1973

Arthur Machen and the Celtic Renaissance in Wales.

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ARTHUR MACHEN AND THE CELTIC RENAISSANCE IN WALES.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, modern

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Arthur Machen and the
Celtic Renaissance in Wales

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Karl Marius Petersen
B.A., Louisiana State University in N.O., 1963
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1966
May, 1973
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Thomas Watson, under whose direction this research was completed, for his patience and for his guidance; to my committee in general, and especially to Dr. Otis Wheeler and Dr. John Wildman for their careful reading of the manuscript and subsequent recommendations.

I cannot adequately express my appreciation to many friends who have sustained me during periods of emotional fatigue and frustration. Most especially my thanks go to Elise Kleinschmidt, who pushed me through the last stretch, but also Ernie, Anna, and Charlotte Kleinschmidt. For their endless confidence in my completing the course, I thank Dr. Thomas Kirby, Faye Ott Rifkind, Bill Horan, Raeburn Miller, and Nolan LeCompte.

For their love and kindness and a different view of success in this project, I thank my Malaysian and Thai friends.

Finally, I thank Sandra and Jerry Fackrell for their help in getting this dissertation typed.
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ABSTRACT

Arthur Machen (1863-1947) does not now enjoy much recognition as a serious literary craftsman. The principal reason for his obscurity is that readers have been deterred by the commentators from seeing his achievement in terms of the literary movements of the 1890's, the decade of his best work.

Born in Caerleon-on-Usk, Machen looked to Wales as the source of inspiration. The spiritual affinity to the Celtic fatherland is analyzed by a series of critics—Ernest Renan, Matthew Arnold, W. B. Yeats, and Grant Allen—as the point of departure for the Celtic genius. A pervasive sense of the supernatural, melancholia, the magical treatment of nature, escape into the world of dream, are further traits which the critics isolate as distinctly Celtic. Machen uses all the traits consistently in developing his fictional characters, especially Lucian Taylor in The Hill of Dreams, his principal novel, and Ambrose Meyrick in The Secret Glory.

Machen constructs a theory of literature in Hieroglyphics which is based on ecstasy, the result of seeing the physical...
world as a projection of a spiritual reality. The physical universe, under such an interpretation, is a sacrament. Great literature, Machen claims, is an attempt to capture this sense of man's existence within two worlds, an ideal shared by such seemingly irreconcilable elements as the pre-Christian Druids and the Symbolists of the nineteenth century. His view of nature as a sacrament is the most consistently developed of Machen's ideas and is his original contribution to a long history of Celtic thought which has had as its primary characteristic the concern with spiritual rather than physical realities. Although the sacramental idea appears in all the novels, its implications are specifically worked out in several essays, specifically "Dr. Stigging: His Views and Principals," and "Farewell to Materialism."

Through the Welsh fairylore Machen probes the question of whether the spiritual force underlying physical reality might not be evil. In such stories as "The Novel of the Black Seal" and "The White People," he makes a convincing argument that the basic intent of the tales surrounding the fairies is to reveal the darker spiritual truths, which can only be suggested rather than fully understood. Within the context of traditional fairylore he develops a negative sacramentalism,
his view that the mean and ugly physical realities are the projection of an underlying spiritual evil.

The solitary and imaginative escape into the dream world which characterizes all Machen's heroes is a Celtic quality, but is also common to the heroes of Aestheticism. Although Machen denied any explicit contact with the disciples of Aestheticism, his work exhibits the same concern with the cultivation of sensation, and the dedication to beauty, and their reconstruction by the imagination.

Seen as an artistic movement of the 1890's, the Celtic Renaissance assimilated the highly sympathetic attitudes of Symbolism and Aestheticism. Arthur Machen, consciously a Welsh Celt throughout, made use of a particularly rich fusion of artistic influences to create original literary works of considerable merit. As a poet, novelist, and critic, he was using the native Welsh material as a vehicle of contemporary sensibility in much the same way as Yeats was using the Irish and MacLeod the Scottish material. Machen has suffered in reputation because he has not previously been credited with his clear and significant contribution to the Celtic Renaissance, specifically as it affected the Welsh.
CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Arthur Machen and the Celtic Renaissance in Wales

December 15, 1972, was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Arthur Machen's death. Although he has left a fairly rich literary legacy—nine volumes in his collected edition of 1923, and several additional volumes of short stories and personal essays—no concerted effort has been made to see his works within the framework of the major artistic theories functioning at the close of the nineteenth century. During the decade of the nineteen sixties, however, efforts of Adrian Goldstone and members of the Arthur Machen Society seemed on the verge of initiating a revival of interest in the works of Machen. To begin with, the Society sponsored a Machen symposium in the Winter 1959-1960 issue of the Aylesford Review. This was followed in 1963 by the publication of Arthur Machen, a biographical study by the Englishmen Aidan Reynolds and William Charlton. In 1964 Wesley Sweetser published his Arthur Machen, another biographical study, as volume eight of the Twayne's English Authors Series.
Also in the same year The Three Impostors, one of Machen's novels from the 1890's, was reprinted in England. Finally, the exhaustive A Bibliography of Arthur Machen was published in 1965 jointly by Adrian Goldstone and Wesley Sweetser.

With the biographical and bibliographical data meticulously gathered and published, the scene is set for a study which concentrates on the literary value of the works themselves and the rich tradition from which they grew. Arthur Machen, born in Wales and a staunch Welshman all his life, had definite literary and critical affinities with the movement of the 1890's, the Celtic Revival. It is customary, however, to overlook Machen's concern with the aesthetics of that movement. Holbrook Jackson, writing in 1913, claims that the movement, centered of course in Yeats and his Irish followers, had enthusiastic supporters in Scotland but that artistic activity in Wales "was confined to a renewed interest in national myth and tradition," the result, chiefly, of Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the Mabinogion. He concluded that "there was no distinctive modern art or literary production." As late as 1964, in his preface to the reprint of The Three Impostors, Julian Symons still says

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of Machen that "in a direct sense he seems to have had little
to do with the Nineties or with Nineties writers."\textsuperscript{2} It is
the burden of this thesis to demonstrate that Machen con­
sciously worked from what he understood to be the Celtic
point of view and produced a significant body of literary
criticism, personal essays, short stories and novels which
can truly be termed Celtic.

Arthur Llewellyn Jones-Machen was born on March 3, 1863,
at Caerleon-on-Usk in Monmouthshire, Wales. He was the only
son of the Rev. John Edward Jones, a graduate of Jesus College,
Oxford, and Janet Robina Machen. In the following year the
family of three moved to the rectory at Llanddewi, a short
distance from Caerleon, which was his home for the remainder
of his childhood. In January, 1874, he entered Hereford
Cathedral School and continued as a student until April, 1880.
In June of the same year, then seventeen years old, he went
to London to prepare for the examination of the Royal College
of Surgeons. Having failed the examination, he returned to
Wales that same winter and began writing a poem of two hun­
dred and seventeen lines which he titled \textit{Eleusinia}. He had
the poem published at his own expense, and of the edition

\textsuperscript{2}Julian Symons, Intro. \textit{The Three Impostors} by Arthur
there are only three copies extant. However slight the actual merit of the poem, he won the support of his father in favor of a career in journalism and returned to London in the summer of 1881. Without friends or money, he found life in London agonizing. As a scholar-hermit he accepted the deprivations of the life and dedicated himself to intensive reading and writing. After completing the manuscript of The Anatomy of Tobacco, a book written as a conscious imitation of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, he returned to Llanddewi for the spring and summer of 1884. On his return to London he began working for George Redway, the publisher of The Anatomy. During the last months of 1884 and the early part of 1885, he prepared a translation of the Heptameron by Margaret of Navarre. With the completion in the autumn of the catalogue of The Literature of Occultism and Archeology, the project for which he was originally hired, his employment by Redway ended. On November 10 his mother died, and Machen returned once again to Wales.

In January of 1887 Machen made his way back to London, and on August 31 he married Amelia Hogg, a woman thirteen years his senior. Considered to be advanced in her views, she

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had among her group of friends A. E. Waite, the renowned occultist. Through her, Machen was introduced to Waite, and a friendship was initiated which lasted until Waite's death in 1942. Within a month of the wedding, on September 29, his father died. The money made available through the father's bequest and funds left by Scottish relatives gave Machen the leisure of spending one month a year in France for the following ten years.

With the familial ties to Wales severed, Machen settled at 98 Great Russell Street. Utilizing the experience gained as an employee of Redway, he presented himself to Messrs. Robson and Carslake of Coventry Street, Leicester Square, as a cataloguer. Redway had discovered Machen's talent for translating from the French; in their turn Robson and Carslake requested him to produce an English translation of the Memoirs of Casanova. The project engaged him during 1888 and 1889. At the same time he was fascinated by Beroalde de Verville's Le Moyen de Parvenir, a work which he recognized as an early imitation of his admired Rabelais. In the second volume of his autobiography, Things Far and Near, Machen describes the publication in 1890 of Fantastic Tales.
his translation of Beroalde, as the result of "Rabelaisian enthusiasm."  

The decade from 1890 to 1900 is recognized as the period in which Machen produced his own most significant pieces of imaginative writing. The bulk of his published work up to this point was represented by his translations. In September, 1889, he had begun writing essays for The Globe and in November for St. James's Gazette. Composition of a short story, "The Great God Pan," was begun in 1890. From 1891 to 1893, he and Amy rented a cottage in Buckinghamshire. There he finished "The Great God Pan" and "The Inmost Light." He also worked on a series of stories to be published as The Three Impostors—all destroyed, except the episode entitled "The Novel of the Dark Valley."

John Lane published The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light in December, 1894, as Volume V of the Keynotes Series. As with all the volumes in the series, the frontispiece was designed by Aubrey Beardsley. The book gained something of an evil reputation, with the result that Mudie's circulating library, for example, would only supply the volume from under

the counter. Although the publication of his own imaginative creations was probably of greater interest to the author, Machen also saw published in 1894 his translation of The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova.

Machen's identification with the Yellow Book effort was to be his undoing in 1895. The publication of The Three Impostors, as it turned out, coincided with the trial of Oscar Wilde, and the poor reception of the book is attributed to the conservative reaction of public opinion to all suspect literature. But Machen was not hushed. In the same year he wrote two short stories, "The Red Hand" and "The Shining Pyramid." By autumn he had begun working seriously on what was to be published eventually as The Hill of Dreams. The composition of this, his major novel, occupied him until the spring of 1897. After completion of The Hill of Dreams, he became an independent-minded reviewer for Literature, the predecessor of the Times Literary Supplement, and gained a reputation for speaking out his critical judgments. After several disagreements with the editors, however, he left Literature in the early part of 1899 and dedicated himself completely to the formulation of his literary creed.

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5 Reynolds and Charlton, p. 44.
By the summer he had completed *Hieroglyphics*, his major critical statement.

During the period of composition Amelia was hopelessly bed-ridden with cancer, and on July 31 she died. The two had lived together for thirteen years, and Machen was deeply grieved by her death. He attempted to maintain his level of literary intensity by involving himself in several imaginative projects but without great success. He found himself, as the year wore on, working on three different plots, none of which he could complete. Two of them, "The White People" and "A Fragment of Life," were eventually published as fragments, and the third plot was eventually worked into his novel *The Secret Glory*.

Machen's effort to maintain a writing schedule after Amelia's death failed. He became despondent, and it was an attempt to find some further meaning in life which, in 1900, brought him to the group organized as the Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn. Among the brotherhood were A. E. Waite and W. B. Yeats. Machen and Waite worked together on the ritual for the society, printed in 1904 as *The House of the Hidden Light*, but there was little other incentive for writing which grew out of his association with the group.
In January, 1901, in what was probably an attempt to escape his depression after Amelia's death, he became affiliated with the Benson Company. He had had no previous experience in acting, but his inexperience did not bar him from an apprenticeship with the company. The acting profession was fascinating to him, and he found an easy identification with the players. His roles were at first very small; for example, he played the servant Carlo in Stephen Phillips' Paolo and Francesca. It was, however, while playing Carlo at the St. James's Theatre that he decided to marry Dorothie Purefoy Hudleston, likewise an enthusiast of the theatre. They did not become engaged until the summer of 1902, and the wedding was delayed until June 25, 1903. While in his actor phase Machen made a tour with Beerbohm Tree's Shakespearean group, and it was in the role of Bolingbroke, the Enchanter, in Henry VI, Part I, that he made his final stage appearance, at Stratford, in 1909.

With his second marriage Machen seemed to attain the composure necessary for his program of imaginative composition. Except for the publication of Hieroglyphics in 1902, nothing literarily significant had happened to him between the death of Amelia and his marriage to Purefoy. By contrast, 1904 proved to be a busy year for publication. A. E. Waite
had convinced his fellow members of the board of directors of Horlick's, the prosperous milk company, to sponsor a periodical titled *The Horlick's Magazine and Home Journal for Australia, India and The Colonies*, and its first number in January featured Machen's short story "The White People." From February to May "A Fragment of Life" was serialized, and for the six months from July to December "The Garden of Avallaunius" [*The Hill of Dreams*] also appeared in serial.

Machen was to resume the life of a journalist in 1906. In that year he saw through the press *The House of Souls*, a collection of his short stories. Lord Alfred Douglas was favorably impressed by the volume and offered Machen a full-time job on *The Academy*, the periodical which he was editing. His most significant contributions in that periodical were the five related essays which developed through the October and November issues as "Dr. Stiggins: His Views and Principles." In November the collected essays were published by Francis Griffiths under the same title. Machen's essays established *The Academy* as the organ of High Anglicanism and Lord Douglas himself converted to that position.⁶ Machen left *The Academy*

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in the summer of 1908 and wrote for The Neolith. During the following two years he worked for several small journals, but in 1910 he found a position with the Evening News as a reporter.

At the outbreak of World War I, Machen was already in his fifties and consequently too old for conscription. He felt the anxiety of the troubled times, however, as is witnessed by the stories written during the war. One of the stories, "The Bowman: The Angels of Mons," appeared in the Evening News on November 29, 1914. That single story brought Machen his brief moment of fame. Ironically, the popularity of the story was based on the public's feeling that the events narrated were real rather than the fruit of the author's imagination. So Machen, the conscientious and painstaking craftsman of words, was fated to see his work praised, but for the wrong reasons. He did, however, follow up the popularity of the first story with an indifferent series of stories in the same mode. The Great Return, another book dealing with supernatural manifestations, was published in 1915, and in 1917 The Terror appeared in hardback after having been serialized in the Evening News.

Employment on the Evening News came to an end in 1921. It was on February 4 that a false obituary notice for Lord
Alfred Douglas appeared. Machen wrote the notice in which he referred to Douglas as a degenerate.\textsuperscript{7} Douglas filed suit and won a judgment of libel against the \textit{Evening News}. As the newspaper's gesture of guilt and restitution, Machen was dismissed. From that point until his death on December 15, 1947, Machen had no steady form of income. With the help of a number of admirers and the small royalties from the sale of his books, he was able to eke out an existence. In 1933 a pension from the King greatly eased the worries of his last days.\textsuperscript{8}

Because Machen was born in Monmouthshire, he identifies himself with the place and with the countrymen. Not only is he the Arthur Machen born in 1863, but he is also the ancient Druid, the prisoner of the Roman occupation and the knight at King Arthur's table. Caerleon-on-Usk has all the painful and joyous associations of two thousand years of human habitation. The town was called Isca in the documents of Rome. Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote of it as the seat of Arthur's kingdom. There could hardly be a spot in the British Isles with a richer literary heritage.

\textsuperscript{7}Reynolds and Charlton, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{8}Wesley D. Sweetser, \textit{Arthur Machen} (New York, 1964), p. 45.
Machen praises Gwent—the ancient Welsh name of the country of Monmouthshire—for its great beauty but more especially for that quality which makes it an enchanted land. The countryside itself is a source of wonder to Machen; he is always impressed by the "magic" of the scene, the feeling that there is more to it than meets the eye. Natural beauty is never simply the matter of a lovely landscape; he must suffuse the landscape with his own feelings of mystery: "from very early years indeed," he says in *Far Off Things*, the first volume of his autobiography, "I became an enchanted student of the daylight country, which, I think, for me never was illuminated by common daylight, but rather by suns that rose from the holy seas of faery and sank down behind magic hills."³ Yeats relates a similar feeling for the magical quality of the woods in the neighborhood of Inchy. The sense of mysterious presences, he claims in "Enchanted Woods" is a legacy from the ancient past, a tradition which has been rejected by the educated and kept alive only by the provincially ignorant, and yet he finds himself believing "that all nature is full of people whom we cannot see, ... and that these are not far away when we are walking in

pleasant and quiet places. ¹⁰ Both Machen and Yeats love the beauties of nature, but they sense a spiritual presence which is felt rather than understood, a presence which is more richly described by the imagination through myth and legend than by the analytical reason.

The sense of the mysterious in nature is also found in the early Welsh writings. It would be difficult to separate what in Machen’s feeling for nature came from his own sensitivity to beauty and what was planted there by what he read and the tales he heard about the ancient buildings and customs of the Welsh countryside. His own natural awe for the beauty of nature was early in life fused with the same kind of awe that had become a literary convention of primitive Welsh writers. In this way he felt the spirit of the early literature really living and functioning in contemporary society.

Machen wrote only a few poems which he considered of any significance, but all convey a sense of the awe in the presence of nature which is a blend of his own subjective feeling and what he had learned from the ancients. His theme in the poems is always his native Gwent:

In the darkness of old age let not my memory fail:  
Let me not forget to celebrate the beloved land 
of Gwent.  
If they imprison me in a deep place, in a house of 
pestilence,  
Still shall I be free, remembering the sunshine upon 
Mynydd Maen.  
There have I listened to the song of the lark, my 
soul has ascended with the song of the little bird:  
The great white clouds were the ships of my spirit, 
sailing to the heaven of the Almighty.  
Equally to be held in honour is the site of the Great 
Mountain.  
Adorned with the gushing of many waters—sweet is the 
shade of its hazel thickets.  
There a treasure is preserved which I will not celebrate!  
It is glorious, and deeply concealed.  
If Teilo should return, if happiness were restored 
to the Cymri,  
Dewi and Dyfrig should serve his Mass; then a great 
marvel would be made visible.  
O blessed and miraculous work! then should my bliss 
be as the joy of angels.  
I had rather behold this offering than kiss the twin 
lips of dark Gwenllian.  
Dear my land of Gwent: O quam dilecta tabernacula.  
Thy rivers are like precious golden streams of Paradise, 
thy hills are as the Mount Syon.  
Better a grave on Twym Barlwm than a throne in the 
palace of the Saxons at Caer-Ludd.  

It is true that the countryside is as beautiful to Machen 
as a Paradise, but his sense of the marvel of the Great Moun- 
tain comes from its association with the treasure--the hidden 
relics of Teilo Sant. Machen refers to that ancient Welsh 

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11 Arthur Machen, "The Remembrance of the Bard" in 
Arthur Machen: A Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin by Vincent 
Starrett (Chicago, 1918), pp. 32-3.
saint in several of his novels, and it is his hidden and mysterious chalice which becomes for Machen one of the probable sources of the Holy Grail legends. Many, too, are the local associations with the legends of King Arthur as Machen found them in Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the Mabinogion, the twelfth-century rendering of popular Welsh folktales. Gwent is first of all a fatherland, but it also a place loaded with complex cultural associations that combine Druid, Roman, and Christian influences.

In her "The Cult of the Celt: Pan-Celtism in the Nineties," Ann Saddlemyer points out that it was a "sense of place, as opposed to a vague atmosphere" which was the truly "new element" in the Celtic Revival. Folklore, she comments, was popularized all through the nineteenth century and actually reached a culmination in the publication of Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough in 1890. The folklore, like the life of St. Teilo, has a direct influence on the emotions of Arthur Machen, native of Gwent. The emphasis is on creating a sense of what Gwent means to a living and feeling

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human born into the particular locality. Yeats attempts to do the same thing for Sligo, and it was for this reason that he spent years walking through the villages gathering what he could of folk wisdom. It is in his "Trembling of the Veil" that Yeats criticizes Shelly for not having "nailed" his Prometheus "upon some Welsh or Scottish rock," for then his art "would have entered more intimately, more microscopically, as it were, into our thought....." As Yeats saw it, and indeed as it became a trait identified with the Celtic Revival, a sense of place was a necessary departure in the creation of a literature.

For the Celt, as will be seen later, the place in which he finds himself historically is remote, rugged, and cut off from the outside world. More importantly, however, it is a place which he loves and which has meaning below its surface reality. For Machen, Wales is such a place, wildly beautiful but rich with literary associations.

The literary influences which are involved with Machen's treatment of his nationality come from two Welsh sources—the spiritual tales of the saints of ancient Wales, and the tales from popular Welsh folklore. The spiritual element is

centered on Teilo Sant, the patron saint of southeast Wales, and an active spiritual tradition which he traces back to the Druids. The popular folklore element centers on the activities of the Little People or y Tylwyth Teg as they are called in the Welsh language. The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate that by the use of specifically Welsh material, Arthur Machen consciously wrote literature which furthered the aims of the movement in the 1890's called the Celtic Revival and in doing so demonstrate that there was a revival in Wales as well as in Ireland and Scotland which fostered a significant rebirth of literary activity.
CHAPTER II

The Celtic Theorists

The appearance in 1859 of Ernest Renan's "La Poésie des Races Celtiques" is generally accepted as the initial impetus of the literary flowering referred to as the Celtic Revival. When the movement reaches its crest in the work of W. B. Yeats in the 1890's, no one questions the existence of a Celtic spirit in literature. The scholar, however, runs into serious difficulties in trying to isolate specific characteristics common to all works within such a category. It is untenable to suppose that any particular racial group has evolved for itself literary traits which are exclusively its own property. Thus, basing a criticism of literature solely on racial lines must be highly suspect. Holbrook Jackson in The Eighteen Nineties expressed the same skeptical conclusion when he reviewed an essay published by Grant Allen in 1891 titled "The Celt in English Art." He said of Allen's underlying assumptions about the reality of a spirit common to all the personalities under consideration that "even where Grant Allen correctly indicates Celtic influence, that influence is the
accidental outcome of the fact that those who were responsible for it happened to have been Celts or to have had Celtic blood in their veins."¹ In view of Jackson's wariness, the first problem in considering the Celtic elements in the works of Arthur Machen will be to extract from the major commentaries on the Celtic spirit those traits which are consistently said to characterize the Celtic author.

Renan begins "La Poésie des Races Celtiques" with the assumption that the Celts are a recognizable body of homogeneous humans who are separated from their neighbors in the nineteenth century by the same characteristics which distinguished them from the antagonistic forces which had successfully oppressed them through two thousand years of suffering. First of all, Renan clearly states who fits the category of Celtic. He does not refer to the ancient race which at an early period in history accounted for almost the entire population of Western Europe. The Teutonic and Latin peoples, Renan says, have displaced the Celtic race, and there are now only four small groups which can claim descent from that original, pure stock: (1) the inhabitants of Wales (Cambria) and Cornwall, called today by the ancient

name of Cymry; (2) the dwellers in French Brittany who speak Bas-Breton and who are emigrants of the Cymry from Wales; (3) the Gaels of the North of Scotland who speak Gaelic; (4) the Irish, although they are clearly distinguished from the rest of the Celts. Renan’s separating the members of the Celtic family is interesting because he makes a specific point of distinguishing the Irish from the other three groups in the category. Later in the century, of course, it was to be Yeats and his circle of Irish associates who became most intimately identified with the Revival.

Renan himself was a member of the second group of Celts, the Bretons bretennants or Armorican branch. It is understandable that when he undertakes to state a generalization about the Celtic nature, he makes his point by using the group with which he has had direct experience. What he has himself experienced, however, he invites his readers to verify. Take a trip, he says, through the Armorican peninsula. As you pass from Normandy and Maine into the true Brittany, you leave behind the cheerful, commonplace

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faces. The wind becomes colder; the trees are bare and twisted. The soil is shallow and strewn with rocks. The sea is eternally dreary. The starkness of the landscape is also reflected in the people. They are timid, reserved, and introvert, quite the opposite of the plump and boisterous Normans. Yet for all their seeming-dullness, the Bretons have profound feelings and a delicacy of religious instincts. The same changes, he comments, are observable in going from England into Scotland or Wales. The difference is so marked that one could be moving with Dante "from one circle of his Inferno to another" (pp. 1-2).

