (April-July 1973), 190-198.
Samson, Jim (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
Sanders, Dan, 'Mix and Persona', in *Innovation in Music: Performance, Production, Technology, and Business*, ed. Russ Hepworth-Sawyer, Jay Hodgson, Justin Paterson, and Rob Toulson (New York: Routledge, 2019), 160-172.
Santa, Matthew, 'Analysing Post-Tonal Diatonic Music: A Modulo 7 Perspective', *Music Analysis¸19.2* (2000), 167-201.
Saunders, Edward, 'Defining Metabiography in Historical Perspective: Between Biomyths and Documentary', *Biography*, 38.3 (Summer 2015), 325-342.
Saylor, Eric, *English Pastoral Music: From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900-1955* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
Scarborough, Dorothy, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1917).
Schaarwächter, Jürgen, 'Chasing a Myth and a Legend: ''The British Musical Renaissance'' in a ''Land Without Music'' ', *The Musical Times*, 149.1904 (Autumn 2008), 53-60.
Scher, Steven Paul, *Verbal Music in German Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).
_____'Literature and Music', in *Interrelations of Literature*, ed. Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1982), 224-250.
_____*Essays on Literature and Music: 1967-2004*, ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (New York: Rodopi, 2004).
Schmidt, James (ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (London: University of California Press, 1996).

Searle, Muriel, *John Ireland: The Man and His Music* (Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books, 1979).
Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
Shaviro, Steven, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
Showalter, Elaine, *Sexual Anarchy* (London: Virago, 1992).
Sicher, Efraim, 'The ''Attraction of Repulsion'': Dickens, Modernity, and Representation', in *A Mighty Mass of Brick and Smoke*, ed. Lawrence Phillips (New York: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007).
Simoniti, Jure, *The Untruth of Reality: The Unacknowledged Realism of Modern Philosophy* (New York: Lexington Books, 2016).
Smith, Timothy D'Arch, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1970).
Solie, Ruth A., 'Changing the Subject', *Current Musicology*, 53 (1993), 55-65.
Spacks, Patricia Meyer, 'Review: *Arthur Machen* by Wesley D. Sweetser', *The Modern Language Review*, 62.1 (January 1967), 123.
Spencer, Williametta, 'The Relationship between André Caplet and Claude Debussy', *The Musical Quarterly*, 66.1 (January 1980), 112-131.
Stevens, Wallace, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006).
Stevenson, Robert Louis, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
Strachey, Lytton, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1918).
_____*Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928).
Suckling, Norman, 'John Ireland and the Piano', *The Listener*, 50.1295 (24 December 1953), 36.
Sullivan, Jack, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story form Le Fanu to Blackwood* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978).
Sutton, Emma, 'Restless Mystical Ardours: Decadence and Music', in *Decadence: A Literary History*, ed. Alex Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 218-233.
Sweetser, Wesley Duaine, The Works of Arthur Machen: An Analysis and Bibliography' (DPhil Thesis: University of Colorado, 1958).
_____'Review of *Arthur Machen: Surface Realities of Essence of Spirit* by Mr. Aidan Reynolds and Mr. William Charlton', *English Literature in Transition*, 7.1 (1 January 1964), 38-41.
Symonds, John Addington, *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive* (London: Scriber, 1907).
Symons, Arthur, *Plays, Acting, and Music* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1903).
_____*London: A Book of Aspects* (London: Privately Printed for Edmund D. Brooks and His Friends, 1909).
_____*Symbolist Movement in Literature* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2014).
Taruskin, Richard, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
_____*The Oxford History of Western Music, Vol. 4: Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
Tilley, Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg, 1994).

_____*The Materiality of Stone* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).
_____'Walking the Past in the Present', in *Landscapes Beyond Land: Routes, Aesthetic, Narratives*, ed. Arnar Árnasan, Nicolas Ellison, Jo Vergunst, and Andrew Whitehouse (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 15-32.
Tomlinson, Gary, 'Musical Pasts and Postmodern Musicologies: A Response to Lawrence Kramer', *Current Musicology*, 53 (1993), 18-24.
Townsend Warner, Sylvia, *The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner*, ed. Claire Harman (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994).
_____*Lolly Willowes* (London: Penguin Classics, 2020).
Townshend, Nigel, 'The Achievement of John Ireland', *Music and Letters* 24.2 (1943), 65-74.
Turnbull, Jonathon and Ben Platt, 'For a New Weird Geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 46.5 (2022), 1207-1231.
Valentine, Mark, *Arthur Machen* (Seren: Mid Glamorgan, 1995).
Valentine, Mark and Timothy J. Jarivs (eds.), *The Scarlet Ceremonies: Critical Essays on Arthur Machen* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2019)
VanderMeer, Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories* (London: Corvus, 2011).
Vendler, Helen, *Yeats' Vision and the Later Plays* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1963).
Verlaine, Paul, *A Hundred and One Poems*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
Waters, Colin, *Gothic Whitby* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009).
Watt, Paul and Anne-Marie Forbes (ed.), *Joseph Holbrooke: Composer, Critic, and Musical Patriot* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).
Weliver, Phyllis, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900: Representations of Music, Science, and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
Wheelwright, Philip, 'The Archetypal Symbol', in *Perspectives in Literary Symbolism*, ed. Joseph Strelka (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968).
White, Andrew, *A History of Whitby* (Stroud: The History Press, 2019).
Whittall, Arnold, 'Review of *Dweller in Shadows: A Life of Ivor Gurney* by Kate Kennedy', *Musical Times*, 162.1956 (Autumn 2021), 113-116.
Wilde, Oscar, 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', *Fortnightly Review*, 45.265 (January 1889), 41-54.
_____*Intentions* (New York: Brentano's, 1905).
_____*Complete Writings of Oscar Wilde: Reviews* (New York: The Nottingham Society, 1909).
_____*De Profundis* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996).
_____*The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 2000).
_____*The Oscar Wilde Reader* (London: Dover Publications, 2015).
_____*The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Volume 4*, ed. Josephine Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
Wiley, Christopher, 'When a Woman Speaks the Truth about Her Body: Ethel Smyth, Virginia Woolf, and the Challenges of Lesbian Auto/Biography', *Music & Letters*, 85.3 (August 2004), 388-414.

_____'Musical Biography and the Myth of the Muse', in *Critical Music Historiography: Probing Canons, Ideologies, and Institutions*, ed. Vesa Kurkela and Markus Mantere (London: Routledge, 2016), 251-261.
_____'Myth-Making and the Politics of Nationality in Narratives of J.S. Bach's 1717 Contest with Louis Marchand', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 38.2-4 (2019), 193-215.
Williams, Raymond, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985).
Wiseman, Sam, 'Finding Infinity Round the Corner': Doublings, Dualities, and Suburban Strangeness in Arthur Machen's The London Adventure', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 16 (2017), 94-107.
_____*Locating the Gothic in British Modernity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019).
Woolf, Virginia, *Orlando: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
_____*Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. J. Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002).
Worth, Aaron, 'Arthur Machen and the Horrors of Deep History', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 40.1 (2012), 215-227.
Wright, David, "Dead and Gone? *Musical Times*, 142 (2001), 58-59.
_____ 'Review: *Sir George Dyson: His Life and Music* by Paul Spicer', *The Musical Times*, 155.1929 (Winter 2014), 91-97.
Yeats, W.B., *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961).
_____*Autobiographies*, ed. W. O'Donnell and D. Archibald (New York: Scribner, 1989).
Yenne, Vernon, *Three Twentieth Century English Composers: Peter Warlock, E.J. Moeran and John Ireland* (DMA, University of Illinois, 1969).
Young, George, *A History of Whitby and Streoneshalh Abbey: With a Statistical Survey of the Vicinity to the Distance of Twenty-Five Miles* (Whitby: Clark and Medd, 1817).
Zuckerkandl, Victor, *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956).

Other Sources

Scores

John Ireland, *The Island Spell* © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
John Ireland, *Moon-Glade* © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
John Ireland, *The Scarlet Ceremonies* © Copyright 1915 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
John Ireland, *Chelsea Reach* © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
John Ireland, *Ragamuffin* © Copyright 1918 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

John Ireland, *Soho Forenoons* © Copyright 1920 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
John Ireland, *Ballade of London Nights* © Copyright 1968 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Bossey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.
John Ireland, *In a May Morning* © Copyright 1941 by Hawkes & Son (London) Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.
John Ireland/Ernest Christopher Dowson, *I was not sorrowful* © Copyright 1912 by Boosey & Co. Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Broadcasts

'Composer of the Week: John Ireland', BBC Radio 3, 18 June 2014.

Recordings (with sleeve notes)

John Ireland, *John Ireland: Piano Works Vol. 2* (Naxos, 8.553889, 1999)
_____*John Ireland: Piano Works Vol. 3* (Naxos, 8.570261, 2008)
_____*John Ireland: The Songs* (Lyrita, SRCD.2261, 1979)
_____*John Ireland: String Quartet* (Naxos, 8.557777, 2006)
_____*A John Ireland Collection* (ASC Records, 150, 2011)

Correspondence

Valentine, Mark, Private Correspondence, 2 October 2020.

Interviews

Philips, Bruce, Oxford, England, 2 March 2020.