The kind of life which Renan describes for his people is a difficult one. The Bretons are in possession of a district which would not sustain the temperament found in Normandy and Maine. The reason for the Bretons' being where they are is clear enough; this is the place where they can preserve their racial identity. The land is so poor that no one else wants it. Possession of the poorest, most isolated land is, in fact, the trait of Celtdom everywhere. The flight from the conqueror has left the Celt with only forgotten islands and peninsulas--places cut off by treacherous seas or impassable mountains. After centuries of persecution by the outsider, the Celt has developed
a hatred for the foreigner and a pronounced individuality which forces him to subsist completely on what he can achieve by his own effort. He has withstood the attempt at colonization by the Romans; he has driven back the Teutonic invasion. The battle for survival still goes on. In the nineteenth century the enemy is a more subtle force, "civilization." The effect of the modern, unified, "civilized" state is to break down local differences in the effort to create a strong national and political identity. In attempting to draw the Celt into the mainstream of the nation's life, the state is naturally bent on removing from the Celt's disposition those traits which would cause him to look upon himself as different from the others and consequently to hold himself aloof. Whereas the early conquerors tried to subject the Celt to their power from the outside, the modern threat is from within. Then as now, the role of keeping before the eyes of the people their cultural traditions belonged to the bard or poet. If the present threat to Celtic identity is to be overcome, the poets must once again verbalize to the people in the idiom of their own day the nature of the danger and the alternatives to destruction.
The continuous effort to avoid a corrupting contact with the alien world results in two tendencies that are observable in the Celtic temperament and literature. In the first place, having been forced to inhabit a land that is incapable of affording an abundance of physical comforts, the Celts must look to the world beyond for their satisfaction. Or as Renan states it, "...perhaps the profoundest instinct of the Celtic peoples is their desire to penetrate the unknown" (p. 53). It is the need to escape the mean circumstances of a practical existence that stimulates the literary Celt, and, according to Renan, he makes his escape through dreams and visions of a better world. The form of escape most common to the poetic Celt is "the adventure— the pursuit of the unknown, an endless quest after an object ever flying from desire" (p. 9). St. Brendan in his dreams, Peredur with his mystic chivalry, Knight Owen in his subterranean journeyings— each is a form of adventure, a desire for the infinite. The characteristic failing of the Bretons, their drunkenness, is itself, Renan claims, simply another manifestation of their need for illusion. They are simply trying to find in mead— "a vision of the invisible world"— what Owen, St. Brendan, and Peredur structured into an Adventure. As a consequence
of his need for mental escape, the dreamer-Celt presents no real threat to the conqueror because there is no recognizable form of resistance. By turning into himself, however, the Celt has completely eluded the enemy. The retreat has been into a realm where there can be no pursuit. Besides providing the Celt with an avenue of escape, the realm of the imagination opens up before him as a far richer and more desirable state than the one from which he has fled.

In seeming contrast to the first characteristic of Celtic literature which provides the reader with an imaginative escape from the rigors of his everyday existence is the second characteristic which would completely immerse the reader in an undiluted bath of realism. Looked at realistically, the life which the Celt is forced into affords very few pleasures. Necessarily, the tone which pervades all factual treatments of the Celt's condition is melancholia. The Celt's history is nothing but a single, protracted lament, recalling all the exiles and wanderings. All the Celt's songs of joy end as elegies; his national melodies are dirges. "Never," says Renan, "have men feasted so long upon these solitary delights of the spirit" (p. 8). Solitary delights he calls them because it is difficult to
distinguish whether they are bitter or sweet, these memories of past sufferings. As Renan himself indicates, the conflict between imaginative escape and the immersion in melancholy is not real. Both serve to block the Celt from the danger of involving himself in the external world. Through a realization of the perpetual sorrow attached to physical existence, the Celt is drawn by a process which has been at work in his race for long generations to look beyond to the world of spirit. In the last analysis, both traits of Celtic literature lead the sympathetic reader to look to the spiritual world for complete fulfillment.

Although Renan gives the major attention to the inhabitants of Brittany, the group to which he was closely associated by birth, he is much concerned with the Cymry or Welsh Celts, the branch from which the Bretons were derived. As a matter of fact, it is the Welsh collection of Arthurian legends, the Mabinogion, which he claims to be the finest statement of the Celtic spirit. "To our thinking," he says, "it is in the Mabinogion that the true expression of the Celtic genius is to be sought" (p. 11). Renan praises a Welsh work which was not available in printed form until Lady Charlotte Guest's English edition appeared in 1839. But the delayed translation of the romance into
English does not detract from its role as a focal point in the development of mediaeval literature. It was through the *Mabinogion*, Renan claims, that the imaginative genius of the Celt made itself felt on the Continent, for it proved in the twelfth century that the creation of a half-conquered race could become "the universal feast of imagination for mankind" (p. 25). That Renan calls attention to the importance of the recently published work is significant, but what seems even more significant is that Renan is more fascinated by the vital spirit behind the work—the Welsh imagination—than by the work itself.

Renan's tribute to the Celtic genius was followed in 1866 by a series of four articles by Matthew Arnold which appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* under the title "The Study of Celtic Literature." Arnold wrote his essay on the occasion of the Eisteddfod, or Bardic Congress of Wales, which was being held at Chester. When the collected edition of his works was published, Arnold used as a preface to the essay a letter he had sent to Mr. Hugh Owen, the chairman of the celebration. In the letter Arnold gives his famous description of Philistinism: "On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence,—this is Philistinism" (p. xii).
The Philistinism of the English middle class, he writes, is a far greater peril than the displacing of the aristocracy or the "ravenss" of the lower class. In contrast to Philistinism, he cites "the greater delicacy and spirituality of the Celtic peoples." It is at this point in history, Arnold claims, that the Celt can do far more for England than England can do for the Celt. Like Renan, Arnold deals with the Celtic spirit as a living force and not merely as a term to be applied to an historical fact. The true Welshman still clings to his tradition, still loves his poetry and the past glory of his race. By contrast, the prosperous Saxon has lost his sense of tradition in the wild scramble to amass wealth. The ability to maintain a connection with the vitality of its ancient traditions, to keep alive its cultural identity, is what makes the Welsh Celt an object of fascination for Arnold.

The chief characteristic of the Celtic genius, says Arnold, is its concern for spiritual value. Spirituality is one of the living evidences that the Celt is rooted in tradition, for the spirituality comes to him from his ancient forebears, the Druids. Arnold expresses the same

\footnote{The Works of Matthew Arnold, V (London, 1903), XII.}
admiration for the spiritual values of the Welsh that he finds echoed in a late Roman document in which Lucan addresses a band of Druid priests. The occasion was the withdrawal of certain troops from England to aid in the civil war at Rome. In his address, Lucan observes how the priests return to their ancient rites and rituals after they are no longer constrained by the domineering Romans. From the Druids, however, he claims to have learned that there is a life which continues after man meets death. "From you," says Lucan, "we learn that the bourne of man's ghost is not the senseless grave, not the pale realm of the monarch below: in another world his spirit survives still" (p. 41).

Arnold sees in the Celtic tendency to place value in the spiritual world a direct legacy from the Druids, the key to imaginative escape. It is his being "always ready to react against the despotism of fact" (p. 83) which gives the Celt his talent for imaginative literature.

That quality of spiritual preoccupation which produces the highest form of imaginative literature is also visible in the other art forms. However, applying such sensitivities to the plastic arts results in disaster. The Druids, for example, created no elaborate temples or beautiful idols. The basic tendency in the Druidical religion was
to see with the eye of the mind rather than with the eye of the body. Its religious conceptualizations could not find adequate expression in color and form as it sought always for the transcendent reality, the ideal. Ireland, with its plentiful crop of powerful spirits, has produced no great sculptors or painters. The Greek, Latin, and German races, on the other hand, have succeeded admirably in the plastic arts. Durer and Rubens are two examples of painters whose direct sense of the visible, palpable world has led to the creation of the highest kind of painting. Reynolds and Turner, Englishmen in the great tradition of the Celt, have failed to achieve that mastery of the plastic arts which is evident in the more unmixed German races. The cause of their failure is in their architectonics— a weakness in the structural design and composition of the work. In comparing the artistic strengths and weaknesses of his countrymen to their continental counterparts, Arnold concludes that despite their weakness in plastic art, they have succeeded "in magic, in beauty, in grace, in expressing almost the inexpressible" (p. 100). To Arnold's mind, what causes the Celtic painting to appear structurally inferior to the Germanic and Latin is actually
is greatest glory, for it captures the sense of spirit which lies beyond the merely physical.

Turning from his consideration of the Celtic genius as it finds expression in the plastic arts, Arnold focuses his attention on the specific traits in Celtic literature which are continuous from the earliest times to the present. Style is the first trait, and Arnold traces it back to the Celt's need to find an escape from the mean realities of his everyday existence. Unable to master the hostile environment into which he has been driven, the Celt throws all of his energies into mastering language so that it becomes the vehicle for expressing his ideas "with unsurpassable intensity, elevation, and effect" (p. 119). Arnold terms the Celtic fascination with style "Pindarism" after the Roman poet who seemed most concerned with the power of language, properly manipulated, to inspire and intoxicate. And it is not a quality found only in the writings of such great poets as Taliesian and Ossian, Arnold claims, but in all the Celtic writings. Arnold makes no attempt to set up criteria for distinguishing a good from a poor style. The term "Pindarism" could apply to a work demonstrably weak in many technical aspects. What Arnold does
hold is that the intoxication of style is a trait which can be detected in all Celtic literature.

The second trait of Celtic literature is that a certain kind of melancholy pervades it. It is different from what is called melancholy in Germanic literature. "The German Sehnsucht itself is a wistful, soft, tearful longing, rather than a struggling, fierce, passionate one," Arnold states. He does not, however, give examples of what he would classify as typical cases of Celtic melancholy. In essence, he establishes the category but does not advance it beyond the broadest generalizations. Except for its being "struggling, fierce, and passionate" (p. 128), he says nothing further on the matter. Earlier, of course, Renan had already cited melancholy as one of the major characteristics of Celtic literature and had worked out his idea at some length.

The Celt's approach to nature is the third trait of Celtic poetry. Although Arnold admits there are probably many modes of handling nature, he draws a line of distinction between four of these methods. There is the conventional way of handling nature; there is the faithful way of handling nature; there is the Greek way of handling nature; and there is the magical way of handling nature.
It is, however, the magical way of handling nature which is the peculiarly Celtic way of looking at nature. Magic, Arnold says, is the only way to describe it. The Greeks and Latins understood the beauty of nature; the Germans perfected a faithful realism; but the Celts get at the intimate life of nature, "her weird power and her fairy charm" (p. 132). Always, in Celtic romance, there is something mysterious, some "delicate magic" in the description of forest solitudes, bubbling springs, and the wild flowers which hints at a life beyond what is clearly visible.

In order to give substance to his classification of the methods of handling nature, Arnold analyzes the poetry of Shakespeare by showing how the tone of various passages can be accounted for within the terms of the theory. In a passage such as

I knew a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine--

the handling of nature is primarily Greek. Nature is described directly but with the clearness and brightness characteristic of the Greek method. In another passage Shakespeare achieves the mastery of the magical way of handling nature:
The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls--
in such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew--
in such a night
Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage.

The last lines Arnold describes as being "drenched and in-
toxicated with the fairy-dew of that natural magic which
is our theme" (p. 139-40). Quite clearly Arnold associates
the magical tone with the highest form of poetic inspiration
and grants to the Celt the tribute of having perfected that
manner of dealing with nature.

Arnold's study isolates three traits which he finds
in Celtic literature, all three of which presuppose the
Celt's concern with spiritual rather than physical reality:
a commitment to style, a pervading sense of melancholy, and
the handling of nature in a magical way. Although the first
two are distinctive Celtic traits, it is in the magical
handling of nature that Celtic literature has made its
unique contribution to English literature.

A third key statement in a study of the Celtic Revival
is Grant Allen's "The Celt in English Art," which appeared
in the Fortnightly Review during 1891. Although written
primarily as an appreciation of the Briar Rose sequence of
pictures by Edward Burne-Jones, the essay considers the larger history of literature and art as it is delineated through the contributions made by the Celts. It is clear in Allen's essay that the terms used in his discussion of the Celtic element in the realm of art are for the most part derived from Renan and Arnold. The value of Allen's essay is not that he initiates a set of terms or critical categories within which the achievement of the Celts can be analyzed. Rather, with Arnold dead, he is able to look over the decade of the 1880's and view it more or less with Arnold's eyes. Arnold had expressed his wish that the Celtic spirit would do its work in England as an antidote to Philistinism. In Allen's estimation this is exactly what happened in the 1880's. "From the very beginning," he says, "the modern aesthetic movement in England...has been due above everything to Celtic initiative." 4 William Morris, a Welshman, dedicated his life as a poet and artist to bringing into the lives of the middle class objects of beauty with which to surround themselves. Edward Burne-Jones, also of Welsh ancestry, worked as the close friend

of Morris for the same purpose. Oscar Wilde, an Irishman to the core, fired the enthusiasm of his middle-class audiences in his lectures on beauty and art. Looking back on his own college days at Oxford, Allen fancies that practically everyone associated with the movement for the restoration of the decorative arts had Celtic origins, being either a Welshman, a Highlander, or an Irish Celt. "Bear me out, you of Christ Church, of Magdalen, of Brasenose!" he exclaims (p. 273). The service performed by Allen, therefore, is not in the formulation of criteria for a discussion of the Celts but in his tracing of the progress of Celtic art from Arnold to his own day. And to this particular task, according to Richard Le Gallienne in The Romantic Nineties, Allen was admirably suited, for his "barometric mind" was a true gauge of all the artistic currents of his day and made him "one of the most vigorous and persuasive of all the trumpeters of 'advance' in every form."\(^5\)

Before analyzing the Celtic contribution to the plastic arts, Allen recalls the glories of Celtic literature. In this he is shrewd, for few readers would actually question

the historical significance of the Celtic achievement al­
ready expounded by Renan and Arnold. In fact, Allen's trib­
ute is little more than a catalogue of easily recognized
works that are more or less directly derived from Celtic
sources. He recalls that the Arthurian legend--Lancelot,
Galahad, and Guinevere--are embodiments of the Celtic spir­
it. Milton's Satan belongs to the grandiose Celtic type.
King Lear is actually the account by the Welshman Geoffrey
of Monmouth of the history of a Welsh hero, dramatized by
Shakespeare, just as Macbeth is the terrible history of a
Gaelic Scot. The fanciful and the sublime alike--Titania,
Mab, and Oberon--are part of the Celtic imagination and
come into English literature from that source alone, Allen
claims. Nothing here extends beyond the critical structure
in which Celtic literature had already been placed. Allen's
description of the Celtic achievement in poetry and romance,
although even a bit extravagant for them, could just as
easily have been written by Renan or Arnold.

From his discussion of the Celtic literary traits Allen
advances to a discussion of art, the specific task of his
essay. His division of the characteristics of art into two
ethnic groups, the Teutonic and the Celtic, is reminiscent
of Arnold's similar grouping. With the Teutonic artist, he
claims, there is always an expression which is basically imitative and pictorial; the scene to be painted is the primary concern, not the creation of beauty for the sake of beauty. The composition of the work is primary; form and color are only secondary concerns. With the Celtic artist, on the other hand, the tendency is primarily to produce a thing of beauty, to ornament rather than to narrate. This tendency is manifested already in the earliest examples of Celtic art where it is obvious that the decorative has had a greater fascination than the purely functional. Look at the Celtic crosses, the Celtic brooches, and the Celtic embroidery, Allen says. It is their exquisite sense of decorative fitness that sets them apart as works of art. The Celtic artist freely uses animal forms and human figures, but there is always a perfect subordination to decorative needs and intentions. Even in contemporary society he sees the same balanced feeling for manual adornment which made of the Celtic manuscripts such masterpieces of ornamental art. Although he gives credit to the Teutonic spirit for its technical mastery, he concludes that "poetry, grace, delicacy, feeling, the touch of charm, the touch of fancy are almost always conspicuously absent"
(p. 270), and that, in the last analysis, the Celts must be given credit for having produced art in its highest form.

The first specific trait that Allen distinguishes in the artistic genius of the Celt is its spirituality. His treatment of the matter, however, is very brief. It will be recalled that Arnold had specifically noted how difficult it was for a practitioner of the plastic arts to convey successfully a sense of the spiritual. Either the art turned out bad or the artist went mad. Allen proposes that Burne-Jones does successfully capture the sense of spirituality within his medium. Of the Briar Rose cycle he says, "Spiritus intus alit; on Burne-Jones's canvas soul pervades every gem, every fret, every fold, every fillet" (p. 275-6).

It is difficult to see exactly in what sense the spiritual pervades the physical objects depicted. To Allen's mind, however, the fusion of spiritual and physical is achieved in the purely decorative elements of the painting, for example, rather than in the expressions of the faces or attitudes of the bodies. His conclusion that "only a Celt, and only a Celt of our time, could have put so much spirituality into the broidery of a robe" (p. 276) restates
his premise that Celtism is still a vital force on the contemporary scene and that its spirituality, its dominant trait, is expressed through the decorative elements in the painting, as it was earlier expressed in the elaborately wrought manuscripts of the Middle Ages.

The second trait of Celtic art is melancholia. Allen's model is again Burne-Jones' Briar Rose. He finds that its tone of melancholy is enough to form a major distinction between the English series and the otherwise equally embellished madonu by Memling. It is the sadness of a conquered race which has been ground down and oppressed for hundreds of years that shines through a Burne-Jones canvas. Yet what he sees on the canvas is not peculiar to Burne-Jones, for he finds that from Ossian to George Meredith Celtic art is universally sad, tender, and soulful. "Our sweetest songs," he concludes, "are these that tell of saddest thought" (p. 277).

The sadness, the unrest, the mysticism are all absent in the Flemish paintings. They have specifically those qualities which Arnold had already attributed to Teutonic art--straightforwardness, tangibleness, and reality—or in other words, what would be a structurally perfect picture. But Allen concludes that in a world of doubt, frustration,
and misery, the Celt's art speaks to the soul of man and should alone be called the highest form of art.

The last major statement on Celtism in the nineteenth century, W. B. Yeats's "The Celtic Element in Literature," was published in 1897. The concepts first associated with Celtic literature by Renan in 1859 had already served a full generation of artists, and Yeats sets out to analyze Renan's and Arnold's basic assumptions in the light of his own study and the research of others into the ancient Celtic literature.

Unlike Renan who deeply identifies with everything he says about the Celts of Brittany, Yeats avoids applying sweeping generalities to Irish literature as distinguished from any other national literature. In brief, Yeats finds that the traits which Renan first verbalized and Arnold later adopted can be applied not only to Celtic literature but to any primitive literature.

Yeats begins with Arnold's four divisions of the ways of handling nature. He finds that the divisions do in fact describe four possible ways of looking at nature, but he denies that the magical way is exclusively the property of the Celts as Arnold had claimed. Actually, the magical way of looking at nature was the only way of looking at nature
for the primitives, for "all folk literature, and all literature that keeps the folk tradition, delights in unbounded and immortal things." He quotes several episodes from the *Kalevala* and the *Song of Roland* to demonstrate his point that the magical treatment of nature is present in literature other than the Celtic. Yeats does not deny that there are equally beautiful examples of the magical treatment of nature in the *Mabinogion*, but he finds no grounds for concluding that the trait is distinctly Celtic or comes principally from Celtic sources. In a gentlemanly apology for Arnold's having allowed himself to stumble into such a critically indefensibly position, Yeats concludes that Arnold simply did not have the benefit of the exhaustive research into folk-song and folk-belief which was available to the following generation. Natural magic, he can say, is nothing but "the ancient religion of the world, the ancient worship of Nature and that troubled ecstasy before her" (p. 176).*

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* For the ancients, Yeats claims, all beautiful places were haunted by spiritual presences.
Melancholia is another trait which Renan and Arnold isolate as typically Celtic. Yeats sees melancholia as a concommitant of passion, and all folk literature has a passion unmatched in modern literature. Love, for example, is almost always tragic in ancient literature. As such, it is a reflection of life as the ancient saw it. The physical world, after all, offered only illusion, for the reflective poet realized that the very moment of love's ecstasy contained within itself the seed of death. Nothing in man's world remained constant, and even the most exuberant moment of youth had to give way to grey hairs, rotten teeth, and feeble bones. The concept of love's tragedy, that man is born to die and must pass from this life long before his thirst for love is slaked, is found in all the august sorrowful persons of literature. It is found in Deirdre, Lear, and Tristan, but it is not exclusively Celtic. There are also Cassandra and Helen and examples from many other ancient literatures. Yeats's attempt to see the traits of Celtic literature within the broader framework of world literature forces him again to deny melancholy the role of being a peculiarly Celtic trait. Countering Arnold's use of a Celtic lamentation as evidence for the race's special mastery of the mood, Yeats comments: "Matthew Arnold quotes
the lamentation of Llywarch Hen as a type of the Celtic melancholy, but I prefer to quote it as a type of the primitive melancholy" (p. 183). As with the trait of the magical treatment of nature, Yeats finds that when the Celt conveys a sense of melancholy in his writing, he does so not because he is a Celt but because he is a primitive and has the primitive's intensity of passion.

The task Yeats sets himself after having cleared some of the earlier notions established by Renan and Arnold is to get at the core of what makes great literature. He concludes that a great writer strips away the sophisticated habits of modern thought and goes to nature with a readiness to be overwhelmed by her mysterious and untamed powers. The man of genius strips away the layers of convention and finds within himself the ancient hunter and fisher and the ecstatic dancer among hills and woods. It is not a revelation, Yeats admits, which is likely to make a man better adjusted to the needs of modern life, where discipline and restraint are preached as necessary virtues. Under modern conditions of life, the imagination lies bound and gagged. It is the artist who must throw off the yoke of convention and reclaim the "unbounded emotion" and the "wild melancholy" of the primitive, for "excess is the vivifying spirit of the
finest art, and we must always seek to make excess more abundantly excessive" (p. 184).

The attitude toward nature which Yeats sees as essential to the artist is far removed from the modern's manner of viewing her. Modern man has, indeed, an "affection... for the garden where he has walked daily and thought pleasant thoughts" (p. 178), but the artist's perception of nature must go far beyond that. Nature must throw the artist into a state of ecstasy, of religious awe. Nature must be seen as the thin disguise for the spiritual realities beyond.

The really unique quality of Celtic art is, as Yeats sees it, that it has remained close to the primitive attitude toward nature, and the ancient Gaelic legends are prime examples of the clearly expressed sense of mystery in nature. "'The Celtic movement,' as I understand it, is principally the opening of this fountain"-- the fountain of Gaelic legends (p. 186), he says. The great importance of such a source of previously unavailable legends he finds difficult to imagine. Far in the past, the tales of Arthur and the Grail provided an "intoxication for the imagination," but the need then was small as compared to the need of his contemporaries who have been successively dehumanized by
the rationalism of the eighteenth century and the materialism of the nineteenth. The passage is distinctive for its emphasis on the imaginative as contrasted with the cognitive power of the mind. Here Yeats describes the process of moving the imagination in terms of "intoxication," a clear identification with the earlier description of the man of genius in terms of "excess."

Yeats begins his essay on the Celtic element in literature by indicating that Matthew Arnold had claimed for the Celt such artistic qualities as were characteristic of all primitive minds. When he describes the Gaelic legends, however, he uses language closely related to Arnold's. In effect, Yeats does not deny to Celtic literature these qualities which Arnold found there; he simply sees them as applying to any movement which attempts to revive a primitive art.

At the time of his essay in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Irish effort seems to Yeats a unique effort to revive a primitive heritage. Consequently, the characteristics of ancient literature which he finds in Renan and Arnold do apply not only to Celtic literature but also to what he himself attempts.
The chief trait is the spirituality of Celtic art. Yeats summarizes the attitude when he writes that "the arts by brooding upon their own intensity have become religious" (p. 187). Putting man in contact with the spiritual reality of his nature is the primary purpose of all Celtic art. It was true of the Druid; it was true of the Grail cycle; it is still true at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Celt's treatment of nature is also an identifying characteristic. Nature is always portrayed as magical, as revealing through the beautiful external forms a reality which is other-worldly. The function of the artist, therefore, is always to carry the reader through nature rather than to stop and hold him in an admiration of the beauties of nature.

The final characteristic held in common by all Celts Yeats describes as "excess," "inebriation," or "ecstasy." It is the trait which does for all the circumstances of life what the Celt does to nature—it reveals the spiritual core of meaning which lies beyond the most insignificant happening. This "ecstasy" separates the man of imagination permanently from the recorder of fact.
Although the Celtic Revival begins with Renan's essay in 1859, it is not until 1889, with the publication of Douglas Hyde's *Leabhar Sgeuluishcheachta* (A Book of Gaelic Stories) and W. B. Yeats's *Wanderings of Oisin* that the revival of Irish traditions, history, and folk-legends becomes an important source of artistic inspiration rather than a subject of scholarship. Yeats hated the literary pretensions and superficiality of the coteries and went directly to the feelings of the peasants as they were formulated in folktales and folk-traditions. In *The Celtic Twilight* he retells many of the legends as he heard them in the district around Sligo. The tales of Cuchulain and the ancient heroes of Ireland he reclaimed as narrative material in his long poems. He also dramatized the great passions and sorrows of the past in such plays as *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, *On Baile's Strand*, and *Deirdre*, showing that the native literature of Ireland could stimulate new art just as Richard Wagner had already successfully done with the Ring cycle in Germany.

The importance of folklore in the art of Yeats would be difficult to overemphasize. To begin with, he looks upon the psychic separation between his own generation and those of the distant Irish past as merely a convention. In the
essay "Magic" he describes the borders of people's minds as constantly shifting and claims that all minds flow together to "reveal a single mind, a single energy." Such being the case, it is basically a matter of the artist expanding the boundaries of his mind to flow into the great ideas of the past as well as of the present. In creating his own art, the artist uses symbols so that "this great mind and great memory can be evoked." Folklore, having distilled through centuries the purest examples of human passion, presents the artist with symbols that evoke such passions.

Yeats was raised in the household of an atheistic father but from childhood had strong intuitive leanings toward spiritualism. When his family moved to London in 1887, he joined the intimate group of Theosophists surrounding Madame Blavatsky. After three years of membership he was dismissed. The degree to which he absorbed Theosophist doctrines is the subject of much speculation and debate. Richard Ellmann in Yeats: the Man and the Masks settles for a minimal influence, claiming that the Theosophists simply

8 Ibid.
reinforced his attitude that "reality could not be facil­ely explained as the perceptions of the five senses and that scientific rationalism had ignored or superficially dismissed many most important matters." It was the work of his life, of course, to harmonize and unify the spiritual and physical elements in man's existence.

After Yeats, the man most closely associated with the Celtic Revival is George Russell (A. E.). In his auto­biography, Yeats describes how he met him, "the poet and the mystic," at the Dublin art school where they were students. His poetry is more consciously steeped in the learning of the past than are the works of any other artist of the Revival. According to Lloyd Morris in The Celtic Dawn, a proper understanding of Russell's view of life would take the reader back through Blake and Jacob Boehme, Sweden­borg and Crashaw, Santa Teresa and the neoplatonists of Alexandria, to Plato himself and the sacred books of the East. His early volume of transcendental verses, Homeward.


Songs by the Way (1894), although it does not deal with Celtic subject matter, expresses the revolt against materialism which was a rallying point for the Revival. In such a poem as "The Symbol Seduces," he states an attitude toward matter and spirit with which all members of the early Revival could identify:

There in her old-world garden smiles
A symbol of the world's desire,
Striving with quaint and lovely wiles
To bind to earth the soul of fire.

And while I sit and listen there,
The robe of Beauty falls away
From universal things to where
Its image dazzles for a day.

Away! the great life calls; I leave
For Beauty, Beauty's rarest flower;
For Truth, the lips that ne'er deceive;
For Love, I leave Love's haunted bower.¹²

In the first decade of the twentieth century, with the Revival showing signs of losing its thrust, Russell turned his attention from art and poetry to social reform and agriculture. His The Rural Community (1913) is a good example of the Revival's shift from dreams and escape to immersion in current social problems.

Yeats first met Lady Gregory while on a visit with Arthur Symons to Edward Martyn at Tullyra Castle in 1895. She invited him to visit her at Coole, an invitation which she extended for the succeeding twenty summers. She was personally a great inspiration to Yeats but likewise took an active part in establishing the Irish Literary Theatre for which she wrote twenty-one plays. She had already been active in the collection of folk-tales before she met Yeats and took him with her on many of her later excursions into the villages. In Cuchulain of Muirthemne she retells the adventures of the hero in an account which is reconstructed from the many tales she had collected.

The chief non-Irish member of the Celtic Revival was Fiona Macleod, the pseudonym of William Sharp. A Scotchman by birth, Sharp fell enthusiastically into line with the ideals of the Revival with the publication of Parais in 1894. He was anxious to probe the Celtic element in the Scotch consciousness and was the only outsider to write plays for the Irish Theatre. Yeats encouraged Sharp to dramatize his ideas in an effort "to make the Irish, Scotch and other Celts recognize their solidarity." Strangely enough,

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13Richard Ellman, p. 129.
Morris claims that at the time of his death in 1905, "'Fiona' was certainly the most widely known and talked of author of the Celtic group." William Sharp did very little theorizing about the Revival, and it is significant that at least one contemporary observer should have named him the best-known figure, especially as he has been practically lost to later commentators.

The Celtic Revival comes to an end when, as in the case of A. E., the artists turn from the theme most characteristic of Celtic consciousness—the conflict between reality and the ideal—to the practical conditions of everyday life. The shift is seen most completely in the plays of J. M. Synge, where the Irish peasant is seen as primitive and elemental rather than as spiritual and lost in the world of dreams. The attitude adopted by the younger generation of poets and playwrights Morris terms "Neo-Celtic, for they seek "a refuge from life not in art, but in action." Arthur Machen, in the same spirit as William Sharp, felt the surge in pro-Celtic sentiment which rose at the middle

14Morris, p. 201
15Ibid., p. 168.
of the nineteenth century and crested in Ireland during the 1890's. Conscious of his Welsh ancestry and love for his native land, Machen worked within a tradition which stressed the primacy of spiritual value over the merely physical and created an art which, through its concern with style, attempted to lead the reader into a world of beauty that exists nowhere but within the reader's own mind. His heroes, Lucian of The Hill of Dreams and Ambrose of The Secret Glory, cut themselves off from the world of working men and child-bearing women and dedicate themselves to the frustrating, melancholy life of penniless seekers after the ideal. Although Machen did not know Sharp personally, the parallel between the two authors is striking, as both went to the peasant folktales for material and both stressed the persistence of belief in fairies and other manifestations of spirit in the physical world. Sharp published a volume of poems in 1896 as From the Hills of Dream. At the time Machen was working on "The Garden of Avallaunius," which was reissued in 1907 as The Hill of Dreams. Machen's search is always an interior one, and his heroes are always conscious of themselves as Celts--students of a rich spiritual tradition of hermits and saints but citizens of a world
concerned with more immediate and practical problems. The Celtic element is so central to Machen's artistic purpose that without an appreciation of its objectives there can be no real understanding of Machen's achievement.
CHAPTER III

Machen's Critical Theory

The literary figures of the nineteenth century were clearly divided in their attitudes towards the spiritual nature of man. The scientific skepticism which had been developing since Newton was furthered by Darwin at mid-century. Celtism as viewed by Renan, Arnold, and Yeats did, however, provide a clear and evident alternative to materialism. Furthermore, the spiritual bias of the Celt was strengthened by the emergence in France of the Symbolists. Yeats was early influenced by the poets whom he described in "The Autumn of the Body" as struggling "against that 'externality' which a time of scientific and political thought has brought into literature," and were pointing the direction to a restoration of art by concerning themselves with "the essences of things, and not with

things." In 1889 Arthur Symons, with the assistance of Yeats, wrote *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. Symons saw the movement as having its source in "this revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition." Having disengaged the ultimate essences, the artist in "waiting upon every symbol by which the soul of things can be made visible" enters upon his sacred task of making art a religious ritual. Clearly, to both Yeats and Symons the making of art was a task of spiritual regeneration, and the artist performed what was essentially a priestly function.

Charles Baudelaire's "Correspondances," a poem from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, functioned as a touchstone for the relationship between the spiritual essence and its symbol:

> La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
> Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
> Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

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²Ibid., p. 193.


⁴Ibid.
Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
—Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.⁵

The poem set a standard by which the physical objects in
nature could be seen as alive with a spirit that forced
itself upon the senses, calling attention to itself through
a complex series of mysterious associations.

Machen, as well as Yeats, was influenced in his art
by the Symbolist effort to evoke spiritual realities
through the choice of physical objects. In an introduction
which he wrote in 1926 for Frederick Carter's The Dragon of
the Alchemists he remarks: "We pass through, we perceive
sensibly, temporal things in order that we may gain eternal
things, the everlasting essences that are at once hidden in
the visible and tangible and audible universe and communi-
cated by it."⁶ It is a typical statement of the sacramental
concept by Machen and will be seen repeated many times in
his criticism and fictional works. Likewise, the comment is

⁵Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, trans, C. F.
Mac Intyre (Berkeley, 1947), p. 21.

⁶Arthur Machen, intro. The Dragon of the Alchemists by
at once a statement of what Machen set out to do in all his literary efforts and a paraphrase of Baudelaire's "Correspondances." The confusion of terms is immediately obvious. Machen never considered himself to be a symbolist, and yet what he attempts to do in his art has obvious parallels with the earlier movement. G. Turquet-Milnes in *The Influence of Baudelaire in France and England* calls Machen "one of the most Baudelairian of contemporary writers." Machen recognized and identified with the Symbolist intention of suggesting spiritual realities by means of specifically structured sense experiences, but he was conscious throughout his own writings that the tradition from which he grew went back to more ancient beliefs and philosophies. He attempted to revive in his novels the realizations that the Welsh had always had a belief in the underlying spiritual reality of human existence, a belief which had its roots in the Druidic rites before the Romans and the Christians arrived in Britain. The same belief was the source of fantastic folktales and myths, but there was always the basic truth--man was a combination of spiritual and physical realities.

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In analyzing Machen's treatment of the Welsh ethos, the scholar could very well use the term "symbolism" to describe the relationship between spirit and matter that Machen attempted to achieve. Such a term would have the advantage of verbally relating Machen to Yeats and the use he was making of his Irish background. Machen, however, preferred to use the term "sacramentalism" for what was essentially the same reality. The point is well made in a passage from "Dr. Stiggins: His Views and Principles."

In the essay Machen contrasts Dr. Stiggins, an outspoken modern, with the Syrians of early Christianity. The comparison is typical of Machen's attitude throughout his works. There is always a contrast between the disoriented moderns and the ancient men of faith. Near the end of his long harangue, Dr. Stiggins says in disgust, "Those old Syrians, with all their piety, were Sacramentalists to the backbone; to them the visible and tangible world was but the symbol of the heavenly realities." The statement is a succinct analysis of Machen's artistic presuppositions. As Machen viewed the world, the material universe functioned as a

8Arthur Machen, "Dr. Stiggins: His Views and Principles," The Academy, LXXIII (November 9, 1907), p. 121.
symbol for the spiritual realities beyond.* Someone who sees the world so is a Sacramentalist. Termed sacramentalist or symbolist, Machen shared this attitude with Yeats and the other members of the Celtic Renaissance.

The consistency of Machen's sacramental point of view can be substantiated by an analysis of two essays which enclose a period of almost thirty years. "Dr. Stiggins: His Views and Principles" is a series of five essays published in The Academy in 1907. The series represents the position of the writer as he emerges from the nineteenth century and verbalizes in essay form the values inherent in Machen's fiction and formal criticism. The other, "Farewell to Materialism," is a product of his old age but represents the stance which he could honestly say in 1935 was the main thrust of his ideas throughout a long life.

Dr. Stiggins, an Evangelical preacher of the most liberal theology and the fictional narrator of the five

*In his Confessions, the famous occultist Aleister Crowley says that for him, "A poem is a series of words so arranged that the combination of meaning, rhythm, and rime produces the definitely magical effect of exalting the soul to divine ecstasy. Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Machen share this view."9

addresses to his Flock, is Machen's embodiment of the arch-
Philistine. His topics range over a wide variety of sub-
jects, including history, politics, painting, sculpture, 
and literature, all of which he views from a cramped, 
utilitarian perspective. His only aesthetic principle is 
that all art is justifiable exclusively on the grounds that 
it teaches Christian ethics. Any art which is the result 
of other considerations should be systematically eliminated.

Regarding history, Dr. Stiggins has adopted the theory 
of evolution. It is nonsense, he argues, to talk about the 
relevance of the Bible to modern days when one realizes the 
 extreme primitiveness of the period out of which it grew. 
The East never changes. The Oriental has always been dreamy 
and mystical, whether he lived in first-century Palestine 
or present-day India. The Syrian peasant has always lacked 
such business interests which would keep him going night 
and day, physically and mentally working at his peak of per-
formance. In contrast, the modern man must be alert con-
stantly lest he miss out on a chance to make money. Whether 
he lives in Chicago or London, he must strain every nerve 
and brain cell in the interest of those things which make 
a good citizen and an earnest Christian. The Bible, viewed 
in such a manner, can be thought of profitably only in terms
of the historic process. The appropriate attitude of the reader should be that everything that happens in the narrative is defined by the mind of a primitive and is consequently quaint and rather naive. Behind Dr. Stiggins' historical evaluations is Machen's own unstated conclusions that all imaginative literature is great when it is able to lift the reader beyond the circumstances of everyday life. For Stiggins, the Biblical accounts of miracles are to be rationally discarded because they obviously go against what modern man has been taught is the scientific operation of the universe. For the credulous Oriental, the "Great Story" was the proper literature; it too looked upon the world as essentially a vision and narrated history in terms of the marvelous. The modern man, on the other hand, knows that his world has little in common with fantasy, and when he sits down to enjoyable reading, it is to the newspaper that he turns. If the newspaper is assumed as the standard for evaluation, there is no question that man's imaginative ventures are doomed. Stiggins' analysis of the situation is precise. The world of the Bible is fantasy, appropriate enough for an uneducated, undeveloped people. For modern man, however, with his need for making money and gaining social respectability, there is no place
for such escape from reality. Since for him there must be a highly rational ordering of means towards his goals, the Bible lacks a basis for application in the practical affairs of life.

Dr. Stiggins' research into the "early documents" of the Church discloses ample evidence of "the sacramental nature of Christianity" (p. 122). The concept is upsetting to him, for he does not see any reality at all which exists beyond the religious fantasies in the Bible. He permits himself to be amused by the Bible accounts, but sacramentalism goes so far as to say that the fantasy is only the physical symbol of a spiritual realm beyond. Applying his yardstick of evolution again, Dr. Stiggins concludes that "from the nature of the case early Christianity could not fail to be a ceremonial and ritual religion" (p. 122) because of the addiction to ceremony and outward show which characterizes the personality of the East. Oil, water, bread, wine, the imposition of hands, the ceremonial washing as seen in the Apostle to the Hebrews—all are used within the world of spirit. For the practical, rational man of the twentieth century, Stiggins decides, such artificial rendering of reality is purest nonsense.
The essay concludes with a final invocation to evolution and a vision of the true conflict for power over man's mind. Dr. Stiggins admits that there could have been a religion of human sacrifice in the barbaric past but that such an anachronism, if not eradicated by the process of evolution, must be faced in open warfare. He prophetically sees the battlelines drawn, the forces set for the bout: "...already is begun the great battle between two great hosts--between the armies of Sacramentalism and Anti-Sacramentalism" (p. 122). The prospects of the Sacramentalists are quite grim. In the age of democracy, for which Stiggins stands as a spokesman, it is always the immediate, tangible, and material advances which are likely to catch public fancy. With social justice as the proper sphere of activity for the Church, there will be no longer any need to weave fantasies about a place of beauty and joy in the world beyond sense.

Arthur Machen bristles at the expansive theology of Dr. Stiggins. The sacramental nature of existence is for him an historical and artistic *sine qua non*. To reject the spiritual correlative of man's physical existence is to destroy that which distinguishes man from all other forms of animate life. Machen returns to the dichotomy of man's
nature in "Farewell to Materialism," published in the September, 1935, issue of *The American Mercury*. His argument is that science, by posing as the final assessor of reality, has attempted to reduce everything to its component physical properties. Under the microscope, he claims, even the face of a loved one is an ugly and unrecognizable mass. So too, a landscape masterpiece becomes a blur, formless and misty, when viewed from the lens of a microscope. The microscope so used becomes an instrument of evil in the "black magic of science" which "can demonstrate that all beauty is ugliness, that all form is formless, that the seer's vision is a drunkard's delirium."^10

It is a vicious process by which the elements in life which cannot be reduced to a scientific measurement are discarded as having no real existence. The same tendency in science to subject everything to its crucible had been attacked earlier by Dickens in *Hard Times* where Bitzer gives his famous "definition" of a horse as: "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye teeth and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in spring; in marshy countries sheds

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hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth" (p. 46). The absurdity of such an approach to understanding reality is more startlingly apparent when the scientific criteria are applied to a human being. To guarantee the greatest impact, Machen uses the example of the poet Keats, a man who, by scientifically "objective" criteria, was physically below average and even predisposed by a weakness in the lungs to tuberculosis. Looked at scientifically, he was an unlikely candidate for any type of excellence, and yet, after the classifying of bones, veins, teeth, and nails, had the scientist summed up the collection by saying "'This is Keats': then he would have lied, just as Bitzer lied when he gave his famous definition of a horse" (p. 46). The question of what made Keats Keats had already seemed to Machen, at the writing of the second volume of his autobiography in 1923, as the stumbling block for science. In Things Near and Far he had challenged science to proceed beyond Keats' physical traits, which he had in common with many other humans, to an acceptable description of the unique personality which he was. The analysis of the fragmented portions of Bitzer's and Keats' bodies would lead to absolutely nothing because that which gave the two creatures living personality had been
annihilated. Under the regime of science, an inquiry into a creature's "quiddity" is quite beside the point as it would carry the investigator into areas of the "unsearchable and ineffable," an obscene suggestion in an age which has "forgotten that there is such a thing as that essence which is present in all things." The attitude expressed is easily recognized as being similar, even in phraseology, to what Yeats says in "The Autumn of the Body" and other essays from the 1890's.

By the time of the writing of the "Farewell to Materialism," Machen realized that the claim which science had earlier made of revealing "reality" under the microscope had come to be thought of by contemporary scientists as quite naive. In fact, Machen claims, science has eventually come around to looking at reality from what is essentially his own point of view. Looking back to the state of science in the 1890's when he first began to write seriously, Machen realized that by 1935 most of the problems have vanished. Science quite readily admits that it has come no closer to explaining "reality" through the microscope than has the man with unassisted vision. "The thing in itself," he

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concludes, "the reality, is never to be found; it vanishes into the invisible conjectured land of the electrons; it becomes a manifestation of the eternal energy, a part of an infinite cosmos, like the sun and the stars. Its end is a great glory, a firm order, a shining mystery" (p. 48). Although Machen found in the science of the nineteenth century a determination to undermine belief in the spiritual world, he never denied to science its legitimate role of exploring the unknown areas of the physical world. As creatures of the earth, he argues, men have no alternative but to use the physical as a means of getting to the spiritual. In the end, everything known about the material world can be used in the effort to understand the hidden, spiritual world. "Crass and imbecile materialism is gone forever," he optimistically concludes, "and in its place we have the recognition that, in its ultimates, all being is a profound mystery" (p. 50). The use of language in describing nature is especially reminiscent of Symons in The Symbolist Movement in Literature. Machen brings science to the point of admitting that the universe is still essentially a great mystery. Symons says that "the doctrine of mysticism, with which all this symbolical literature has so much to do" is finally nothing but "a theory of life which makes us
familiar with mystery." Symons relates symbolism quite logically to a broad concept of mysticism, and Machen in his turn sees the twentieth century scientists doing the work of poets and visionaries, for "all these knew, some in their minds but all in their hearts, that we live in a world of symbols; of sensibly perishable things which both veil and reveal spiritual and living and eternal realities" (p. 51). What, after all, is such a statement but a reiteration of the Celt's magical treatment of nature? Science, to Machen's way of viewing it, has come to an acceptance of an element in nature which is beyond its analytical methodology. He finds in his concept of sacramentality a structure which adequately accounts for the two levels of nature's reality, a manner of looking at nature in her wholeness.

In his single volume of criticism, *Hieroglyphics: A Note Upon Ecstasy in Literature*, Machen formulated as early as 1899 his theory that the sacramental interpretation of existence is the unifying factor in all "real" literature. On the other hand, all other "books which are not literature

12 Arthur Symons, p. 95.
Though this sacramentalism is not limited to Celtic writing, in many of his essays and in his own novels Machen's object is to show that the sacramental view of man is what gives continuity to the long series of Welsh literary efforts. What he concludes is that producing great literature cannot be the prerogative of any single racial group but that a single racial group can have its impressive share in this process— that, for instance, the ideas and beliefs found in great literature can be seen handed on from generation to generation by the Welsh writers.

Literature, to be great, must be sacramental because "man is a sacrament, soul manifested under the form of body, and art has to deal with each and both and to show their interaction and interdependence" (p. 81). The proposition is easily recognized as one of Machen's recurring themes. Such a view of man and art is simply one portion of a large philosophy of life, one which sees man as belonging to a universe which is interpreted spiritually rather than materially. The second half of the nineteenth century was caught

up in viewing man exclusively in terms of his physical existence. For Machen this was artistically disastrous. As an expression of human values, such art could embody nothing more than half-truths. Consequently, anything written from so erroneous a position would necessarily fall short of truly great literature.

In Hieroglyphics the task of pointing out the traits of great literature is carried out by the narrator, who is called the Hermit. He is an elderly man, long retired from active life, who occupies a small apartment in a run-down section of London. By his own admission, his system for analyzing great literature is "a confession of mysticism" (p. 8). He entertains the author with evenings of literary conversation which range in subject matter from Homer to George Eliot. In the course of his conversation he derives standards which are based on the view that man exists in two worlds--the physical and the spiritual. Given the nature of man, only a mystic, the Hermit argues, can understand the function of art as a quest by man into that element in his character which is not immediately available to the senses, a quest which by its very nature leads the artist into the vast unknown and uncharted realms of the spirit. The realm of art is not, the Hermit points out, the
only one in which the quest for the unknown manifests itself. The gambler is motivated by the same thing, and when the petty gambler places his very small bet on a horse, he is in fact venturing into the world of the unknown. The shopkeeper also, that class of human which is generally despised by the artist for exerting every energy in pursuit of gold, is not totally unmotivated by the same insights into the spiritual, which is the basis of the greatest art. The tradesman meets the challenge of taking a risk, and the taking of a risk is a venture into uncertainty and the unknown. "So you see," quips the paradoxical Hermit, "our despised grocer turns out, after all, to be of the kin of Columbus, of the treasure-seekers, and mystery-mongers, and delvers after hidden things spiritual and material" (p. 15).

All of human behavior can, in fact, be analyzed in terms of its spiritual or material motivation. The task of the literary critic is therefore quite clearly defined: he must class as great literature that which comes closest to wakening the reader to the reality that he is the inhabitant of two worlds, and he must term "reading matter" as that which merely tells a story, however cleverly written or truly descriptive of the myriad details of everyday life.
The only stage at which a work can qualify as literature is in its inception. It is the idea from which the author begins and not the mastery of the technique which places the work in the class of literature. Art, the Hermit insists, must inspire a work from beginning to end, but it is only in the idea that pure art manifests itself. Plot, construction, and style is each alloyed with artifice. The sole criterion for a great work is the quality of its basic idea; for if "any given book can be shown to proceed from an Idea, it is to be placed in the class of literature" (p. 77). The Hermit further minimizes literary craftsmanship and highlights the artist's creative "Idea" through the analogy of a temple and a tub. Real literature, he states, is to a temple what reading matter is to a tub. A temple is nonetheless a sacred place because it is built by primitive and inartistic people, whereas wash tubs reach a high level of artistic design in the Roman Baths. Yet no degree of artistic merit can make of a tub a sacred object: "The temple may be a miserably designed structure, in ruinous condition, and the tub is, perhaps, a miracle of excellent workmanship. But one means worship and the other means washing, and that is the distinction" (p. 22). So too, the highest form of literature has an essentially sacred role to play in human
affairs, and no amount of embellishment can correct the flaw. The temple is made for worship; the tub is designed for utility. Homer and Sophocles wrote great literature—they saw in terms of his questing after the unknown. Jane Austen and Thackeray, on the other hand, wrote "reading matter"—they conceived of man in terms of a single dimension, the physical. If Homer and Sophocles can be compared to a temple, Austen and Thackeray are a wash tub, perhaps not a pitiful porcelain construction but a glorious Roman Bath. But no matter how splendid and complex the details, they are still basically a wash tub. Such then is the literary effect of "ecstasy," the questing after the unknown, spiritual element in man's nature.

One of the means by which an author achieves ecstasy is by leading the reader out of the so-called real world which is clearly identified with physical realities and into a fantasy world where the objects and events are beyond actual human experience. In such a case, the objects in nature become symbols which lead the mind to non-physical realities. In the key expression of the concept by the Hermit, "We are withdrawn from the common ways of life; and in that withdrawal is the beginning of ecstasy" (p. 57). The theme of such withdrawal is consistent through all the great literature.
Homer withdraws Ulysses from the world of war and carnage and puts him adrift on the sea; the tales of the Celtic monks are full of the withdrawal from the land to find God in the solitude of the seas; the medieval romances tell of the knights who withdraw from the castles to wander in search of the Grail. Dickens, of all the artists in the immediate past, comes closest to ecstasy in the creation of Pickwick. *The Pickwick Papers* is steeped in ecstasy:

"There is ecstasy in the main idea, in the thought of the man who wanders away from his familiar streets into the unknown tracts and lanes and villages" (p. 59). Among the American works, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* ranks as a literary masterpiece because Twain captures within Huck's flight down the Mississippi the sense of mystery and wonder which are adjuncts to man's cutting himself off from the world of sense and launching into the unknown: "that flight by night down the great unknown, rolling river, between the dim marshy lands and the high 'bluffs' of the other shore, comes in my mind well under the great Odyssey class" (p. 165). In such a work, the events are not narrated primarily to be interesting in themselves but function as symbols through which the reader sees into the spiritual world and senses the adventure of being cut off completely from the known and the understood.
On the other hand there is Thackeray. In his novels details are utilitarian; they supply the reader with knowledge of the characters' attitudes, conversations, and life styles. But they signify nothing beyond themselves. The writing is in fact very good, but it suffers the fatal flaw of being one-dimensional and can never aspire to the rank of literature "simply because he is clearly and decisively lacking in that one essential quality of ecstasy, because he never leaves the street and the high road to wander on the eternal hills, because he does not seem to be aware that such hills exist" (p. 48).

Removal from common life which leads to ecstasy and is a quality of great literature reaches a high level of verbalization in Rabelais. The removal from the normal, expected state of human valuation is totally disrupted in three distinct ways. First, when he is absorbed in conveying the highest emotions, it is then that the most degrading of images intrude themselves. By having Pantagruel speak the most obscene and vulgar language, Rabelais removes him from the polite and acceptable world in which he lived, for as the famous poets of Persia express "the most transcendental secrets of the Divine Love" through a vocabulary used only in the strictest privacy of the bedchamber, "so Rabelais
soars above the common life, above the streets and the gutter, by going far lower than the streets and the gutter: he brings before you the highest by positioning that which is lower than the lowest" (p. 110). The idea of shocking the reader into an awareness of transcendent realities is reiterated when the Hermit asks, "don't you perceive that when a certain depth has been passed you begin to ascend into the heights?" (p. 110).

The second detail which Rabelais uses to pull the reader violently out of the common life is the gigantic stature of Pantagruel. Such a creature is clearly not the neighbor down the street or a slightly peculiar distant relative. Pantagruel's size is a "sign-post, warning you not to expect a faithful picture of life, but rather a withdrawal from life and from common experience" (p. 111). Whereas Thackeray and Austen strive consciously to create characters which are fully identifiable as human types, Rabelais pushes the reader over the ledge of credibility. And it is precisely this quality, the act of making the reader abandon the world of physical reality, which is an essential element of literature.
The third character trait in Pantagruel which alienates him from the expectations of the average reader is his drunkenness. He has an insatiable desire for wine and is happiest when he is drinking himself into oblivion. Most readers find drunkenness morally offensive, but it is, in fact, "a hint of the stature of the perfect man, of the ideal man, freed from the bonds of the common life, and common appetites, having only the eternal thirst for the eternal vine" (p. 111). Such an attitude toward drunkenness is not without a foundation in the most sacred book in the religions of the West, for does not the Hebrew author of the Psalms himself exclaim: *Calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est*, which can be adequately rendered in English as: "How splendid is this cup of wine that makes me drunk" (p. 101). Excess of alcohol is, for the artist, an important vehicle of inspiration rather than a cause of moral outrage. As alcohol frees the mind from its preoccupations with the practical events of the common life, the greatest writers use it as a symbol for man's search for the unknown. Within the context of such an interpretation, a drunken state of mind functions as "a clue to the labyrinth of mystic theology" (p. 107).

The analysis given Pantagruel by Machen is considered by Madeleine Cazamian in *Le roman et les idées en Angleterre*.
to be so perceptive as to identify it with the critical spirit of Pater and Wilde:

...tel portrait littéraire, tel raccourci d'oeuvre--l'étude...de Pantagurel--pourraient rivaliser dans leur genre avec les pages fameuses de Pater sur Monna Lisa. Selon l'idéal que proposait Wilde, Machen emploie aussi librement les matériaux élaborés par l'art que le conteur ou le poète descriptif les éléments qu'il emprunte à la nature; son interprétation parfois révèle les valeurs profondes des chef-d-œuvre dont il parle, et parfois leur en ajoute d'autres, qu'il tire de lui-même.  

The relationship established here between Machen, Pater, and Wilde clearly indicates a dependence on the principles of Aestheticism. Cazamian does, in fact, present a convincing argument for the turn-of-the-century Celt's artistic revival finding an easily adaptable source of literary material, both critical and thematic, in the Aesthetic Movement of the 1880's.

The primacy of "ecstasy" as an artistic standard likewise finds expression among the Symbolists. Tourquet-Milnes identifies in Machen "the same importance given to ecstasy 'which is the withdrawal, the standing apart from common life,' and this 'standing apart' naturally leads him to seek 'the other things.'" In a passage from Baudelaire's "Bénédiction,"

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15 Turquet-Milnes, p. 250.
the poet "lifts his pious arms" to "screen the raging of the rabble from his sight" and begins his contemplation:

"Praise be to God who bade that we endure pain's holy balm for our impurities, most potent of elixirs and most pure, which steels the strong with holy ecstasies!"\(^{16}\)

The poet's attitude is closely related to Machen's, as he draws himself from the desires of other men and finds his satisfaction in a purely intellectual, spiritual uplifting.

Yeats also freely employs the term "ecstasy" in reference to highest forms of art. In "The Celtic Element in Literature" he refers to "the ancient worship of nature and that troubled ecstasy before her, that certainty of all beautiful places being haunted, which it brought into men's minds" (p. 176), as being the superior treatment of nature which Arnold had earlier termed "natural magic." Likewise in "The Autumn of the Body," in referring to the poetry seized upon by Symons as representative of the Symbolists, Yeats says, "I think there will be much more of this kind, because of an ever more arduous search for an almost disembodied ecstasy" (p. 194). The passages clearly indicate the value placed upon attempting to achieve in art a

\(^{16}\) Baudelaire, p. 13.
transport of the reader out of his physical limitations into the world of spirit.

Similarly, William Sharp in his essay "The Ancient Beauty" pessimistically looks to the possibility that some day the children of Scotland will forget the tales of Deirdre, Ailinn, and Baile. If that day should come, he says, "it is not merely beautiful children of legend we shall lose, not the lovely rainment, but the very beauty and love themselves, the love of beauty, the love of love, the old wondering ecstasy, the lost upliftedness, which once were an ancestral possession in an old, simple, primitive way." Macleod and Yeats look upon ecstasy as a precious gift from the literature of the past and as an essential element in the creation of any new literature.

Since the function of art is to bring the reader to an awareness of the world beyond sense, artistic creations are always perceived only partially by the intellect. This is necessarily so, for the world of spirit is essentially unavailable to man's rational ordering. Such being the case, the artist himself is never fully conscious of what he has accomplished. If he has produced significant art, the

artist goes into realms which cannot be explained rationally. The Hermit's supposition that "the quintessence of art is distilled from the subconscious and not from the conscious self" (p. 120) leads necessarily to the conclusion that the artist is in no better position than the reader to understand what he has produced. Robert Louis Stevenson captures the essence of this concept in his Jekyll and Hyde. In his confession, Dr. Jekyll writes that he is not one but two. In creating such a figure with a double consciousness, Stevenson had "a vision of the mystery of human nature, compounded of the dust and of the stars, of a dim vast city, splendid and ruinous as drowned Atlantis deep beneath the waves, of a haunted quire where a flickering light burns before the Veil" (p. 80). The rational, conscious Jekyll is incapable of controlling the spontaneous, emotional responses of Hyde and, as such, he is a great symbol of man as artist. The role of imagination in the artist is variously described as the "shadowy double" (p.47), the "half-known Companion" (p. 130); but it always means the same reality. The imagination, the element in man which is in touch with the transcendent, is "the invisible attendant who walks all the way beside us, though his feet are in the other world" (p. 130), and "it is he who whispers to us his ineffable secrets which we clumsily endeavor to set down in mortal
language" (p. 131). To the conscious man, even to the rational part of the artist himself, the fantasy captured by the imagination need not make any sense. For this very reason, some of the greatest literature is most appealing to children or primitive people in whom the rational self is still not completely developed. Nature and life itself have a fantasy-like quality for such children and primitives, and for them "a wonderful vision appears where many of us can only see the common and insignificant" (p. 91).

Great literature can be judged, therefore, only on one level by a set of rational criteria. The imaginative scope of the work, however, is beyond the reach of the reason and can be talked of only in terms of sparking the imagination of the reader by that of the writer. Any kind of quantitative analysis of the effect would be meaningless.

Yeats's view of the imagination closely parallels Machen's. In "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry" he begins by specifically rejecting a study of philosophy as a means of arriving at truth. "Whatever of philosophy has been made poetry is alone permanent," he asserts at the very opening of the

essay. The means by which philosophy enters poetry, he further explains, is through dreams and visions and most emphatically not through a study of historical records or in rational speculation, twin studies "where in the heart withers" (p. 65). The mistake is in thinking that the rational rather than the intuitive is the principal function of the mind which distinguishes the human from the animal. For the artist, however, "the imagination has some way of lighting on the truth that the reason has not" (p. 65), a form of enlightenment which can only occur when the reason is silent. The result of such a functioning of the imagination is not a work of systematic philosophy but a "sacred book," one which is more concerned with faith than with reason. Yeats admits that, however superb Shelley's creation of beauty, he could never consider him as anything but a "vague thinker."

Machen's emphasis on the role of the subconscious in the creative process is related by Cazamian to the similar position advanced by Oscar Wilde in his Intentions:

Wilde et Machen ne sont pourtant pas aussi éloignés l'un de l'autre, dans ce plan même, qu'on pourrait le penser. Lorsque le premier soutient que "la forme engendre le fond," ne confesse-t-il pas que l'impulsion première ou le sens intérieur d'une œuvre, ignoré de l'artiste lui-même, ne se révèle à lui que par l'expression, qui en est inséparable? Et il ne manque pas de passages, dans Intentions, où l'auteur se montre
It is not difficult to see the relationship between the Aesthetic and Celtic attitude toward the subconscious. As the Aesthetic Movement revolted against the ugliness which resulted from the highly rational world of the machine, the Celt revolted against the spiritual aridity of scientific skepticism. Both found common ground in the untainted, non-rational world of imagination.

True literature must release man into the realm of spirit and recall him to an awareness of his compound nature, a task which was much easier in an age of faith. Modern man is not as well disposed toward the values which are inherent in literature. Materialism is largely to blame for this alienation from works of imagination. Although each age of man has lived by its own philosophies--from the most primitive, through the Homeric and mediaeval, and into the modern--there has always been an underlying conviction, even

\[19\text{Cazamian, p. 256.}\]
though unconscious at times, that man was "a wonderful being, descended of a wonderful ancestry, and surrounded by mysteries of all kinds" (p. 158). Materialism, on the other hand, has destroyed man's dream of his own exalted condition. When man sees the objects of nature as nothing more than physical presences, the sense of mystery is lost. Furthermore, when he sees himself as merely a part of the same exclusively physical processes, he loses the sense of his own dignity. Formerly, when man lived with a sense of his own mysterious existence, "even the smallest details of his life partook of the ruling ecstasy; he was so sure that he was miraculous that it seemed that no part of his life could escape from the miracle, so that to him every meal becomes a sacrament" (p. 158). For modern man to produce literature there must be a radical change in his world view, a return to seeing himself "mystically." Only then will he be able to produce a work which contains the essential element of ecstasy, or in terms of Machen's synonyms, a work which reveals a "desire of the unknown, sense of the unknown, rapture, adoration, mystery, wonder, withdrawal from the common life" (p. 87). The reemergence of ecstasy has as a corollary the viewing of man sacramentally.
Basically, the term implies nothing more for Machen than man's seeing his physical life as always having a corresponding spiritual significance.

The key concepts around which Machen develops his aesthetic are "ecstasy" and "sacrament." As Cazamian points out, neither concept is original with Machen, for acquaintance with the writings of Pater and Wilde reveals that both terms were already current. Pater used the term "ecstasy" in The Renaissance, and Wilde "ait déclare dans ses conferences américaines que l'art fait de l'univers un sacrament" (p. 255). Pushing the analysis of the key words to their original usage does help to distinguish Machen from his predecessors. Going beyond their use in the Aesthetic Movement, one realizes that both words are religious in origin. Coleridge described in Biographia Literaria the essentially religious and sacramental view which had motivated his contributions to the Lyrical Ballads. Machen's use of ecstasy in his Celtic framework is likewise close in tone to the religious meaning. Ecstasy, for Machen, still stresses the human's sense of spiritual exultation, whereas Pater's famous statement—"To burn always with this hard,

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gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life\textsuperscript{21} -- is an exhortation to live as fully as possible the fleeting moments of life, which is a meaning that has little in common with Machen's. Cazamian, realizing the difference in Machen's point of view, ranks his statement in \textit{Hieroglyphics} in the same class as Pater's and Wilde's:

\begin{quote}
Avec les \textit{Studies in the History of the Renaissance} et \textit{Intentions}, c'est le livre de critique le plus marquant de l'époque. Il est animé d'une foi plus entraînante et d'une ardeur logique plus demonstrative que les études de Pater, s'il n'est ni plus suggestif ni aussi persuasif; il a moins de richesse, de souplesse, de charme que les dialogues de Wilde, mais l'accent de sincérité passionnée qui y résonne lui donne, avec plus de concentration, une portée plus nette. (p. 259)
\end{quote}

Cazamian's enthusiastic appraisal of Machen's achievement, in the face of the obvious difference between his own and the critical theories of Pater and Wilde, suggests that \textit{Hieroglyphics} might well verbalize the artistic premises of the Celtic Revival as \textit{The Renaissance} and \textit{Intentions} expressed those of the Aesthetic Movement.

Machen concludes his formal attempts at establishing a critical system based upon the sacramental view of existence with the publication in 1907 of "The Secret of the Sangraal," a series of three essays which appeared in the \textit{Academy}.

Perhaps it was the discovery in 1890 of an exquisitely wrought thirteenth-century chalice and paten in the rocky and inaccessible country of Marioneth which turned Machen to a consideration of the venerable history of the chalice in Wales. The sacramental character of the chalice itself had been recognized from earliest times. As the temporary housing for the bread and wine which were transformed into the body and blood of Christ, chalices were formed only from the richest earthly metals available. The exalted status of chalices and other sacramental vessels of Celtic Christianity led Machen to the conclusion "that the legend of the Grail, as it may be collected from the various Romances, is the glorified version of early Celtic Sacramental legends." In fact, the concept of the sacramental nature of man's existence finds its most highly developed form in Machen's theory of the Holy Grail.

Machen readily admits his own ignorance of formal philological training, and he does not pretend that his conclusions about the Grail Romances are based on scholarly

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language analysis or years of research and comparative studies. In his own words, "What I know about the Grail is very little, but I have a vision of certain probabilities, some quite strong and some rather doubtful" (p. 90). In a formal study of Machen, however, the document is quite interesting because Machen makes of the whole Grail sequence a product of the Welsh imagination and finds therein a sacramental interpretation of life. He finds in a series of Welsh Mediaeval masterpieces the same approach to life which he himself takes in the early twentieth century.

The Ancient Celtic Church was organized after a monastic rather than a diocesan model. That being the case, the tendency was for the monks to live as hermits, in isolation even from the sacraments. St. Columba, however, the Irish missionary who set up his famous monastic community on the island of Iona and from which he proselytized the non-Christians of northern Scotland, was according to Machen, thoroughly sacramental in his orientation. There is a mention of Columba's rule in the "Leabare Breac," written in 1907, that there must be a Mass chalice in every church.²⁴ Columba himself lived during the sixth century, but it was

²⁴Ibid., p. 24.
not until between 750-809 A.D. that Wales finally conformed to the liturgy of the Roman Church. Machen contends that one of the sources for the Grail legend is the belief among the practitioners of the usurped Celtic liturgy that it was the only true and divinely-ordained liturgy and that its being banned from Wales would only bring sickness and disaster. The passing of the Grail would, in that case, signify the loss to Wales of the ancient Celtic liturgy and the establishment in its place of the Roman Missal. In support of such a claim Machen observes that in the "High History," while the King of Castle Mortal was being usurped, the priests and hermits who were the traditional protectors of the Grail were removed by God to a safe place. Likewise, in the Queste, the service of the Holy Grail continued to be held in the chapel where the Holy Grail used to appear. On the strength of such evidence Machen concludes that "in such passages as these we have highly romantic allusions to the Celtic Church; the possessor of sacrosanct and Eucharistic Relics, e coelo venientia, and of a distinct Eucharistic Rite" (p. 117). The principal problem with the theory, as Machen himself admits, is that there is no extant account of the Celtic liturgy, and consequently there can be no exact idea of the significance of the sacramental idea within that liturgy.
The fact that the Holy Grail is concealed from human eyes is central to Machen's consideration of its Welsh origins. Around 666 A.D., Cadwallader, the last king of Britain, died somewhere in the East, perhaps in Jerusalem. He had taken with him the relics of many saints sacred to the Celtic Church in order to save them from the desecrations of the marauding pagans. As no one knew exactly what became of the relics after Cadwallader's death, a tradition developed in which there was a prophecy made by an angel that the country would go through a period of severe hardship which would only be corrected when Cadwallader's bones and the relics of the saints were returned to the island. The prophecy was recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who commented on its ancient origins and its universal acceptance by the Welsh. Machen sees a close parallel between Cadwallader's leaving the island with the precious relics and Galahad's carrying the holy vessel with him to Sarras, as is narrated in the Queste. The suppression in the two centuries after Cadwallader of the Celtic liturgy and the loss of many of the saints' relics were events which set up great expectations in the Welsh for an eventual vindication. As Machen sees it, the Grail Romances take the ancient traditions and weave them into masterpieces of mediaeval fantasy.
Machen traces the problematic Rich Fisherman or Fisher King to Welsh hagiography, specifically to the life of St. David, the patron saint of Wales. A mediaeval redactor of St. David's life relates that David's birth and future greatness were foretold by an angel to his father, who was commanded in a dream to go out hunting. While on the hunt, he found three things—a stag, a fish, and a honeycomb. The redactor comments on the symbolism that "the fish denotes his aquatic life...therefore David will be surnamed David of Aquatic Life" (p. 103). Machen thinks this is nonsense, as there was nothing in David's life to justify such a title. The real symbolism is missed, as the fish here is the ancient Christian symbol of Christ in the Eucharist. From very early Christian artifacts found in Wales, it is clear that Celtic Christianity did know and use the Ichthus symbolism. It seems necessary to Machen to conclude, then, that the title "vir Aquaticus," interpreted by the author of St. David's Life as "denotes his aquatic life," was a failure to understand the ancient Eucharistic symbolism. As in the earliest Romances the ancestor of the Grail keepers receives his title from the act of catching fish, it is a fair hypothesis that the event was created by the narrators to give a reasonable basis to the "vir Aquaticus" title. From this ignorance of
the early sacramental quality of the fish, Machen contends, "arose the figure of the Roi Pecheur, the Rich Fisherman, who keeps the Grail, the Holy Vessel which held 'the Mighty, Unpolluted Fish,' that is the Body and Blood of Christ: panis ipse verus et aquae vivae Piscis" (p. 104). The role of the Fisher-King would, therefore, in Machen's theory, be essentially sacramental and fit the scheme of his analysis of the Romances as an elaboration of Welsh legends and traditions dealing with the repression of the Celtic liturgy.

St. David is again closely related to the physical identity of the Grail itself. Machen notes that the idea of the Grail's being a chalice is not constant in the early romances. In the "High History" the chalice is only the last of five different forms assumed by the Grail. In both the metrical romance of Borron and the Grand Saint Graal, the Holy Vessel is taken as the antitype of the sepulchre in which Joseph of Arimathea laid the body of Christ, and Wolfram says the Grail is a stone called Lapsit Exillit, probably a miscopying of lapsis ex coelis, (p. 105). St. David returned from his consecration as bishop in Jerusalem with a gift given to him by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, his consecrator. The gift was an altar; the stone was said to have been the resting place for the crucified body of Christ--dominicum iacebat
corpus (p. 106). The importance of such an altar as a sacramental instrument is immediately obvious. The chalice holds the bread and wine which are transformed into Christ's body and blood. The stone holds the dead body of Christ which after the three days is resurrected. Throughout David's life the altar was famous for its thaumaturgic powers, but at the saint's death, the altar was not again seen openly, just as in the Romances the Grail itself vanished.

As for the legend's availability to the writers of the Romances, when William of Malmesbury was writing the history of Glastonbury Abbey around 1130 A.D., only a short sixty years before the earliest of the Romances, he refers to St. David's altar, called Sapphirus at the time, as one of the monastery's sacred treasures, which was said to have been lost but recovered after a long time. By calling attention to the honor paid the altar of St. David, Machen does not intend to exclude the possibility that the original object which gave rise to the Holy Grail legends was not a chalice. His point is that there were other venerable objects, such as David's altar, which were surrounded with ancient traditions and were as sacramental in their orientation as a chalice itself.
Chalices, however, were also highly respected as holy relics of the saints. Machen mentions the healing cup of Nant Bos which was presumably still famous for its potent cures at the time he wrote the essay and was also popularly known as "a Venerable Gift of the Almighty" (p. 111). He recalls that in as late as 1887 a Welsh harper reported having been shown an ancient relic but that he went away and spoke of it irreverently. On being shown the relic a second time, the misery which he experienced over his mockery of the relic was immediately erased and he was filled instead with a great sense of peace. The fact that most of the holy relics within the lands of Celtic Christianity had keepers to whom the job was hereditary is a detail which Machen frequently reiterates. As the intention of his essay is to draw parallels between the Romances as written and popular Welsh traditions, the Keeper of the Grail is a personage whom he finds already fully developed in the long histories of families which were keepers of relics since time immemorial.

The cup of St. Teilo which Ambros Meyrick returns to the East at the close of Machen's *The Secret Glory* exists only within the pages of the novel. There are, however, historical records of many such venerable relics which
survived from ancient Welsh times. Glanmor Williams in *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* mentions a famous chalice dedicated to the honor of St. Teilo. That chalice, "inlaid with precious stones" and enshrined at Teilo's cathedral in Llandaff, did not survive the raid on precious altarware engineered by Thomas Cromwell under the reign of Henry VIII.

Machen's conviction is that all great literature is in some way a development of the sacramental idea. In his essay "The Mystic Speech," first published as "A Secret Language" in 1916, he sees that the uttermost mystery of Christianity is not the definition of the Trinity as verbalized by St. Athanasius but is contained in the simple rite which has developed around bread and wine, a rite, he says, which "signifies to us that the way to the spiritual things is by the gate of the sensible things." The sentiment is a paraphrase of an ancient Welsh prayer: "Let us so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal" (p. 139). The prayer catches the sacramental sense of the universe which Machen himself finds to be the

25Glanmor Williams, p. 443.

distinctive trait of all great literature. For all physical things—bread, wine, water, oil, fire—"owe all their significance, all their value, all their light, all their beauty to the fact that they are both images and sacraments of eternal joys and wonders and delights" (p. 139). The sacramental idea is paramount in most of Machen's own stories written during the transitional period between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but he finds it greatest expression in the Grail Romances of the Middle Ages, worked into those masterpieces from ancient Welsh liturgy and hagiography. Machen further concludes that, as it is a concept found in all the great literature, sacramentalism is an essential touchstone of literary criticism.

Machen's thesis that the Grail Romances are the medieval rendering of ancient Celtic sacramental legends finds its most sympathetic response in A. E. Waite who, at the time of the publication of his scholarly The Holy Grail in 1933, describes himself as Machen's "familiar friend of more than forty years."²⁷ Waite, like Machen, had been associated with W. B. Yeats in the Order of the Golden Dawn so that it is not surprising that a mystical interpretation of the

Romances would have been agreeable to his own tastes. It is not, however, a case of Waite's being blinded by friendship to weaknesses in the thesis. He thinks Machen's thesis worthy of consideration and proposes only that it be allowed to speak for itself.

Waite gives his full support to the proposition that the Romances are an expansion of the frustrated hopes of the ancient Celtic Church. He finds, on Machen's suggestion, that the "allegory of rebirth or resurrection" (p. 323) which prophesied the return of Cadwallader and Arthur after their passage into the unmanifest clearly refers to the aspirations of the Celtic Church. Strangely enough, even though there is little documentary evidence from which to reconstruct the Celtic Church, even in its broadest outlines, Waite pushes Machen's thesis to the point where the Druids are also seen to make their contribution to the spirit of the Romances. Not only did the Romances assimilate the sacramental presuppositions and hagiography of the Celtic Church, but the Church had, in its turn, earlier assimilated the doctrines of the Druids. The earlier set of rites, myths, and doctrines dovetailed quite easily into the Christian framework. The priests were often Druids at heart, for "long after the conversion of the Celt, enigmatical fables and mystical
Rites lingered in Gaul and Britain. There were Masters of Lesser Mysteries, old arts and pseudo-sciences, whose knowledge, it has been claimed, was perpetuated under the shadow of the Celtic Church and even within the pale thereof" (p. 322). There were Professors of Theology at Bordeaux, Waite claims, who had been directly converted from Druidism. They unquestionably worked their former experiences into their adopted faith. The most famous case of such assimilation was that of St. Deuno who, on his deathbed, was reported to have seen a vision peopled by the Trinity, Sts. Peter and Paul, and the holy Druids. The appearance of the Druids in the vision was a carefully guarded secret, as its acceptance in Rome would have halted his canonization. Waite's thesis, then, is clearly supportive of Machen's. Both see the Romances as an outgrowth of concerns developed within the ancient Celtic past. Machen conservatively stops with the influence of the Celtic Church; Waite pushes the influence all the way to the Druids.

Machen has received no commentary on his thesis that the Grail Romances are dependent on the cults surrounding the lives of the Celtic saints, especially St. David, St. Teilo, and the holy Celtic monks. Machen's "The Secret of the Sangraal" appeared in 1907. In 1909 Jessie L. Weston remarked
simply in *The Legend of Sir Perceval*: "I very much doubt the existence of an original Christian Grail tradition in Wales." She admits that Wales was certainly a land of relics and relic-keepers, but she does not see a relationship between any of those relics known to have been revered and the Grail symbols. As for the thesis that the episodes of the Grail legend were adopted from the lives of the Celtic saints, she admits that she "should not be surprised to find that certain of the latest forms of the story had been affected by popular Welsh hagiology" (p. 268). Machen is identified in a footnote as the proponent of the theory. However, no further critical attention had been paid to Machen's thesis at the time of the Holy Grail's publication in 1933, as Waite observed, without any reference to the contribution made by Machen, that one important field of Celtic research had been neglected which could "throw light on the Christian aspects of the Grail Legend apart from the aspects of non-Christian myth" (p. 324). That essentially uninvestigated field, he goes on to say, is the intimate relationship "between the

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lesser matters of the literature and Celtic Christian Hagiology" (p. 325). Waite felt that an adequate job had been done in the researching of the mythological basis of the Grail legends and Romances, but there was no corresponding research into the Christian origins. Waite appears receptive to the idea that Celtic hagiology could cast some light on the study of the Grail, but he gives no credit to Machen for having pioneered in that area.

It would be futile to attempt to prove that Arthur Machen intended to launch a Welsh Revival which would have paralleled Yeats's Irish Revival. The idea would have been appalling to him, for he always expressed a modest opinion of his own literary efforts. Viewing his work, however, the reader gets a sure sense of an explicit Celtic hypothesis which colored all his creative and critical endeavors. It will be recalled how insistent Renan and Arnold were on the "spirituality" of the Celtic personality. Machen was convinced from his study of the lives of the Welsh saints that there was more than just an emphasis on the spiritual nature of man. He saw in the cults which had grown up around the saints and in the recorded episodes from their biographies that the physical world was always treated as though the spiritual reality were lying hidden just beyond it—-that the
physical reality stood always as a symbol for a deeper spiritual meaning. This concept of the sacramentality of life Machen adopts as a genuinely Celtic perception. Not only does he see all of Welsh hagiography within this sacramental context, but he interprets the cycle of Grail Romances as being an authentic extension of this Welsh trait. The idea is brought to its logical conclusion when he feels the same perception working within himself, a Welshman living many centuries after the demise of the Celtic Church and the death of the last Minstrel. For Machen, then, the essence of a Welsh Revival is a return to sacramentality, and this is what he attempts in the major part of his own works.
Arthur Machen's own creative works—his novels and short stories—develop from a pervasive sense of the sacramentality of human existence. From first to last, it is evident that he consciously strove to write what would be easily identified as Celtic literature. All his major works are set in Wales, and all the action aims at having the protagonists realize within themselves the great reality of simultaneously living in the world of matter and the world of spirit.

Wales itself, Machen felt, had the ability to convey, through all of its natural beauty, a sense of the great spiritual mystery which lies beyond physical perception. He saw his native country as being essentially magical, as an enchanted place where the physical was always illuminated by a reality larger than itself. Birth in such a place he always thought to be his greatest blessing. "For the older I grow," he confessed in the autobiographical Far-Off Things, "the more firmly am I convinced that anything which I may
have accomplished in literature is due to the fact that when my eyes were first opened in earliest childhood they had before them the vision of an enchanted land.⁴⁴ All around he saw mountains which were held to be sacred for countless generations. His protagonists all go through the same process of learning to love the countryside and finding themselves lured into a quest for what is not available to the senses.

Machen's principal novel, The Hill of Dreams, can be perceptively read only in the light of the criteria for true literature set forth in Hieroglyphics and the Grail symbol. Completed in 1897, it represents the fictional example of sacramentalism.

Lucian Taylor, the hero, is born in a rectory a short distance from the ancient Welsh town of Caermaen, a detail which thinly disguises him as the author himself. Lucian, as a young child, is cut off from companionship with others of his own age because the rectory serves a rural parish. Always alone, the boy finds great amusement in exploring the countryside. The perception of nature, however, very early gives way to a feeling of the great mystery which lies

beyond, and although his senses are sharpened to the physical realities, his soul hungers for the ineffable, the mysterious presence which can only be described in religious language. One night while walking through the pleasant lanes, feeling the warm wind with its odors of the meadows and hearing the mingled sounds of night-birds and insects, the young Lucian finds himself irresistibly "drinking in the religion of the scene, and thinking the country by night as mystic and wonderful as a dimly-lit cathedral."² At other times the boy's greatest fascination is to wander off from the paths through the woods into the overgrown thicket. The "sense of having journeyed very far, all the long way from the known to the unknown" (p. 4), thrills him even though he knows rationally that he is never very far from paths and fields. When he does finally emerge onto a road after experiencing the sense of being lost, it is always "with a good deal of relief, and a little disappointment" (p. 5).

At fifteen Lucian falls in love with Annie. Everything that he experiences is transformed by the emotion. The shabby modern town of Caermaen is brought to life again in

his imagination as the splendid Roman city of Siluria. He renames himself Avallaunius and presides over a beautiful villa and garden. Everything is luxurious and rich—a product of the lover's imagination. Without his love for Annie, none of this would have been possible as he realises it is she who "had taught him the rare magic which had created the garden of Avallaunius" (p. 118). Love is one of the human emotions which is most able to spark the imagination, and he realises that Annie has given him the secret which magicians in the past claimed to have had "the key to the symbolic transmutations of the Eastern tales" (p. 108). It is the ability to overcome the enemy he realises, by overcoming oneself. The adept could change the most threatening situation into a perfectly harmless and unimportant one by rising above the event. Similarly, love has allowed him to transcend all physical reality and create a world which exists only in his mind.

Lucian's Platonic love affair with Annie is cut short. She leaves without notice to assist a pregnant sister in a neighboring town, and when she returns a month later the spark of love has died. Years later, in looking back on the affair, Lucian realizes that his love for Annie was
simply the occasion for his expressing an emotion which went beyond the dimension of time and space:

It was the longing for longing, the love of love, that had come to him when he awoke one morning and for the first time felt the sharp thrill of passion.... It was no love of a woman but the desire of womanhood, the Eros of the unknown, that made the heart tremble. He hardly dreamed that such a love could ever be satisfied, that the thirst of beauty could be slaked. (pp. 208-9)

Every detail in the descriptions of the pleasures of Siluria have as their immediate purpose the heightening of this emotion of love. The intensity of the love does, in fact, go beyond the human who has been its immediate cause and points to the spiritual reality of which any particular human love can only be a diminished portion. Consequently, Lucian's love for Annie becomes the symbol for his quest for the unknown, for ecstasy.

With the "real" Annie out of the way, Lucian gives himself over to a quest for the unknown. By removing him from the drab realities of life, his love for Annie had provided him with ecstasy. He turns then to literature to provide him the same kind of imaginative escape. He leaves "the wonder and magic of the wild land" (p. 166), his Native Wales, and establishes himself in a poor section of London. His writing becomes the vehicle for removal from the affairs of common life, compared to which everything else is unimportant
and trivial. The literary craft becomes the single focus of his life—"it raised him up in the morning to renew the struggle, it was the symbol which charmed him as he lay down at night" (p. 165). The enchantment of composition provides a screen which stands between Lucian and the sordid conditions of the city life around him. Annie's love had transformed the splendor of woods and mountains; literature now transforms the squalor of London.

When inspiration fails and he descends to the physical realities, Lucian realizes the horror of life in a large urban center. He wanders aimlessly through dark and deserted streets, speculating on the joys and miseries of the local inhabitants. His favorite time for making sorties into the unexplored portions of the city is in the dead of night, but when he does emerge on occasion into the bright light of day, he is stunned by the nightmarish aspect of people's lives. The streets are busy with moving forms, but few people actually converse and practically everyone is rushing to some private destination.

In one of his rambles through the alien streets, he discovers an aged house, particularly dilapidated by the wear of the elements. Modern "taste" has replaced the original tile roof with slate, and a yellow wash disguises what
had formerly been the warm red color of the walls. The one building becomes a symbol for the destructive process of modern life and fills him with premonitions of horror and doom. "The black streaks that crept upon the walls, and the green drift upon the roof," Lucian thought, "appeared not so much the work of foul weather and dripping boughs, as the outward signs of evil working and creeping in the lives of those within" (pp. 226-27). Every detail in the description of the house furthers the single effect of the emotion of revulsion, just as every fragrance in the garden of Aval- launius had reminded Lucian of his love for Annie. As a sample of what the modern world can perpetrate in ugliness, the house stands as a clearly defined symbol of the corruption of the lives of the people within. The house becomes, in Machen's term, a sacrament of evil, depicting through its outward horror the evil which dwells within.

Literature itself, Lucian discovers, has a sacramental character. While he works to create beauty of sound and image, what he hopes to achieve is actually beyond the confines of the work. In the end, the beauty of expression hides a greater ineffable, and essentially spiritual reality. "He who reads wonderful prose or verse is conscious of suggestions that cannot be put into words" (p. 127), Lucian says to
himself. For just as scientists have in the past discovered
elements which were previously uncontemplated by the human
mind and were hardly even guessed at by the scientists them­
selves, so too is what happens in literature of the highest
quality beyond the wildest imaginings of the reader. The
realm of art is consequently the world of the dreamer, the
child, and probably even the madman, for it is a world in
which physical realities are "instantly appearing, and in­
stantly vanishing away, a world beyond all expression or ana­
lysis, neither of the intellect nor of the senses" (p. 128).
The spiritual reality beyond the word, beyond the chemical
element is essentially non-communicable by the physical ob­
jective or the human intellect. As the Hermit in Hiero­
glyphics explains, any analysis of value in art which is
exclusively rational in nonsense. Lucian finally reaches the
point of verbalizing the principal role payed by the imag­
inative, intuitive element in art when he realizes "the folly
of regarding fine literature from the standpoint of the
logical intellect" (p. 129).

Lucian finds great satisfaction in the imaginative es­
cape of writing, but unfortunately the quality of his writing
is subject to change of mood. During the cold, wet months of
winter he finds composition an emotional impossibility.
Consequently he wastes a great deal of time in idle re-
fection and spends hours vainly attempting to capture the
exact shade of meaning. For weeks his daily effort produces
only a page or two which, on the morning after composition,
he finds good only for the trash basket. The "great book"
which he has so often dreamed of writing is, he realizes,
ever to be put into words. That which he turns to in his
imagination is the Welsh hill country of his youth, with
its strange, mystical associations. In moments of extreme
frustration he thinks of the magical quality of those beau-
tiful forms in nature and despairs from "the labour and the
vain efforts to make the form of it and the awe of it in
prose, to write the hush of the vast hill, and the sadness
of the world below sinking into the night, and the mystery,
the suggestion of the rounded hillock, huge against the magic
sky" (p. 213). Missing is the very element that makes a
work literature. He cannot put into words that which conveys
a sense of a reality beyond physical phenomena. He cannot
capture that essence in nature which is beyond the catalogue
of physical objects—that which gives it life. He cannot, in
other words, produce a work of ecstasy.

The one book which Lucian does finally see through pub-
lication is titled The Amber Statuette. Its theme is
essentially that of Lucian's quest for the ideal. The heroine, whose greatest glory is "a fire of bronze hair" (p. 240), is troubled because she is loved by a young man but cannot reciprocate. She goes to Venus asking that she be given the gift of great love. Venus demands that in return for the gift she must sacrifice all her store of precious stones and rich robes. With complete abandon she obeys Venus' requests. When the lover returns from the sea, he finds a little amber statuette in place of the woman he loves. In Britain, meanwhile, at the shrine of the Golden Venus, a strange transformation has taken place. At the feet of the statue lie the beautiful silk robes and precious jewels belonging to the devotee, but the strangest transformation of all is in the face of the statue itself, for "her face was like the lady's face when the sun had brightened it on that day of her devotion" (p. 240). The story is a fantastic presentation of Lucian's own conclusions about life. The story is itself a wonderful symbol of his own love for Annie. True love can never be actually attained, for the earthly emotion is the shadow merely of a greater quest which can never be adequately represented. True love is never experienced but is dreamed of and longed for throughout life. As love can never be experienced in real life at
the peak of intensity which she fantasizes, the love of
the heroine can best be turned to art— an immortalization
of the emotion.

As the youthful love for Annie and the fully-matured
Lucian's love for literature provided him with the nec-
essary removal from common life, reflection of The Amber
Statuette throws him into an ecstasy of detachment. It is
the world of fantasy, of imaginative escape which he pene-
trates. He sees the bronze lady float before his eyes
and feels her beautiful hair brush his uplifted face. All
the "real" sounds of workaday London are blocked from his
ears, and in his nostrils the smell of neighborhood cooking
and industrial fumes is displaced by rare Eastern perfumes.
Caught up in this fantasy, "his pleasure was an inebriation,
an ecstasy of joy that destroyed all the vile Hottentot
kraals and mud avenues as with one white lightning flash"
(p. 240). The "great work" having been completed, Lucian
finds that occupancy in the realm of imagination is indeed
a difficult status to maintain, and although he spends sev-
eral weeks "entranced by the argent gleam in the lady's
eyes" (p. 241), he soon lapses into a deeper melancholy.

With his inner resources more or less expended, Lucian
turns to a form of narcotic for momentary release. The
nature of the beverage is never explicitly stated, but there are several references to his being tempted by the contents of a "little bottle of dark blue glass" (p. 246). Machen's reticence can only be construed as an attempt to heighten suspense as there is nothing prudish in his attitude toward excessive use of alcoholic or narcotic stimulants. In fact, the liquid in the dark blue bottle is simply an alternative to literature and love as a means of imaginative escape from the drab realities of city life. Lucian is following the pattern set by his great literary predecessor, Pantagruel, and Machen would be the last to criticise his escape through alcohol.

The conclusion of the novel is charged with disquieting symbols. Apparently from an overdose of his narcotic, Lucian goes through the process of feeling his life gradually ebb away. He is aware that he is dying, but the narcotic has worked so well that there are only fragmentary intrusions into his death scene of the physical world. As the sense of his entering into the great unknown fills him with fear, the figures of his novel play the roles of sinister guides into the unknown and inexpressible. The female figure from The Amber Statuette appears and beckons to him. She stands before him and strips herself just as she had before Venus. Bit
by bit she gives up each jewel and splendid robe. Mad with desire to consummate his union with this elusive marvel of his imagination, he uncontrollably pursues her through the brightness of noontime and the deepest black of midnight, over hills and through thickets. On the plains of his dream-land he at last "captured her and won her with horrible caresses, and they went up to celebrate and make the marriage of the Sabbath. They were within the matted thicket, and they writhed in the flames, insatiable, forever" (p. 245).

It seems rather strange that Lucian's infatuation with the ideal, with the world of fancy, should trap him into a "wedding of the Sabbath." But is not the theme of the destructive power of beauty a common one to all of Romantic literature? Cazamian correctly sees in Lucian's quest for beauty a parallel with the equally destructive quest of Dorian Gray:

C'est une histoire symbolique, à la façon de The Picture of Dorian Gray, celle d'un jeune homme en quête de beauté. Il y a de beaucoup d'Oscar Wilde et de Huysmans ou de Baudelaire—sans qu'on puisse dire qu'il y ait eu provenance directe—dans le culte des jouissances sensuelles et imaginatives que professe le héros Lucian. (p. 259)

There is also, as Cazamian notes, a marked strain of the sensual in Lucian. The creation of the garden of Avallaunius, with all its sense impressions of sound, sight, and smell,
puts Lucian well within the category of a des Esseintes and
is probably the principal reason for Cazamian's calling
The Hill of Dreams "sans doute le livre le plus decadent de
toute la littérature anglaise" (p. 260), a view cited by
Mario Praz in The Romantic Agony. There is, however, a
trait in Lucian which clearly separates him from the aes-
thetic pleasures of Dorian Gray and his followers. Lucian
experiences all of physical reality sacramentally. The
garden of Avallaunius, it will be recalled, was purely a
creation of Lucian's imagination. The wide range of sen-
suous pleasures which he fantasized never threatened to
make him forget his love for Annie, for it was the love for
her which made the garden possible and which kept it alive.
The garden, in other words, became the outward sign of
Lucian's interior love.

Because of the obvious dependence of Machen on the
aesthetic principles of Pater, Wilde, and Huysmans, there
is the danger of confusing him with the Aesthetic Movement.
Cazamian has brilliantly outlined the areas of artistic poss-
sibilities explored by the Aesthetic Movement and later in-
corporated by the Celtic Revival:

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3Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (New York, 1956),
p. 466.
L'esthétisme a rendu au merveilleux son empire dans la littérature. Il a émancipé les imaginations, et ouvert les fenêtres de leurs prisons à tous les elfes, les gnomes, les fées et les magiciens de la légende ou de la fantastie, de la tradition, du rêve ou de la folie. Réagissant contre le prosaïsme ou l'objectivité de principe et les disciplines rationnelles du réalisme, résolument en quête de beauté, d'inédit et de sensационnel, il a parfois forcé les portes de la nature, pour pénétrer dans le domaine du surnaturel et de l'occulte.

Il n'est pas surprenant qu'une affinité se soit déclarée entre cette doctrine et la "Renaissance Celtique," qui s'est épanouie à la fin du XIX siècle. (p. 326)

Although both Aestheticism and the later Celtic Revival shared "la haine de l'industrialisme, du mécanisme et du materialisme modernes" (p. 327), the Celtic Revival, as Machen understood it, was more deeply religious, more directly connected with the ancient cultural roots of his native Wales.

Lucian Taylor is well characterized by what William Sharp in the preface to "The Sin-Eater" calls "the Celtic Gloom". The expression "Tha mi Dubhachas,"—"I have the Gloom" (p. 4), which he heard enunciated beyond count during his trips to the remote Scottish Isles in quest of folktales, he claims to be the most common sentiment, growing out of

the Celt's "unconscious knowledge of the lamentations of a race, the unknowing surety of an inheritance of woe" (p. 5). What MacLeod calls "gloom," Renan had much earlier termed "melancholy" and found it to be a fundamental trait of the Celtic disposition. Nothing could more aptly describe Lucian, a boy who grows up with a sense of his isolation from all human association. When he roams through the Welsh countryside as a young boy and later haunts the midnight streets of London, he is clearly a Celt, feeling at first his removal from all physical presences around him and later knowing himself to be in exile.

Escape from reality is likewise a Celtic trait which all the commentators from Renan through Yeats find to be easily identifiable. Druids had their realm of spiritual escape, which Arnold found set the tone of the need common for all later Celts. In "Maya," MacLeod says of his observations on this trait of the Celts that "Dreamland is the last fantasy of the unloosened imagination, or its valley of Avalon, or the via sacra for the spirit, accordingly as one finds it, or with what dower one goes to it."^5

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Machen suggests that the tales of St. Columba's monks sailing into unknown waters is more a demonstration of this need to escape the earth-bound realities than the result of missionary zeal. Likewise, Lucian's world is essentially a world of dreams. As Robert Hillyer commented in 1923, "The Hill of Dreams, then, concerns the soul of Lucien [sic] Taylor, driven by disappointment in actual people and things ever farther into the country of the imagination, until that country claims him completely." Lucian's imaginative escape begins, for all practical purposes, in his infancy. Later in life he was to realize that the hills around his place of birth were filled with mysterious presences. As an adolescent he experiences that strange sense of being visited by faun-like creatures while he lies dazed in the ancient Roman fortress. One of the most captivating episodes in the entire novel is his imaginative reconstruction, villa by villa, of the ancient Roman town of Siluria, which comes to life as a result of his ecstatic love for Annie. The novel ends in Lucian's mad pursuit of the beautiful bronze

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lady of his novel, an imaginative vehicle which helps him bridge the gulf between life and death. As an example of the Celtic need for escape into the world of imagination, there could be none more striking than the life of Lucian Taylor.

Fascination with style, a trait termed "Pindarism" by Arnold, is the final Celtic manifestation in the character of Lucian. He leaves his native Wales to find a career in London as a writer. His insatiable desire for the absolutely perfect phrase leads him to a discontent for all he writes. It is only after years of effort and the pains of great poverty that he composes The Amber Statuette, his masterpiece of idealism and escape. Curiously enough, even though the novel is the epitome of what Machen himself hoped to achieve in his writing, it has escaped commentary by any of Machen's critics. That novel within the novel comes so close to the Celtic ideal that Lucian must unavoidably be called a principal example of the fictional Celt.

There have been numerous comments on The Hill of Dreams, most of which designate it as Machen's masterpiece. In 1907, the year of The Hill of Dreams' publication, Arthur Milbank said of the novel and its author that "the author of 'The Hill of Dreams' has surely a right to a very high place among
contemporary writers of fiction. For my own part, I should put him at the head of all our living novelists, with the exception of Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hardy." The editors of The Academy, the periodical in which the statement appeared, fully endorsed the sentiment. In 1923, Robert Hillyer, writing in The Yale Review, commented that "Arthur Machen's best work is preoccupied with the interior life of the spirit; it is the higher 'realism' which suggests rather than states—which expresses the core rather than the surface. Such is the method in his greatest work, 'The Hill of Dreams.'" That method which Hillyer correctly identifies is exactly what the theorists of the Celtic element call one of its chief traits. R. Ellis Roberts was in the process of identifying the Celtic orientation of Machen when he observed in The Sewanee Review in 1924 that "Mr. Machen is Welsh, and obstinately Celtic." However, when he subsequently says, "I am not sure that he himself knows how consummately he conveys, especially in The Hill of Dreams...a continuous sense

8Arthur Milbank, "Mr. Machen's Place Among Contemporary Writers," The Academy, LXXIII (November 16, 1907), p. 149.
of the reality of those other worlds which surround, protect, threaten, and at times invade the world of fact and appearance" (p. 355), he in no way relates these traits of the novel to the objectives of Celtism. What Hillyer and Roberts say is quite true of the novel and of Machen's theme generally, but Machen does not write in isolation. An understanding of the tradition in which Machen wrote helps to fit The Hill of Dreams into a larger context, one which shows an organic relationship between all of Machen's writings and the literary effort in Ireland and Scotland as well.

Machen's stylistic concerns are referred to by Helen Lynch in The Sewanee Review Quarterly. She says that "Mr. Machen's Hill of Dreams has not been omitted from lists of indispensable books by many who have the right to an opinion in the matter. As a piece of verbal art it ranks with the best in English. It is a rare and superb creation."

In their biographical work of 1963, Reynolds and Charlton conclude of The Hill of Dreams that "there is no other book which embodies both such psychological study, and such

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Both comments speak of Machen's artistic achievement in superlatives. Although what they say has merit, in its own right, Machen's concern with style can also be viewed as a concern shared by the Celtic, Symbolist and Aesthetic temperament, one transferred by Machen to Lucian Taylor in the novel. Again, the virtue of such a position is that it provides a more comprehensive framework in which not one but all Machen's efforts can be analyzed.

The novel which most successfully conveys the hero's sense of being Celtic is *The Secret Glory*. It is the story of Ambrose Meyrick, a Welshman raised with a love for the ancient folklore, initiated as a child into the rites of the defunct Celtic Church and finally martyred in the East after returning one of the most treasured of Christian relics to its original shrine.

At the outset of the novel Ambrose Meyrick is a student at Lupton, a public school with a reputation for graduating scholars and gentlemen. The school is situated in the English Midlands, a cesspool of industrial refuse. Recently arrived from the wooded countryside of Wales, Ambrose is

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12 Reynolds and Charlton, p. 61.
appalled by the dirt and ugliness. From the first he hates the place and contemplates running away. Unfortunately, however, he is at Lupton because his father had recently died and there is no one else to care for him, nowhere to go. The boy finds the crass, materialistic spirit of the school suffocating, and his one amusement is to go alone into the neighborhood and make sketches of the dilapidated Norman churches—a pastime which he had learned from his dear dead father. On one such excursion he loses his sense of time and returns to school an hour late for dinner. The housemaster, suffering himself from a verbal chastisement given by the headmaster earlier in the day, takes out his frustrations by beating Ambrose for his tardiness. Mortified and indignant, Ambrose is sent to the studyhall on an empty stomach. He shares the studyhall with three other boys, two of whom he has to knock on the floor for daring to make fun of his suffering. The third, Bates, becomes from that moment a great inspiration to him. For, unlike the others, Bates continues to do his assignments, unmoved by all the confusion of broken noses and black eyes. Ambrose decides on the spot that the only way for him to beat the system is to conform perfectly to all its absurd demands while keeping his mind completely removed from any real involvement. He
is, in fact, from that day forward a perfect model to the rest of the school. He leads his class in Latin composition and the construing of Greek parts of speech. On the playing field he is an inspiration to his teammates. No one knocks heads with greater spirit than he does.

For six years he is applauded by faculty and fellow students. When it is announced that he has won a highly-valued scholarship to Balliol in order to further his study of the classics, no one is surprised. Everyone knows of his hard work and dedication to the school and to scholarship. The institution is shocked by Ambrose's disappearance. The only hypothesis is that some great disaster has caused his death on one of his solitary walks, and everyone searches the woods to find his body. But Ambrose is safe in London after making his escape with Nelly Foran, the chambermaid from his house at school. The episode of exile from Wales ends when, while talking to Nelly one night, he realizes that he has sinned seriously by seducing her, and he returns to Wales in order to set his life in order once again.

The title of the novel is taken from Ambrose's early initiation into the secret wonders of the celebration of Mass according to the rite of the ancient Celtic Church.
As a result of that experience, he was able to withstand all the brashness and superficiality of life at Lupton. In moments of trial and confusion, he had only to look within himself and think back on what he had learned. As a mere child Ambrose had gone with his father to visit an old friend who lived as a hermit in the hills. As it turned out, the old man celebrated the Eucharist according to the Celtic ritual. Ambrose, being a docile child and already instructed in the mysteries, was highly receptive to the mystical experience. As the liturgy progressed, it occurred to Ambrose that he was for the first time attending the Sovereign Perpetual Choir, Corarbennic, a mystery of such highly guarded secrecy that few living humans could claim to have witnessed it. Overcome by the sense of its awesomeness, Ambrose fell into a swoon and saw passing before his as in a vision "the Image of the Slain and Risen." In explaining to the boy what he had witnessed, Nicholas Meyrick told his son that the man they visited was the last in a line of keepers of the holy vessel which had been in the same family for 1300 years. The vessel was known as the Holy Cup of Teilo Sant, and the tradition in the family of

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the keepers was that Teilo had received the cup from the Lord himself. When Teilo had said Mass with the cup, the choir of angels was visibly present. After Teilo's death the cup was devoutly held by the family of keepers and was known throughout Wales for its curative powers and the bestowal of visions.

Ambrose was not surprised, therefore, when he, alone after his father's death, continued to encounter the supernatural. On one such occasion, he was taking a solitary walk; suddenly everything was transformed, and he felt himself surrounded by a mass of spirit-like forms. He was in a strange, unknown spot, sitting beneath a great oak tree. His thoughts flashed back to the mysterious liturgy far off in his early childhood. Then he thought of two other stories. The first told of a man who passed by a familiar wall and for the first time he noticed a small door. He opened it and "found himself in a new world of unsurmised and marvellous experiences" (p. 49). In the second story a young sportsman, out with his friends, shot an arrow further than any of his friends. When he went to retrieve it, he found himself in the land of the fairies. "Yet--this was not fairyland;" he realizes, for "these are rather the sad fields and unhappy graves of the underworld than
the abode of endless pleasures and undying delights. And yet in all that he saw there was the promise of great wonder" (pp. 49-50). What happened to Ambrose at that point was psychologically curious. Caught in a situation that he could not fully understand, he called up all his past experience to help him explain it. Not only did he see a religious explanation, but he found meaning as well in what he had heard his father say of the local folklore.

In such a moment of crisis, the fairies jockey with Teilo Sant to provide a framework in which to determine the significance of the event under consideration.

With Nelly forsaken in London, Ambrose dedicates himself in Wales to the studies that gave so much meaning to his father's life. It is in the Celtic Church that he finds a structure whose source of vitality is mystical rather than moral, imaginative rather than legal. It is through the faith that he feels most closely related to his father and sees the pattern working in his life from birth to the present day:

The religion that led me and drew me and compelled me was that wonderful and doubtful mythos of the Celtic Church. It was the study--nay, more than the study, the enthusiasm--of my father's life; and as I was literally baptized with water from a Holy Well, so spiritually the great legend of the Saints and their amazing lives had tinged all my dearest
aspirations, had become to me the glowing vestment of the Great Mystery.... (p. 171)

Ambrose realizes that he and his father were singled out to share a significant role in the destiny of the Celtic Church. With this awareness, "every little wood, every rock and fountain, and every running stream of Gwent were hallowed for him by some mystical and entrancing legend" (p. 173). He is struck by the significance of each passing moment, by the sense of the spiritual history running parallel to his physical development, by the permanent influence which many of his father's seemingly minor actions had on his own life.

At the death of Mr. Cradock, the hereditary keeper of the holy vessel and the last survivor in the family, Ambrose is given the mission of transporting the vessel to a shrine in Asia. After safely delivering the cup, he is captured by the Turks and given the choice between rejection of Christ and death by crucifixion. He kisses the image of Christ that is presented for him to spit upon and in doing so seals his fate. So Ambrose Meyrick wins the red robe of martyrdom and the palm of victory.

Among Ambrose's remains is a notebook in which he had jotted down many of his personal observations and many of the things he heard from countryfolk and found to be of
interest. Naturally much of what caught his fancy was from the store of Celtic tales. Ambrose had even attempted at one point to put into verse an incident from the Arthurian legend:

Many went on the search of Caer-Pedryfan,
Seven alone returned with Arthur, but my spirit was present.
Seven are the apple trees in a beautiful orchard.
I am not ignorant of a Head which is glorious and venerable.
It made perpetual entertainment for the warriors;
their joys would have been immortal.
If they had not opened the door of the south, they could have feasted forever,
Listening to the song of the Fairy Birds of Rhiannon.
Let not anyone instruct me concerning the Glassy Isle,
In the garments of the saints who returned from it were rich odours of Paradise. (pp. 152-3)

The poem is simply an abbreviated form of the longer one published later by Machen as "The Praise of Myfanwy." The source of Ambrose's poem is recognizably an episode from the chapter "Branwen the Daughter of Llyr" in the Mabinogion. There, it is Bendigeid Vran who is wounded in the foot with a poisoned dart. Knowing that he was on the point of death, he ordered his seven companions to cut off his head and carry it with them. He foretold that "in Harlech you will be feasting seven years, the birds of Rhiannon singing unto you the while. And all that time the head will be to you as pleasant
company as it ever was when on my body." He further predicted that the head would remain uncorrupted until the door which looked toward Cornwall was opened, but at that time the feasting would end and the survivors would have to set forth immediately to bury the head.

Machen's poem, with its roots in the rich soil of Arthurian legends, is not an isolated example in the note-books of Ambrose's fascination with Welsh folklore. He especially liked the sensitive tale of "Eos Amherawdur or the Emperor Nightingale" as it was told to him by his father, and he retells in his notebooks the same story. Emperor Eos was the wealthiest king in all the land of fairy. He invited all the other kings and their many subjects to his castle for a great feast. On the day of the feast, nine great halls were filled to capacity. Eos lit them with the sun and the moon. When his choirs sang for his Mass in nine great cathedrals, the melody was so beautiful that the stars bent down from heaven. The one great sadness which Eos could not remedy was that the beautiful melodies could not be perceived by human ears. As a result, he decided to

divest himself of all his fairy splendors and to take on
the shape of a little brown bird—a bird which could teach
men the sweetness of the fairy melodies. Because of its
humbleness, the little brown bird was despised by all the
larger, more beautiful birds. They mocked his song. But
as the tale concludes, "Wise men heard that song from the
fairy regions and listened all night beneath the bough,
and these were the first who were bards in the Isle of
Britain" (p. 128).

The tale is another interesting example of the fusion
of Machen's two streams of Celtic inspiration, the Church
and popular folklore. Eos is neatly assigned the role of
a Christian emperor in the land of fairy, and when he as­
sembles all of his fairy-subjects, it is to join in the
celebration of the Mass. Furthermore, he sees the Church
itself as providing a framework in which apparent opposites
can be reconciled. Within the language of the Church, life
then assumes a sacramental quality. The physical world, in­
stead of being in opposition to the spiritual, is the neces­
sary other half of the whole creature which a man is. The
lesson which Ambrose learns from the lives of the saints and
the ancient writings of the Bards is that man spends his life
surrounded by the perpetual reminders of his sacramental

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existence, that the physical world is the symbol for
the spiritual world which is imperceptible to the eyes of
the flesh. In one of the meditations left in his note-
books, Ambrose includes a copy of a prayer by the anoin-
ted Bard:

With the bodily lips I receive the drink of mortal
vineyards; with spiritual understanding wine from
the garths of the undying. May Mihangel intercede
for me that these may be mingles in one cup; let
the door between body and soul be thrown open.
For in that day earth will have become Paradise,
and the secret sayings of the bards shall be
verified. (p. 150)

So it was that Ambrose, by following the ideal set forth
by the Bard, had entered into a kind of paradise where
nothing in the universe was without its inner meaning. He
saw that man alone did not function as body and soul, but
even the smallest flower had a counterpart in the world
of spirit and was consequently good. He arrived at the
symbolic or sacramental interpretation of existence as the
ultimate point in his spiritual evolution, a point at which
he could honestly believe that "all the glory of life was
for the service of the sanctuary" (p. 123). Convinced of
the benevolent guidance of his life by the divinity, he was
able to see all good and beautiful things of the earth as
drawing him onward in an act of prayer. The statement that
"Where joy and delight and beauty were, there he knew by sure signs were the parts of the mystery, the glorious apparels of the heavenly vestments" (pp. 123-4), clearly links Ambrose to an ancient Celtic tradition based on a similar belief.

In the end, when Ambrose found himself in the hands of his Turkish executioners, he left the world with no regrets. Having matured in the doctrine of sacramentalism, he became the heir to the keepers of the holy cup. In a world in which the idea of man's spiritual life had come to be considered such an absurdity, he was delegated to carry the cup back to its Eastern place of origin. The idea of the sacramentality of existence having been rejected, there was no longer any purpose for the physical representation of that idea—the chalice—to remain in Wales.

Although not published until 1922, The Secret Glory is thematically patterned on The Hill of Dreams. Ambrose and Lucian share a common Welsh background, and memories of the sacred woods and hills remind them continuously during their exile in London that it is only with the greatest difficulty that the ideals of beauty and goodness can be kept alive in the mad frenzy of urban life. It is through the imagination alone that the two young men are able to
survive, for each achieves an escape from the mean "realities" by imposing upon life a beautiful, transforming dream. In the end both die lonely deaths, removed from anyone with sympathy for what they have tried to achieve, locked into their highly individual dream of a world—Ambrose's a satisfying, religious fantasy, and Lucian's a painful nightmare, crowded with evil visions and an overwhelming sense of doom. Despite the two decades which separate the publication of *The Hill of Dreams* and *Secret Glory*, Madeleine Cazamian rightly sees them as companion pieces in the Machen canon:

L'idéal d'Ambrose Meyrick ne se distingue pas radicalement de celui que se proposait Lucian en *The Hill of Dreams*. Il s'est épuré, seulement; il est devenu plus désintéressé, plus religieux. En un sens, on peut dire que Lucian échoue, puisqu'il meurt misérablement; et que Meyrick réussit, puisqu'il vit en beauté et subit un sort qui est le couronnement et le triomphe de sa foi. Malgré leur date de publication tardive—târès postérieure, d'ailleurs, dans l'un et l'autre cas, à celle de leur composition—ces deux romans sont inséparables, et constituent ensemble des expressions les plus fortes et les plus originales de l'esthétisme tel qu'il se formulait à la fin du XIX siècle. (pp. 268-9)

Ambrose shares with Lucian Taylor the melancholy of the Celtic disposition, the emphasis on the spiritual rather than on the physical world, and the escape into dreams. He is, however, even more overtly Welsh than Lucian. His contact with the urban life of London is only a short episode
in his youth. He returns to Wales and actively continues his father's study of the local folklore, the Celtic Church, and the Celtic spirituality. The prayer which he ascribes to the "anointed Bard" (p. 104 supra) is closely akin to the spirit of "Let us so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal," said by Machen in "The Secret of the Sangraal" to be an ancient Welsh prayer (p. 76 supra). Ambrose is consciously Celtic throughout, and his death at the conclusion of the novel clearly makes him a candidate for the Celtic martyrology. His life's work, for which he has premonitions at an early age, is a curious parallel to Cadwallader's. Cadwallader went to Jerusalem with the relics of the Celtic saints at the time of attack by the heathens. Those that remained were carefully guarded by the relic-keepers. Ambrose performs essentially the same task. He feels drawn to the East as the logical place for Teilo's cup when the ancient devotion has faded from the land.

Ambrose Meyrick achieves his escape from the common life, a form of ecstasy, by his adventure in the Celtic Church of antiquity and ultimately by his martyrdom. In "A Fragment of Life" Machen creates a short novel in which the escape is achieved when the events of everyday life
are transformed through a sacramental outlook. The story, begun after the completion of *Hieroglyphics*, was published by A. E. Waite in *Horlick's* magazine in 1899. In the notes supplied by Machen to Henry Danielson's bibliography, he confessed that the story was essentially the reworked material of a short story, "The Resurrection of the Dead," published a decade before. It was a story of a process by which an insignificant London clerk, wasting his life on the petty concerns of keeping his family in decent clothes and furnishings, "suddenly realized that he was the last descendant of an ancient house of Welsh squires, who had lived for a thousand years between the river and the wood, in a wonderful country." In its refined form the story's hero is Edward Darnell, a married man who looks back on his childhood from the perspective of his first wedding anniversary. Born in a remote section of Wales and raised with a consciousness of his family's roots in the early saints of the race, he found that the move to London in his adulthood tended to obstruct the sacred recollections of his childhood. Memories faded in the atmosphere of urban commercial life and it was only at lengthening intervals that "in half-conscious

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moments or in sleep he had revisited that valley in the far-off west, where the breath of the wind was an incantation, and every leaf and stream and hill spoke of great and ineffable mysteries. "

16 Darnell took his wife Mary to Wales for the first vacation of their married life. His family's ancestral home was situated close to Caermaen (reminiscent of Lucian's home in The Hill of Dreams) and presently in the possession of an aging uncle who had promised it to Darnell at his death. Searching through a collection of junk in the attic of the house, Darnell discovered a manuscript which traced his family's fortunes from the time of Iolo Sant to his father's birth. The uncle gave permission for it to be borrowed, and when the Darnells returned to London, the manuscript went with them. The manuscript, called by Darnell's father the Iolo MSS (the name of the manuscript, incidently, in which the Mabinogion was found) contained the "Hidden Songs of Iolo Sant," a compilation of the mystical traditions of the ancient Celtic Church. For the first time Darnell felt within his life the force of the spiritual world. The manuscript provided him with a language whereby he could verbalize wonders and mysteries

which had been totally outside his frame of reference. The Celtic wisdom made available to him reached its peak in the single idea that "the whole world is but a great ceremony or sacrament, which teaches under visible forms a hidden and transcendent doctrine" (p. 110). Under the influence of the sacramental view of existence even the filth of London was transformed into a place of glory as Darnell looked below the surface into the spiritual mysteries beyond, and the newest and brashest portions of the city contained, beneath the veil, an ineffable beauty.

Darnell's discovery of the ancient mysticism was not, however, without its effect on Mary's life as well. Portrayed at the beginning of the novel as a typical Victorian prude, cramped in her enjoyment of life by fear of what the neighbors would think, she learned to anticipate the joys of spiritual abandonment. The previously dull, grey walls were transformed into shining fortresses. Where her ears were accustomed to the strident sounds of city life, she heard hidden choirs; instead of the dusty and offensive smells so common to large cities, she caught whiffs of "the mystic fragrance of incense" (p. 103). Like Machen himself who spent his adulthood in exile from the beloved Wales of his childhood, the Darnells learned that the sacramental view of life enabled
them to see the spirit world beyond the ugly exterior of
London just as truly as they had perceived it below the
tranquil beauty of rural Wales.

A most curious chapter in "The Hidden Songs of Iolo
Sant" was titled *Fons Sacer non in Communem Usum conver-
tendus est*. A comment in the margin, placed there by a
commentator who set out to explain the spiritual meaning
of the prohibitions, warned that the Well of Life was not
to be used merely as a luxury of mortal life, as a new
sensation, or as a means of making the insipid cup of every-
day existence more palatable. The commentator urged the
reader to beware of stopping at the point where the senses
were excited and washed clean again. That, he said, was
essentially a passive stage, where the initiate felt him-
self being renewed. More importantly, the task of regen-
eration was to begin when the soul actively participated,
for "we are rather summoned to stand in the very scene it-
self, and there fervently to enact our parts in a great and
wonderful mystery" (p. 112). The passage is a crucial one
because it clearly establishes the essential difference
between Machen's literary objectives and those of the Aes-
thetic Movement. Whereas Huysmans' *Des Esseintes* and Wilde's
Dorian Gray spend their lives in an effort to achieve an
unending sequence of fresh and untried sensations, Darnell is explicitly warned that the Sacred Fountain from which he drinks is not to be appreciated primarily as an aesthetic pleasure, although it does most surely bring with its water a heightening of his sense responses. It is the sacramental nature of the experience which is paramount. The flood of joy and sense of wonder which come to the Darnells in reading the mystical works of the Celtic Church are symbols only of the state to which they are called spiritually, a state which radically distinguishes their quest from that of their Aesthetic counterparts. The attitude which they must develop, the commentator warns, is one of reverence. The excesses which the Aesthetic heroes strive for are the subjects of explicit warning, and the Darnells realize that the spiritual delights of their quest can only be achieved through constant vigilance and sobriety.

There is only a suggestion in "A Fragment of Life" that the spiritual world which lies beyond the physical symbol could be satanic. The "Hidden Songs" make only oblique reference to the possibility that there was a region into which the soul must not enter under fear of death, a region known to most people "under the crude and somewhat childish symbolism of Black Magic" (p. 113). The mention of such
evil brings to Darnell's mind an experience from his childhood when he accompanied his uncle who had been summoned to an outlying farm to pray for a young girl who had been seized by an evil spirit. He remembered that the girl was in an upstairs room, alternately screaming and singing when the boy arrived. He was fascinated by the overt blasphemy of the girl's song, for there was no difference between the solemn chant of the Mass which "summons the angels and archangels to assist at the great Sacrifice" (p. 116) and what the girl was intoning in her frenzy. Yet, just as the liturgy of the Mass "chants of the heavenly army, so did that seem to summon all the hierarchy of evil, the hosts of Lilith and Samael" (p. 117). The evil which took possession of the innocent girl was obviously a reality which had nothing to do with any moral degradation on her part. Although a frighteningly negative concept, the possibility that the physical world could cloak evil instead of good spiritual forces fascinated Machen. Only hinted at in "A Fragment of Life," the idea that the physical world is a sacrament of evil is fully explored in a series of short stories, some dealing with the Welsh fairylore and others dealing with a more general concept of evil.
The commentary on "A Fragment of Life" has been slight. Sweetser makes the most intriguing comment that "this is Machen's nearest approach to expressing the inexpressible, but it is so nebulous and remote from common experience that it has had only a small body of readers in the past--and even that number is steadily diminishing" (p. 32). Given what Machen himself professed to be the traits of great literature, what Sweetser says is de facto highly commendatory of the short story. The statement, however, was not intended to be complimentary. Perhaps Sweetser applies an overly pragmatic test to Machen's achievement when he says that the number of people reading the story grows increasingly fewer. Machen would undoubtedly cheer the conclusion, for as he repeatedly states in Hieroglyphics, the touchstone of great literature is that it removes the reader from the common life, an experience not even understood and certainly not appreciated by those uninitiated.

As Edward Darnell discovers a manuscript which provides him with a roadmap for withdrawing from the physical world around him, the short story surely invites the reader to do the same thing. It is demonstrably a virtue if the short story can achieve what the ancient Celtic manuscript does for Darnell.
Edward Darnell and Ambrose Meyrick are spiritual brothers. Both find their principal motivation in the traditional wisdom of the Celtic Church. Darnell goes through the stages of spiritual renewal found in the manuscript which had been hidden from the public eye for centuries. Ambrose finally becomes heir to a Celtic relic which had been in the same family for over thirteen hundred years. The process of initiation is tedious and abounding in pitfalls. Each works his way slowly to the point of realization that the physical world is beautiful only to the extent that it is the symbol for an underlying spiritual reality—the crux, Machen suggests, of the Celtic view of reality.

The symbolic or sacramental interpretation of the physical universe is the unifying theme which binds several of the short stories in an evil covenant. The first short story in which the theme plays a major part is the "Novel of the White Powder," one of the four component parts of The Three Impostors. The full novel, published in 1895 with a title-page design by Aubrey Beardsley, is, on the surface, a kind of mystery-detective story. Three characters, a woman named Helen and her two male companions, Davies and Richmond, are in pursuit of Mr. Joseph Walters, their former associate in an underground crime syndicate. In the process
of tracking down Walters, they assume aliases and are encountered quite coincidentally by Dyson and Phillipps, the two scholarly supersleuths. Within this framework the three felons relate stories supporting their assumed identities. The stories are separate, totally unrelated narratives. Davies, alias Wilkins, relates the "Novel of the Dark Valley." Helen, alias Miss Lally, narrates the "Novel of the Black Seal." Richmond, alias Frank Burton, fabricates the "Novel of the Iron Maid." The fourth tale is Helen's again, alias Miss Leicester, who ends the series with "The Novel of the White Powder"—the story within the story that has for its central theme the sacramentality of existence.

The "Novel of the White Powder" is narrated by Miss Leicester, who lures Phillipps into her ground-floor apartment on his leaving the building after a late visit with his friend Dyson. She is dressed in a black mourning outfit and proceeds to tell him the tragic story of her brother Francis. He was a conscientious and hard-working law student who was in a particularly run-down condition after a year of private studies for his bar examination. On her advice, Francis called on a friend of the family, Dr. Haberden, who prescribed a medicine to help restore him. Francis
had the prescription filled by an elderly chemist in the neighborhood, and he revived so beautifully after several doses of the medicine that he actually became something of a man-about-town. Not many weeks afterward, however, his sister noticed that Francis had a small festering sore on his hand. The sore was bandaged, and although she did not see it again, the infected area grew daily until the entire hand was hidden from view. One day Francis announced from his room that he was not feeling well enough to dress for meals but asked that a tray be left outside his door. When asked if the doctor should be sent for, he insisted that he was not seriously ill and would refuse to see the doctor. His sister became alarmed, however, when his tray remained untouched for several days and her inquiries went without answer. Dr. Haberden was summoned again, and on breaking into the room, he found a seething mass of putrefaction. In trying to discover what had happened, the doctor traced the prescription to the chemist's shop. Seeing that the powder supplied by the chemist was not what he had prescribed, he immediately sent a sample to the laboratory of his friend Dr. Chambers for an analysis. Chambers' reply was more than simply a chemical analysis; it was almost an act of faith. After prefacing his written
report with a frankly personal account of his desire as a young chemistry student to probe into the physical foundations of the universe and a confession of his avowed materialism, he concluded with the incongruous observation that "the whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter. The universe is verily more splendid and more awful than we used to dream." What prompted Chambers' strange response was his discovery that the white powder mistaken by the old chemist for what Dr. Haberden had prescribed was actually the powder from which the wine used for the ancient rite of the Witches' Sabbath was prepared. The function of the wine so used was sacramental; it allowed the participants to see beyond the surface of things to their spiritual essences.

Dr. Chambers learned from his research that he had been fool enough as a young scientist to stop at the external surface of reality. Those actually initiated into the Witches' Sabbath, however, were allowed to see into a specific aspect of the spiritual world—the evil. Chambers gives a brief historical sketch of how the Sabbath was

actually a secret satanic initiation of great antiquity. Popu- 
larly thought to have been a product of the Middle Ages, the rite existed in Europe long before Aryan man arrived. The intimation is that the Witches' Sabbath is the antithesis of the spiritual wisdom of the Druidic priests and Celtic saints but that it grows from the same soil. The tale is clearly sacramental, but unlike the spirit-world of Teilo Sant, which is revealed to Ambrose in *The Secret Glory*, the spirit-world which is revealed to Francis Leicester through the instrumentality of the white powder leads to his total disintegration.

In *The Three Impostors*, an early work published in 1895, there are significant structural problems in the composition. Basically, it is a grouping of four short stories which are not successfully tied into any significant larger framework. Reynolds and Charlton focus on the poor dialogue while giving Machen credit for capturing a sense of evil: "In those parts of *The Three Impostors* which are concerned with the ultimate depths of evil and corruption, his power of painting a memorable and disturbing background compensates for his inability to write good dialogue" (p. 49). Dialogue, in Machen, is never believable. First of all, his principal characters
are introvert and meditative. Consequently, the novels are principally a projection of the hero's point of view. Secondly, even when there is dialogue, the parties involved have clearly defined positions which are alternately developed at great length. The result is clearly a novel of ideas. Little of the personalities is reflected in conversation, as the delineation of character is accomplished through self-analysis. Minor characters, as there is no narration from their point of view, are seldom anything but stiff and vague. The whole thrust of the "Novel of the White Powder" is in the concern with "the ultimate depths of evil and corruption" as correctly identified by Reynolds and Charlton. The treatment of the theme, however, does not appear in a vacuum. The Witches' Sabbath, an initiation into the world of spiritual evil which has survived from the ancient Druidic past, is a symbol or sacrament of the inexpressible reality. Just as Lucian, Ambrose, and Darnell realize that all physical beauty is a sacrament which reveals the good, so too do Francis Leicester and his less fortunate allies realize that there is also a spiritual world of evil which has its corresponding symbols.

The barrier between the world of sense and spiritual evil is removed through a brain operation in "The Great
God Pan," a short story published in 1894 as Volumn V of the Keynote Series. The man who performs the operation is Dr. Raymond, and he explains his basic philosophy of medicine to his friend Clarke, the narrator of the short story. In inviting Clarke to look around at the physical world--trees, mountains, and fields of corn--he concludes that "all these are but dreams and shadows; the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. There is a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision."\(^{18}\) Dr. Raymond's obsessive drive is to discover a means by which the symbol or physical object can be penetrated and the spiritual reality perceived directly. After years of study and experimentation, he reaches the point of realizing the parallel between his quest and that of certain wise men in the past, for "the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the good Pan" (p. 5). Although he does not reveal the method by which the ancients penetrated the veil, his own hypothesis is that by activating certain portions of the brain through surgery, the patient gains the power to "see" the spiritual dimension. Despite the depth of his own convictions concerning the nature of reality, Dr. Raymond's

hypothesis has yet to be demonstrated. So he is happy to adopt Mary, a foundling, as a potential accomplice in the unorthodox operation. On the evening of the operation, Dr. Raymond grows eloquent in describing to Clarke what his work will mean to the whole of mankind—the actual attainment of spiritual knowledge which could only be guessed at before. Mary's operation is successful, and she does see into the world of spirit, but the experience simply cannot be withstood by the human intellect. After the initial moment of recognition she becomes a howling idiot. The brief encounter with Pan does involve some form of sexual contact, however, for Mary gives birth to a daughter nine months afterwards and dies. Dr. Raymond names the baby Helen, and when she is still young he brings her to be raised by Welsh countryfolk. Although Machen is reticent about the specific details and kinds of offenses, Helen's playmates grow up morally tainted.

Time passes and the scene of action switches from Wales to London where two of Clarke's friends, Villiers and Austin, begin to compare notes with him on an interesting series of recent deaths and suicides. Villiers runs into a college friend Charles Herbert, who is a ruined man and blames his wretched fate on his wife Helen Vaughn. Arthur Meyrick, an
artist friend of Austin's, dies miserably in Buenos Ayres and leaves behind a sketch of Mrs. Herbert which is identified by Clarke as Mary's daughter Helen. Still the woman herself is not located. The sequence of ruined lives reaches its peak when, in a single month, suicides of five prominent Londoners are reported. By piecing together a series of not-so-convincing coincidences, the trio discovers that the most brilliant hostess of the season, a mysterious but wealthy stranger in London society, a Mrs. Beaumont, is the missing Helen. Presumably justice cannot be administered through regular channels when dealing with a monster of supernatural dimensions, for having been presented face-to-face with the evidence against her, Helen is given a rope and ordered to hang herself. While the life is being choked out of her in the presence of the three men, she changes from human into animal, from woman into man, and finally dissolves into a blob of protoplasm--reminiscent of the final dissolution of Francis Leicester in the "Novel of the White Powder."

Clarke, who does not have the stomach to actually witness the dissolution, retorts to Austin's efforts at description:
We know what happened to those who chanced to meet the Great God Pan, and those who are wise know that all symbols are symbols of something, not of nothing. It was, indeed, an exquisite symbol beneath which men long ago veiled their knowledge of the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things.... Such forces cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol. (pp. 75-6)

As for Dr. Raymond, he admits that what he did to Mary was an "ill work." He maintains, however, that "What I said Mary would see, she saw, but I forgot that no human eyes could look on such a vision without impunity" (p. 87).

Mary dies from the experience of seeing Pan. Helen, on the other hand, continues living, presumably acting out her evil unconsciously and unwillingly. Helen's ending is the same as Francis Leicester's. Both are initiated into the spiritual world of evil, and both end as seething heaps of putrefaction—the perfect physical representation of the state of their souls.

Helen is the real symbol in "The Great God Pan," and Mary is surely the vehicle by which she comes into being. Machen draws from Roman sources what he needed—a human with the soul of the devil. It is not Machen's only use of Roman material, as Lucian reconstructs imaginatively the Roman town of Siluria in The Hill of Dreams, and in "The White People" the obscene statue which is destroyed at the
conclusion is of Roman workmanship. Machen felt that the Roman occupation of southern Wales had left an indelible mark on the psyche of the inhabitants and that its symbols were of right incorporated into the Welsh imagination. In "Magic" Yeats describes how contemporary artists find in the racial memory symbols which have expressed essentially the same idea hundreds or even thousands of years before, for

...there is a memory of Nature that reveals events and symbols of distant centuries. Mystics of many countries and many centuries have spoken of this memory; and the honest men and charlatans, who keep the magical traditions which will some day be studied as part of folk-lore, base most that is of importance in their claims upon this memory. (p. 46)

The Roman symbol used by Machen evokes a sense of the destructive power of evil. Among the commentators, Vincent Starrett finds that "perhaps his most remarkable story—certainly I think his most terrible story, is "The Great God Pan." Machen does use the symbol forcefully in the short story, but there is also a discernable pattern in his use of the symbol which united Helen thematically to Francis Leicester and Alice Harlesden in "The Inmost Light." All three stories in which the characters appear have as their theme the indescribable horror of spiritual evil.

Machen again uses the device of the brain operation in his short story "The Inmost Light" to illustrate the sacramental relationship of soul and body in the human being. The story is set in the London suburb of Harlesden where Dr. Black and his wife Agnes live a happy, middle-class existence. Their life together is happy, that is, until the doctor begins to ponder the inexplicable condition of human life—the yoking together of body and spirit. As a young medical student he had dedicated himself to the project of abstracting the soul from a living human being.

At the time of his marriage to Agnes he had realized that his love for his new wife could become swallowed up in his obsession with the project. He had then gladly put aside the idea and hoped there would be no more worry about it. But having settled into married life, he finds himself fitting up the spare room as a laboratory and spending most of his spare time thinking through the old problem. Each night he feels himself getting closer to the completion of the bridge which is to span the gulf between the world of consciousness and the world of matter. The final step demands a human subject, and this he has in his wife. She agrees to undergo an operation in which her soul is isolated from her body. The soul exists independently as a dazzling
opal, but the body reverts to a purely animal existence. The soul, being pure and beautiful, finds its physical counterpart in the flaming opal. But the body without a soul, or worse yet, made a dwelling place of some evil spirit, rapidly descends the ladder of existence. Out of mercy to its suffering state, Dr. Black finally kills the creature, once his wife.

After Dr. Black's death, all the other thoughts which he jotted down while living in isolation with the soulless form of Alice are given to Dyson along with the opal of great price. Dyson is appalled by what he reads of Dr. Black's experiment and the destruction it had caused in his life. The story is resolved when Dyson, realizing that the beautiful opal is the symbol of a human soul, flings it on the floor and tramples it. A column of yellow smoke issues forth and immediately afterwards a jet of white flame consumes the gem and leaves in its place a black, crumbling cinder.

The stages of Alice's disintegration are basically the same as those already traveled by Francis Leicester and Helen Vaughn. The three stories are demonstrably a development of the single theme: man's body and the physical universe are symbols of a spiritual reality. Whereas the
assumption is that the spirit which lies beyond the material is good, there is always the terrifying possibility that the corresponding evil spirit can also assert itself through physical symbols. The Hill of Dreams, The Secret Glory, and "A Fragment of Life" develop the theme that the physical universe is a veil beyond which the spiritual good exists. As Machen perceived it, such a view had been the common holding of Welsh bards and priests since time immemorial. Yet Machen also finds that there is a corresponding tradition which is more terrifying and because so passed on in secret rites and hidden wisdom. Such a view he found present in Roman mythology and the fairylore of Wales. The latter view was that the physical world was indeed a symbol but that the underlying spiritual reality was evil. This theme he embodies in the "Novel of the White Powder," "The Great God Pan," and "The Inmost Light."

Unlike Yeats, who returned to Ireland after experiencing life in the great city of London, Machen never actually lived again in Wales after his move to London when he was eighteen years old. His love for his native land was therefore mostly a creation of his recollection. He always remembered it as a place of great tranquility and natural
beauty. Raised in the house of a clergyman father, he naturally identified all that he felt with his religious faith. In such a spirit, he thought of all physical reality as having a meaning greater than itself. When he came to balancing the merits of great numbers of literary works, he found that the trait which distinguished the excellent from the minor works was the single quality of the author's ability to excite the reader's mind to the fact of his existence within two worlds. It was that ability which set Homer, Cervantes, Rabelais, and Dickens permanently beyond the scope of such writers as Thackeray, Austen, and George Eliot.

When he wrote his own "great novel," he found that it was his recollections of Wales which gave him the insight into his approach to the material. The mystical interpretation of nature, he realized, had been the traditional Welsh "view" since the Druids and represented the unifying element throughout Welsh literary history. So he found himself in the decade of the 1890's discovering in himself what had already been planted in the Welsh mind thousands of years before. His chief works, especially The Hill of Dreams and The Secret Glory, represent
the search of the Welshness in his makeup, but it is also the single theme which can be detected throughout all his other literary endeavors as well.
CHAPTER V

Celtic Fairylore and the Evil

Arthur Machen, like Yeats, Lady Gregory, Fiona MacLeod, and the other writers of the Celtic Renaissance, gives much of his attention to the folklore of his race. Yeats is especially concerned with the relationship between the stories which generation after generation found compelling enough to be passed on and with the single spirit they reveal. The myths themselves are an extremely important key to the personality of a race, for, Yeats claims in "The Trembling of the Veil," "all races had their first unity from a mythology."¹ But the members of the Renaissance, although interested in an historical rendering of their native folklore, saw themselves as by no means limited to collecting legends for posterity. William Sharp in his essay "Celtic" admits to finding the study of Scottish legends quite fascinating, yet he finds that what he derives from the study is more importantly to "seek in nature and in life, and in the swimming thought of timeless imagination,

for the kind of beauty that the old Celtic poets discovered and uttered." In other words, what he is seeking for is the spirit which lies beyond the legends rather than the legends themselves. To the extent that he is able to identify the larger spirit of which the legends are individual expressions, to that extent has he achieved success. After all, he concludes, the Celtic spirit is not a dead thing which has only historical interest. Putting oneself in touch with the true spirit of Celtism means making of oneself a vehicle for the formulation of myth that speaks to the present age. "The mythopoeic faculty is not only a primitive instinct but a spiritual need" (p. 184), he says of the necessity that the artist go beyond myth-collecting to myth-making.

Machen made no concerted effort to gather Welsh folklore. After his move to London when he was seventeen, he never returned again to Wales for anything but very brief visits. What he has of the Welsh folklore is, therefore, essentially what he remembered hearing as a child. The tales which he uses are liberally construed. He makes no attempt to document the sources, and they fall into no clearly

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identified categories. His favorite folktales are those relating to the fairies or "Little People," and the one consistency is that he uses, almost without exception, tales that reveal the fairies to be evil rather than good.

The "Novel of the Black Seal" is one of Machen's most explicit uses of the Celtic fairylore. The "novel" is one of the four independent segments of The Three Impostors, published in 1895. Like the "Novel of the White Powder," the story is narrated by Helen but under the fictitious name of Miss Lally. Found by Dyson crying in a park, she claims to have just seen the brother whom she has met in the park regularly for the past year being taken away by a strange, death-like figure. Having engaged Dyson's interest, she proceeds to tell the story of her own life, with the implication that what she has experienced might throw some light on the present circumstances. Beginning the account of her own life, she tells how Professor Gregg, a prominent ethnologist, found her one night on the point of starvation and took her into his family as the children's governess. They lived in London at the time but moved to Wales for the summer. The house which they rented was close to the Grey Hills, a place where Gregg had earlier found a stone with a curious inscription in cuneiform.
Strange stories had been told of the Hills. In one case a widow, Mrs. Cradock, left her house to visit friends but on the following morning was found half-crazed in the Hills. About eight months after the experience she gave birth to a son Jervase. Professor Gregg hired the boy, then a lad of about thirteen, to work in the garden. He discovered that the boy had strange seizures during which he babbled in a hissing language. By a close study of Jervase he learned the odd language and decoded the inscription on the stone. It provided instructions for descending into the earth where the Little People lived, one of whom fathered Jervase. Gregg was afraid that venturing into the haunt of the Little People would be dangerous, but the curiosity overwhelmed him. He left a letter explaining to Miss Lally what had happened. The professor then disappeared, and no one ever heard from him again.

The fairy-world created by Machen in the "Novel of the Black Seal" is permeated with evil. In fact, Machen surrounds the fairies in all his novels with an aura of evil. Professor Gregg, in the course of describing what he has learned of the fairies in his years of study, outlines a theory about the nature of the fairies that adequately
describes Machen's predisposition to see them as evil. It is, he says, quite ironic that the things most feared by the people of ancient times have come to be treated in a comic vein by the moderns. Out of the diabolic evil of the Witches' Sabbath has grown the figure of the old woman flying on her broomstick with her black cat. By the same process, the fairies have been metamorphosed into playful, prankish figures. Already during Shakespeare's time the transformation is complete, and the fairies are beautiful and benevolent beings who are, at the very worst, mischievous rather than evil. Their origin is quite otherwise. Shakespeare's fairies are the obvious result of embroidery and exaggeration. The older, more trustworthy legends associate the fairies with unspeakable evil. The tales consistently told in all Celtic lands of the mother who finds when she carelessly leaves the door open that her plump, rosy child is swapped for a sallow, wizened creature, is part of the genuine tradition. The transformation of the fairies has, therefore, a clear psychological purpose. The fairies are called good and said to be beautiful because all the listeners of the stories know the truth to be just the opposite.

The purely speculative issue as to which type of fairy is the older or more genuine is summarily treated by
Machen. He opts for the fairy as a representation of the unknown spiritual evil in the universe, and Jervase Cradock is a representative member of that order. He is consistently described in serpentine imagery; he is a physical embodiment of evil. It is when the boy has his strange attacks that the satanic element takes complete control, causing him to writhe and utter snakelike sounds. On one occasion Miss Lally is present when the attack comes upon Jervase, and her account of the incident is charged with a sense of evil. She tells how she was sitting in the garden while the Cradock boy weeded the flower beds. All of a sudden she heard harsh, choking sounds coming from his direction. She ran to the spot where he was working and found him quivering and shaking as though shocks of electricity were being sent through his body. He foamed at the mouth, and his face was swollen and hideous. When Professor Gregg heard Miss Lally's screams, he came running to the scene to find Cradock lying on the ground and spewing forth a strange, sibilant language—"an infamous jargon, with words, that might have belonged to a tongue dead since untold ages, and buried deep beneath Nilotic mud, or in the inmost recesses of the Mexican forest" (p. 91). Miss Lally observes
to herself at the time that the language sounded very much like what she would expect to hear spoken in Hell.

After a particularly severe attack, Jervase is judged too weak to leave the house by Professor Gregg, who then orders that a bed be made for him on the couch in the study. On the following morning the maid enters to do the cleaning. She is sickened by the odor in the room and reports to Miss Lally that the smell puts her in mind of a trip she once made with a cousin to the London Zoo. She remembers it quite well, as she became sick as a result of merely walking through the cage where all the snakes were kept. The maid sees no relationship between the smell in the snake cage and Cradock's having slept in the room, but Miss Lally begins to fit the pieces of the strange mystery together.

The relationship between the satanic element of Jervase's nature and that of the fairies is finally established unwittingly by the parish priest. Professor Gregg has trouble deciphering one word in particular, "Ishakshar," which occurs quite frequently in Jervase's speech. He finally asks the priest, an authority on the local idiom, if the word is of Welsh origin. The priest answers that he has never heard such a word before or anything which even came close. However, he suggests that "if it belongs to
any language, I should say it must be that of the fairies—the Tylwydd Teg, as we call them" (p. 95). So when Professor Gregg, following the directions contained on the strange stone, makes his way by the secret passage into the earth, it is clear that he has descended into hell and has found fellowship with those evil forces which fathered Jervase Cradock. As for Miss Lally's brother who is last seen being ushered out of the park by the figure of death, nothing more is heard. His misfortune simply provided Helen a framework in which to introduce the strange adventure of Professor Gregg.

The good fairies as well as the bad are called Tylwyth Teg, but the good fairies are known for their great beauty and love of fun. Unlike the bad fairies, they desire very little commerce with humans. Because of their beauty, however, they often have to flee from ever-anxious humans while out dancing on the nights of the full moon, their favorite time for merrymaking. The only time at which the good fairies are visible to humans is from midnight to dawn, for that is when they emerge to have fun

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3 John Rhys, _Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx_, II (Oxford, 1901), p. 84-5.
on the surface of the earth, and their singing and dancing
crescendoes just before dawn when they all join in a great
circle and dance together before departing for home. Of
this particular type of fairy Arthur Machen had little use
in his works. He saw in the legends of the bad fairies a
vision of the spiritual world which revealed the darker
side of man's nature and a truth which later, more op­
timistic ages had tried to suppress. When Yeats pub­
lished The Celtic Twilight in 1893, he was of the opinion
that Irish fairy legends were almost exclusively about the
good fairies. "In Ireland," he said with confidence, "we
hear but little of the darker powers." In a footnote to
the edition of 1902, he humbly admits, "I know better now"
(p. 56). Already in 1901, his essay "Magic" reflects his
greater openness to the idea that evil as well as good can
motivate great literature. "Whatever the passions of man
have gathered about," he says, "becomes a symbol in the
Great Memory, and in the hands of him who has the secret
it is a worker of wonders, a caller-up of angels or of
devils" (p. 50). The spiritual world, Yeats admits, is
divided between two forces. The symbols for both have been
shaped in the ancestral memory over numberless years. Machen
sees the fairies as fitting this category of symbols, and
it is the artist, the one with the "secret" who chooses
the symbol which best expresses his vision.

A short story closely related to the evil world of
Dr. Gregg's fairies is "The White People," published by
A. E. Waite in Horlick's magazine in 1899 and said by
Machen himself to contain "some of the most curious work
that I have ever done, or ever will do."\(^4\) Strangely
enough, even in the face of Machen's own admission, the
story has received little critical attention.

The story begins with the arresting statement: "'Sor­
ccery and sanctity,' said Ambrose, 'these are the only
realities. Each is an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the
common life.'"\(^5\) It is a statement in brief of the aes­
thetic principle developed in Hieroglyphics to be a rev­
elation of the spiritual beauty and good which lies beyond
the physical. It is a perception of reality which reaches
a level of sophistication in the Celtic fairy lore where
the spirits beyond nature are found to be malevolent rather
than benevolent towards mankind.

\(^4\) Henry Danielson, p. 37.

In the first half of the short story Ambrose tries to convince his guest Cotgrave that real evil is an intuitive state in which the individual is drawn spontaneously towards evil. The conversation on the nature of evil concludes with Ambrose's reference to the Pauline distinction between acts apparently virtuous and the elusive charity which transforms all actions into good. Just as one can give all his goods to the poor and still lack charity, Ambrose says by way of paraphrasing St. Paul, so also can one be a sinner and yet avoid all crime. The difference is inherent in the nature of things, for sin and evil are real just as the good is and can be pursued with as much enthusiasm, perhaps even unconsciously. For those with a natural predisposition to evil, sin indeed becomes an "infernal" miracle in the same way as holiness is the "supernal" (p. 131) miracle of the good. Ambrose's introduction to the ecstatic quality of evil sets the scene for the second part of the short story.

Part two of "The White People" is called "The Green Book" and is the diary of a sixteen-year-old girl. Discovered by Ambrose after the girl's death, the diary remains hidden in his possession. In the diary the young girl, who, incidentally, is never given any other name, tells of her
initiation into the world of fairies. Some of her infantile recollections are of the little white people who were always around to take care of her and who taught her the Xu language. It was a language which she shared only with them although her parents would occasionally overhear her amusing herself with words or phrases. She learned all about the place where the white people lived, a place where trees, grass, and hills were also white. As she grew older, however, the white people visit less frequently, and eventually they cease to come altogether. The little girl also loses the language of the fairies (reminiscent of Jervase's fairy language in the "Novel of the Black Seal") as she grows older, but her nurse continues her education. There are many stories about good and bad fairies. The tales achieve a form of ecstasy, for their purpose is to take the listener out of the world of common life and transport her to the beautiful world of imagination. In one such case the nurse tells of a young man who went our hunting and found a pure-white stag, which he followed through woods, across rivers and mountains. The stag finally stopped at the foot of a mountain, and just as the exhausted young man reached out to grab it, it disappeared. In his feeling of complete frustration he looked up and noted a
passageway into the mountain. Entering, he found himself in a beautiful garden where a lovely lady sat at the edge of a fountain. She gave him wine to drink from a jeweled cup and he immediately fell in love. They spent the remainder of the day and the night together in the raptures of love. When the young man awoke, however, he found himself again outside the mountain. He returned home, forever changed, for "he would never kiss any other lady because he had kissed the queen of the fairies, and he would never drink common wine any more, because he had drunk enchanted wine" (p. 155). It is a delightful tale, full of enchantment and a sense of being carried out of the round of common life.

There is, however, a tale of fairy love which reveals the darker side of the fairy nature, a concept which was more attractive to Machen. While out on a solitary ramble through the underbrush of hill and valley, the little girl finds herself in a bewitched land, full of mounds and hollow basins. She slides to the bottom of one of the basins and recalls another of nurse's love stories. In the tale a little girl, attracted into such a basin by the colorful flowers and shining stones, found on her return home that what she had gathered appeared to other people as the finest
gold and richest jewels. Taken to the king's castle, she was received as a distinguished princess. Her beauty and wealth were proclaimed by all, and the prince asked her to be his wife. On the evening of the wedding, however, the prince was struck dead when a tall black man appeared at the gate and asked for his bride. In terror the girl beheld her gold and diamonds fade to bits of stone and withered flowers.

Well trained in the ways of the fairies, the young girl is shown by the nurse how to make a certain type of clay doll. Having molded the figure, the nurse proceeds to teach her a ritual, described in reticent but sexually suggestive terms. The nurse speaks of "paying her respects" to the doll by doing all sorts of strange things with it. The doll is of a male figure, and when the nurse goes through the strange ritual, the little girl describes her as "streaming with persperation" (p. 160), very much as though she had come from a long, vigorous walk. The nurse also teaches the little girl the ritual, which is preceded by a long period of playing with the doll. The nurse claims to have learned the ritual from her grandmother, and although she says that "what we did was no harm at all, only a game" (p. 161), she makes the little girl solemnly swear
never to tell anyone else about the secret. The sexual symbolism is undeniable in a sequence in which the nurse describes the rendezvous of Cassap, "the queen of the people who danced on the hills on summer nights" (p. 162). Cassap, known to her mediaeval contemporaries as Lady Avelin, had the fairy power to summon forth presences which were never guessed at by the uninitiated. She would request from her father, a great lord, permission to go for flowers in the woods. Once deep in the woods, she would lie down, stretch out her arms and sing a special song. Great serpents would answer her call and come slithering and hissing from the woods. They would wrap themselves around her body while she sang to them, and eventually there was nothing uncovered but her head. Finally she would tell them to leave, which they obediently did. She returned to the castle with her garland of flowers.

The point the nurse stresses is that the world the little girl has discovered must be kept secret. To effectively impress her she tells how Lady Avelin met her death. As a beautiful young woman she had many suitors, all of whom she rejected. Five in particular would not be dissuaded and insisted upon her choosing a husband from among them within a year and a day. Lady Avelin continued to
entertain her group of fairy-admirers and wore around her neck an image that actually came to life as a splendid young man and participated in her weird ritual. As her year of decision drew to an end, Lady Avelin destroyed her suitors one by one through the use of voo-doo dolls. Sir Simon, the fifth of the aspirants, frustrated the plans for his death by outwitting the maids and gaining entry into the Lady's private chambers where he witnessed one of her ceremonies. Provided with such information, there was no alternative but to save his own life by reporting this witchcraft to the bishop. Accordingly, Sir Simon rode to the bishop and gave his account. The bishop arrested, tried, and condemned Lady Avelin. On the day which had been set aside for the wedding, she was burnt at the stake in the public meeting-place. The wax figure was tied around her neck, and some sait it screamed out when the flames reached her body.

If the tale ended here, it could be considered an interesting episode in the short story. But there is an organic relationship between Lady Avelin's fate and the little girl's which is verbalized when the latter realizes that she has identified to such an extent with Lady Avelin that she experiences the same cruel death. Lying awake at night after hearing the story, her mind returns insistently to the scene.
of Lady Avelin standing in the midst of the flames. "And I thought of it so much," she writes in her diary, "that I seemed to get into the story myself, and I fancied I was the lady, and that they were coming to take me to be burnt with fire, with all the people in the town looking at me" (p. 167). By using the device of the parallel stories—one set in the Middle Ages, the other a contemporary account—Machen is able to demonstrate the thesis evolved by Ambrose in the Prologue that evil is a reality even though the damned soul is not guilty of a conscious violation of an ethical code. The little girl, for example, is not morally culpable for the actions which she has learned from the nurse. Lady Avelin, on the other hand, freely accepts her evil universe and actively engages in the murder of her suitors. And yet the little girl intuits that the same spirit is active in both persons. Such an awareness is naturally frightening to an otherwise innocent child, and it brings with it many anxieties about her own fate. Unlike Lady Avelin she is not burnt at the stake, but she is found dead one day not long after the diary entry beside a satanic figure of Roman workmanship. Ambrose, who is present when the body is recovered, takes a hammer and reduces the statue to dust.
Although Machen claimed not to have been acquainted with Huysmans' works before the composition of The Hill of Dreams, there can be little doubt that "The White People" derives its theme and form from the novel Là-Bas known in its English translation as Down There, A Study in Satanism.

Machen's interest in Satanism and the occult goes back at least to his early days in London. One of his first jobs was to catalogue the occult books in George Redway's bookshop, a task which resulted in the publication of a detailed catalogue called "The Literature of Occultism and Archaeology." At the same time Huysmans was gathering material in Paris for a novel which was to be "a monumental history of satanism in the nineteenth century." It was Huysmans' intention to make a "parallel demonstration" (p. xxiii) by showing how the ruthless spirit of Gilles de Rais was paralleled at the end of the nineteenth century by the sacrilegious atrocities of his fictional character Dr. Johannès. After years of collaboration with Joseph-Antoine Boullan, a defrocked priest who was the most celebrated occultist of his day and the model for Dr. Johannes, the work was completed by the fall of 1890.

and commenced serialization in the *Echo de Paris* on February 15, 1891.

In "The White People" Machen twice mentions Gilles de Rais. Early in the short story Ambrose defines sin as the "effort to gain the ecstasy and the knowledge that pertain alone to angels" (p. 128). Gilles de Rais dedicates himself fully to the attainment of such ecstasy and makes of himself a demon in the process. Later Ambrose cites Gilles de Rais again as the model murderer who kills purely for the sake of killing, without any possibility of personal benefit.

Demonstrating in parallel chapters the thought processes of two characters separated in time by several centuries is the technique used by Huysmans in *La-Bas*. It is the same device which gives strength to the Lady Avelin sequence in "The White People." In hearing the details of the Lady's life, the young girl senses an identification even though they lived in vastly different ages. The young girl is quite clearly the heir to all the occult wisdom which Lady Avelin had herself acquired, and the nurse, in teaching her the ceremony of the doll, is simply providing her with the means of expressing powers which are already her own property. As Machen demonstrates, the evil comes from within the young girl, spontaneously flowering into an ecstasy of evil.
"The Shining Pyramid," published in 1895, is a third short story which uses the fairies as embodiments of an evil spiritual force. The story begins at the disappearance of Annie Trevor, the beautiful daughter of a well-to-do Welsh farmer. Dyson, the narrator who earlier appeared in The Three Impostors, hears of the tragedy, sympathizes with the family's loss, but is otherwise himself uninvolved. Shortly afterwards, however, he begins to fear that he is soon to become victim of some plot. Over a period of several days he finds in the neighborhood crude outlines made from bits of rock of several art-objects which he possesses as heirlooms. He thinks that he can clearly detect the awkward rendering of a silver punchbowl from the period of Charles II and a pyramidal china cabinet which has been in the family for generations. In addition to these pictures, there appears on his garden wall each morning, at a height of about three feet, what he takes to be an attempt at drawing the human eye. The combination of weird circumstances causes Dyson to contact his friend Vaughn and ask for help. Vaughan arrives on the scene free of Dyson's fear for his personal possessions and is consequently open to many other explanations. While taking a walk with Dyson in the hilly neighborhood, he accidently happens on a large, bowl-like cavity in the earth, what could
well have been the remains of an ancient Roman amphitheatere. Dyson does not at first make the association, but Vaughan relates the amphitheatre to the picture in stone. It is, indeed, the literal setting for a fairy circle. He concludes that the almond-shaped eyes painted on Dyson's wall, as there is one fewer each morning, must be a means of checking off the days before a meeting of particular significance to be held in the circle of stone. With the almond-shaped eyes finally diminished to a single representative, Vaughan suggests that they observe a night-long vigil. Shortly after taking their silent stations on the rim of the amphitheatre, they hear noises that reveal that the cavity is slowly being filled with spectators.

At the crucial moment when the countryside is illuminated as by a flash of brilliant lightning, Vaughan pulls himself up and peers into the abyss. There he sees a multitude of creatures "made in the form of men but stunted like children hideously deformed, the faces with the almond eyes burning with evil and unspeakable lusts." Just as he gets the full impact of the immensity of the crowd, there is a woman's scream of anguish and a monumental flame in the

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shape of a pyramid bursts forth in the center. When the flame finally burns itself out, the two visitors are left still guessing at the significance of what they have beheld. On the following morning Vaughan goes alone to the scene of the fire spectacle and returns with a brooch that he recovers from a heap of ashes. Dyson recognizes it as having belonged to Annie Trevor, and the awful nature of the initiation ceremony is comprehended.

Vaughan recounts step by step the process by which he reasoned that what he had to deal with were fairies. To begin with, the mysterious clues found in the area around Dyson's house indicated that the visitors were under four feet in height, used stone instruments, worked in darkness, and had Mongolian features. These facts brought to his mind "the old name of the fairies, 'the little people,' and the very probable belief that they represent a tradition of the prehistoric Turanian inhabitants of the country, who were cave dwellers" (p. 45). Having decided upon the fairy hypothesis, Vaughan realizes that if there is anything to be feared from the fairies, it is not the theft of Dyson's heirlooms. Living in frightening proximity to modern man but completely ignored by him, the fairies bear witness to the unpleasant reality of evil's presence in the universe.
Disguised by the popular lore which often reduces them to the class of amusing circus figures, they periodically assert themselves and with a show of power snap up a human victim. Dyson and Vaughan, skeptics at the outset, become men of faith in the hidden evil.

The three foregoing short stories work from a clearly formulated hypothesis that the fairylore of Wales, and indeed of Celtdom generally, is a symbol of the evil power in the spirit world. Machen never touches the larger question of whether the evil has a separate existence from the good, or whether evil is merely an absence of the good. The terms good and evil are always attached to specific characters and circumstances. In his novels generally, he sees the spiritual power lying beyond the physical symbols as good. The beautiful objects in nature become, in his terms, a sacrament through which man arrives at an understanding of the spiritual good beyond. In many of his short stories, however, the spiritual force working in the universe is evil, and it is the hideous objects which are symbols for such powers. Instead of participating in the good, Gilles de Rais partakes of a sacrament of evil. The physical form of evil in the "Novel of the Black Seal" is snake-like, slimy, and repulsive. In "The White People" there is also a snake element, but the
fairies there are bloodless, cold, and colorless creatures. In "The Shining Pyramid" the bodies of the fairies are dwarfed and repulsive. Machen molds the local fairylore to serve his own ends. John Rhys, for example, gives many instances of kidnapping by the fairies which have happy endings. He quotes the story of one Ifan Gruffyd (p. 239) who, within living memory, performed the task of snatching his daughter out of a fairy circle on the anniversary of her being carried away. There are no such dramatic rescues in Machen. The fairy world is quite serious, for what is at stake is the soul of man. Men, women, and children fall victim to the fairies and perish.

Written in 1895 for an American literary competition, the short story "The Red Hand" is a final example of Machen's use of the fairies as an evil force. The basic theme of the story is greed, and Machen finds that the evil fairies can ironically serve the ends of human justice. Myths such as the one of Midas have often related the misery which the selfish, greedy person brings upon himself. In his Things Near and Far, Machen theorizes as to how the Celts have made use of the fairies to set man right in his relationship to the objects of wealth around him. When a man falls in love with his money to the exclusion of all else, this love is a
perversion of human emotion and consequently is evil. There are many old tales about fairy gold, treasure which, when touched by humans, turns into ugly rubbish. There is surely here, Machen suggests, hidden and interior meanings. Tales of such transmutations are "veils of certain rare interior experiences of mankind; experiences...which are best avoided. The gold faded into dead leaves; it may be more than an idle tale."  

On the other hand, one of the characteristics often associated with the fairies in Welsh folklore is their great wealth. Frequently they guard the store of treasure accumulated by famous kings or unprincipled pirates. As the watchmen of the treasure, they are as effective in the Welsh tales as are the sentinal-dragons in the Scandinavian counterparts. A good example of the genre is quoted by John Rhys who claims to have it directly from an old Welshman (pp. 254-55). The story goes that there was a pit in the middle of Castle Ynys Geinon which was topped by a stone weighing about three tons. Underneath was a passage which led to the cave of Tau yr Ogof. There the old folks claimed the fairies slept during the day, for during the night they were out playing tricks. The stone

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at the top could be moved only when the magic word was said, and it was the fairy who climbed out of the pit first who said the word which opened the stone and the last one out repeated it to close the rock again. One day when a servant was out hunting rabbits he accidentally said the word while near the rock. The stone moved aside and he climbed into the pit. As the servant did not know what had caused the stone to open, he was incapable of closing it, and the fairies knew that someone had entered the pit because the draft created thereby blew out their candles. They captured him and made him live in the pit for seven years, but then he escaped with a hat full of golden coins. During all that time he learned the magic word and the place where the fairies stored their treasure. Once having escaped, he told his secret to one of the local farmers. The farmer made three very profitable trips to the pit while the fairies were out having fun, but his greed drove him the fourth time to enter the pit before the fairies had gone. That was the last heard of the greedy farmer.

Although they bring destruction to intruders, the fairies in such a story are not otherwise a scourge to the neighborhood. The obvious moral of such a tale is that the man who does not allow himself to be carried away with greed
for what does belong to him has nothing to fear. Machen's "The Red Hand" is out of the same mold; it makes use of the same setting and the same theme.

Dyson, who is recognized as the narrator for several other stories, appears again in "The Red Hand." He relates to his friend Phillipps the strange case of the murder of a prominent London physician, Sir Thomas Vivian. He, himself, discovers the victim late one night while out for a stroll. A curious point he notices while on the scene of the crime is that the instrument used in the murder is a prehistoric flint knife. Being a student of the arcane, Dyson is even more fascinated by a crude drawing on the wall above the body of a red hand making a gesture understood for centuries as being associated with the theory of the evil eye. Dyson concludes that what he is looking for as the murderer must be a survivor from man's ancient past. In order to test his hypothesis, Dyson hires a sidewalk artist in front of the British Museum to draw each morning a picture of a hand in the same attitude as that found on the wall at the time of the murder. During the day Dyson sits in a window across from the museum and watches the reactions of the passers-by. Working from the theory of probability, he expects the culprit to pass that way sooner
or later. When the murderer does appear, his reaction to the picture is immediate. He takes off on the run. But Dyson is after him, and after a brief chase gets him to surrender.

It is something of a disappointment for Dyson to discover that the suspect, Mr. Selby, does not exhibit the grosser features of primitive man. He does admit, however, to having killed Sir Thomas and gives a summary of the events leading up to the slaying. He had moved up to London from Wales when he was a young man. A bookish lad, he spent most of his time reading or discussing ideas. Among his acquaintances was the young Sir Thomas, then as poor as he, although a student at the medical college. The two became particular friends when Selby offered to share with the other the adventure of finding a key to the hieroglyphics carved into a stone tablet he had found in Wales. The two men spent many hours together in a vain effort to break the code, and Vivian finally despaired of ever doing it. At about the same time he received a sizable inheritance and moved to a better section of the city where he began his climb to medical fame.

Selby refused to give up, and untiring effort eventually produced results. The tablet disclosed directions
to a subterranean treasure cache. He left London for Wales, found the location, and got within sight of the hidden treasure. He had resolved, however, that he would not take anything for himself until he had shared the discovery with Vivian. On the way out of the cave he picked up an ancient flint knife as evidence of his visit. His letter to Sir Thomas was answered promptly and a place and time of meeting established. After the years of separation the two met in a familiar back alley. The circumstances of discovery having been described and the directions to the cache completely outlined, Sir Thomas reached in his coat and pulled out a knife. Spontaneously Selby reached for his flint knife, and before Sir Thomas could drive home his weapon, the less sophisticated weapon had slashed his jugular vein. It was only shortly thereafter that Dyson passed by and witnessed the dead body of Sir Thomas.

Having described his life up to the time of the murder, Selby has only to give an account of the short period before his detection by Dyson. After the death of Sir Thomas, he returned to the cave to retrieve the wealth. When he gets to that point in the narrative he falters, and Dyson has to push him to conclude. As Selby finally tells it, what he found in the cave was repulsive beyond description. In the
telling of the episode, the narrator's voice itself "sounded like the hissing of a snake," for although there was a vast treasury, it was guarded by a race of snake-like fairies.

In "The Red Hand" the moral is much more explicit than in the three short stories discussed earlier. The fairies here are a symbol of the spiritual evil of greed. Sir Thomas is a victim of out-and-out materialism; he wants the wealth. Selby's greed is essentially intellectualized; his gratification comes principally from penetrating into a region heretofore unexplored by human beings. All the symbols contribute to the single mood of evil. The serpentine element is present, just as in the other short stories. There is also the symbol of the evil eye, the sign agreed upon for the meeting place in the dark alley. Dyson immediately recognizes it as having ancient associations of evil. It was a symbol likewise used in "The Shining Pyramid" as a means of marking off the days before the initiation of the young girl Annie Trevor into the satanic assembly. Lastly, there is the inscription of the goat on the single coin which Selby brings back from the treasure trove of the fairies. The goat symbolism Machen traces back primarily

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to Roman devil worship, and he uses it to create a sense of evil in "The White People" and principally "The Great God Pan."

In The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction, Dorothy Scarborough claims that although there have been hundreds of volumes of supernatural folktales in the English language, those growing out of the Celtic Revival are infused with "a passionate mysticism, a poetic symbolism that we find scarcely anywhere else in English prose."\(^\text{10}\) Machen is clearly within that tradition with this series of stories based on Welsh fairylore. And although Wesley Sweetser is partially correct in saying that "Machen wrote few works which can be called systematic symbolism or comprehensive mysticism" (p. 104), there can be no doubt of his artistic intention. The fairies play their role in Machen's theory of sacramentalism, which he understood as being a distinctly Celtic attitude. The fairies are the symbols for a principle of evil in the universe, just as the beautiful and life-giving things are symbols for the spiritual good.

It was Machen in his role as mythmaker who got as close as he ever came to popularity. While on the staff of The

Evening News in 1914 he turned out a short fantasy about the war then raging on the Continent. The story came to only six pages in the collected edition of 1923, but it got him more readers and wider acclaim than anything he wrote before or after. He himself found the fame quite ironic, for the story lacked any deep imagination or real skill in composition. In the story, "The Bowmen," an English soldier under heavy attack by the Germans recalls a picture of Saint George slaying the dragon. Encouraged in his fervor by the heat of battle, he whispers a prayer to Saint George to help the Englishmen in their present crisis. When he looks up he catches a glimpse of a long line of shining figures beyond the trench. They seem to be, strangely enough, bowmen. There is no doubt, however, when the soldier sees thousands of arrows flying through the air. With the help of the celestial bowmen, and to the utter amazement of the German troops, the English detachment is overwhelmingly victorious. Viewed by the Germans, a people "ruled by scientific principles," the massacre could only have occurred through the use of some unknown, poisonous gas. The slam at scientific materialism is typical of Machen's

attitude and is, of course, the theme seen in practically all of his earlier works.

Machen found the response to his fantasy most curious. Within a few days of publication he was contacted by the editors of The Occult Review and Light and asked to provide them with the factual material from which he wrote. He responded that the plot existed only within his imagination. No one was willing to believe him, and his stories of supernatural intervention on the battlefield proliferated. There were interviews with soldiers who were actually present and beheld the saint leading the troops. "The Bowmen" was quoted from pulpits throughout the country and cited in the major religious periodicals. It became the prototype of a phenomenon which was referred to as "The Angel of Mons." In an introduction to a collection of his wartime legends titled The Angels of Mons, Machen jokingly refers to how, in the majority of his imitators, the intervention of the angels gradually replaced the aid rendered by Saint George in his story. Englishmen, Machen notes, have for hundreds of years looked upon the intervention of the saints as Popish. As a result, many readers could feel little

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identification with "The Bowmen." However, as other writers began to pick up the idea of supernatural intervention in the war, the emphasis changed from Saint George to the angelic army. "And so soon as the legend got the title 'The Angels of Mons,' "Machen quipped, "it became impossible to avoid it. It permeated the Press; it would not be neglected" (p. 14). The quibble over saintly or angelic intrusion into the mundane world of human affairs notwithstanding, Machen was gratified to see at work the functioning of his own mind as the crucible from which were refined living folktales. Although the masses irritated him in persistently searching for verification of the events portrayed, Machen's power as a creator of contemporary legend was amply demonstrated.

The tale appears to have no Welsh content whatsoever. Machen's consciousness was, however, functioning in the background. One of the fellow staff members on The Evening News asked him on the day of publication why the bowmen in St. George's detachment used French terms. In response--actually a dodging of the question at hand--Machen answered that "as a matter of cold historical fact, most of the archers of Agincourt were mercenaries from Gwent, my native country, who would appeal to Mihangel and to saints not known to the
Saxon--Teilo, Iltyd, Dewi, Cadwaladyr Vendigeid" (p. 8). Machen avoids the discussion of Anglo-Norman at the time of Agincourt, but he reveals that the presence of English soldiers is, in the first place, simply a concession to the English reading public but that he actually visualized the scene with Welsh participants.

"The Terror," Machen's most significant tale from the period of World War I, is set in the summer of 1915 although not published until two years later. The narrator, Dr. Lewis, lives in the far west of Wales at Porth. He reads in the paper at the outset of the war of the strange case of Lt. Western-Reynolds' airplane crack-up, the apparent result of his plane's running into a flock of pigeons and having its engines clogged with crushed bodies. Dr. Lewis makes no immediate association of this bizarre accident with a morbid series of local deaths, all of which have been censored from the newspapers by governmental order. The justification given for the censorship is that the fear of German invasion would be heightened to panic if simple people took alarm at the number of deaths. Dr. Lewis is called upon personally to certify the death reports of many of the victims. Theories as to the nature of "the terror" run the gamut of probability, not the least of which is the
reputed malignancy of the Celtic fairies. The problem is wrenched from the realm of pure speculation, however, when Secretan, a young artist-friend of Lewis' who had come to Porth for the summer, is killed. At Lewis' advice he had taken a room with the Griffith family at Treff Loyne, an estate just a short distance from town, situated in a beautiful wooded valley, famous throughout the district as the site of St. Teilo's well.

Thomas Griffith, his wife, two children, and guest get up one morning to find that the farm animals have all moved into the fenced area immediately surrounding the house. When Griffith attempts to leave the house, the normally placid beasts make threatening noises and advance on him. Thinking that the situation cannot mean anything serious, he picks up a rake and shouts to drive the animals back to pasture. In response the entire herd of sheep, cows, and assorted farm animals charge their master. Unable to make a successful retreat to the house, he is fatally gored by a bull and dies before the eyes of his helpless family. They themselves are only just able to bar the doors before the animals hurl themselves into the house. Trapped in such an outlying district, the survivors watch their rations dwindle day by day as they wait in vain for assistance. By
the end of the second week even the hardiest have perished and left the farm to the animals.

The details of the weird animal uprising are provided by an on-the-scene witness, Secrstan. His diary, faithfully kept during the several days of the siege, provides the necessary information on the nature of "the terror." The diary, addressed to Dr. Lewis in the dying boy's script, provides him with the key to all the previously perplexing cases. He realizes that the pigeons were in an actual conspiracy in the downing of Lt. Western-Reynolds' plane.

Likewise, in every other death, there had been evidence of animals on the scene, facts which at the time were thought to be totally irrelevant. In forming his conclusions about the tragic development, Dr. Lewis finds that modern man has tried to denounce his spiritual existence, the reality which underlies all of ancient folklore. "We may go back into the ages," he states, "and find the popular tradition asserting that not only are the animals the subjects, but also the friends of man. All that was in virtue of that singular spiritual element in man which the rational
animals do not possess." The denial of man's spiritual nature as a result of an over-emphasis on the rational element is likewise the cause of destruction in "The Bowmen." As Machen sees it, the triumph of such a materialistic point of view reaches its logical conclusion in a scientifically engineered war in which millions of human lives can be systematically snuffed out. The revolt of the animals under such circumstances is good legend-making material.

Machen turns to the Holy Grail material for the last short story which grew out of the anxieties of the war. "The Great Return," published serially during the fall of 1915, has as its thesis that there is still active among the rural Welsh a tradition which links the sacramental objects of the Romances with the ancient cults of the local saints. Obscure as many of the traditions are, he contends that the monumental shock of a World War causes them to surface in clearly defined terms. The composition of the story is again an example of Machen's contemporary legend-making.

The action of the story is set in Llantrisant, a small town in Arfonshire in western Wales. The narrator travels there from London, attracted by rumors of strange occurrences

in the neighborhood, supposed by many to be linked with a German invasion of that lonely coast. Word had reached the narrator that the parish church was the scene of mass hallucinations, regarded by most people as the result of severe wartime anxieties. The narrator is overwhelmed when he enters the church and finds it heavy with the odor of incense, especially as the vicar, Mr. Evans, has been known to him as a life-long critic of the least concessions to Popery. On questioning the vicar about the lapse in his orthodoxy, he is reminded of his own Protestant roots. The grandson of a former vicar of Caerleon-on-Usk [Machen's own birthplace], he has gotten the reputation since his move to London for skepticism. The vicar refuses to give him any details of the local phenomena, chiding him with "you are a railer, and see nothing but the outside and the show."

After several days spent in talking to the local people, the narrator pieces together a picture of what had happened, an event which has the entire community living together in love and security. One night during the few weeks preceding his visit, the local doctor had paid what he thought to be

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his last visit to Olwen Phillips, a girl of sixteen in the last stages of consumption. In the dead of night, however, Olwen had an unexpected visit. There before her bed stood three men in blood-red robes. One held a golden bell; the second held what looked like a table top, but it was like a great blue jewel, shot through with riverlets of silver and gold—sometimes taking on the deep cast of purple and at other angles fading into a green; the third man held a cup high above the jewel, and it was "like a rose on fire" (p. 235). When the visitors departed Olwen found herself completely recovered and screamed to her parents for joy.

Olwen was not the only one to be touched by the healing power of the three robed men. During the night practically every family in the town was dramatically cured of some physical or spiritual infirmity. Deaf women had their hearing restored; feuds of long duration were reconciled. The result was that on the following morning, a Sunday, the townspeople turned out for Mass in perfect attendance, a spectacle which had not transpired since the Middle Ages. As the service proceeded, the vicar and the choir felt inwardly compelled to withdraw from the chancel and take their seats in the nave. The congregation was astonished to see standing there
the three figures withnessed during the night by Olwen Phillips. The three functioned as ministers of the Mass. The first held the bell of St. Teilo, said by tradition to have been rung only during the consecration of the Mass. The second held the altar of St. David, known as Sapphirus. The third figure "heaved up high over the altar a cup that was red with burning and the blood of the offering" (p. 240). It was, in fact, the celebration of the Mass of the Sangraal. Once the Mass was ended, the holy persons passed from the land, taking with them the sacred objects which were thenceforth seen "only in dreams by day and by night" (p. 241). Although there were no longer any unusual figures to be seen in the church, for weeks afterwards the smell of heavenly incense persisted and the faces of the people reflected a sense of deep spiritual wellbeing.

In the conclusion Machen questions to what extent the ancient legends of the saints and the Holy Grail still persist in the consciousness of the twentieth-century Welshman. It is true, he says, that the Celts have been swept successively by the heathen Saxons, Latin Mediaevalism, and modern Anglicanism. Yet the Celts still cling to their tales of the saints and their sacred relics. He recalls having talked to his landlord about a certain tradition
of St. Teilo. The tone of the conversation immediately changed, and although he remained polite, he curtly concluded, "That will be over there, up by the mountain" (p. 237). With the outsiders thinking them rather peculiar for their unfashionable beliefs, the Celts are hesitant to speak frankly about such personal religious matters.

After all has been said on the subject, Machen would contend that his having heard the old legends of the saints and feeling within himself the urge to write them up for his contemporaries is clearly evidence that the Welsh imagination is essentially in touch with its own ancient past. The hope that the saints will one day return to bring peace and blessings is, he feels, a living reality which strikes a responsive chord in the souls of people living many centuries after the birth of the legend.
CHAPTER VI
Conclusion

In 1923, Stewart Ellis began an appreciative essay on Machen in the *Fortnightly Review* with the observation that "Mr. Arthur Machen is now, at long last, acknowledged to be one of the most arresting and distinguished writers of our time."¹ Machen, despite Ellis' claim, has never been universally acclaimed as a popular writer. The distinguished American scholar Joseph Wood Krutch came closer to stating the actual situation when he said of Machen in *The Nation* in the year preceding Ellis that "though he is unmistakably an artist he has never enjoyed anything like popularity."² Krutch's reasoning for Machen's lack of popularity is instructive, for "by no possibility could the peculiar temperament which not merely underlies but is the very texture of his work win

²Joseph Wood Krutch, "Tales of a Mystic," *The Nation*, CXV (September 13, 1922), 258.
any wide acceptance. He belongs to the always small company of genuine mystics" (p. 259). The evidence for Machen's mysticism Krutch finds in his theme and plot: "He has only one theme, the Mystic Vision, and only one plot, the Rending of the Veil" (p. 259). So far as Krutch goes, what he says of Machen could hardly be denied. Even a casual reading of Machen reveals that he attempts in everything he writes to bring the reader below the surface of what is merely observed to its essence.

The purpose of this dissertation has been to take the scattered comments about the works of Arthur Machen and match them against a wider system of interpretations, one which attempts to interpret Machen's works as a whole. To begin with, although Machen did all his writing in London, rural Wales much more than urban life is his setting. Yeats and Sharp also lived in London during the 1890's, the principal period of their return to Irish and Scottish themes. It would be a highly improbable coincidence had Machen written his appreciations of Wales uninfluenced.

With Machen joined in time and place to the major figures of the Celtic Revival, the next task is to isolate
in the theorists of the Celtic Revival those traits which they find common to all the products growing from the movement. Renan, Arnold, Yeats, and Allen are the recognized spokesmen for its principles, and the traits which they generally agree upon are spirituality, a penchant for imaginative escape, melancholy, a "Magical" view of nature, and style.

Spirituality is the single trait which all commentators agree upon as being an unmistakable Celtic trait. Yeats states that the Celtic denial of materialism found a responsive chord in the artistic objectives of the Symbolists, who were attempting to evoke the essence of an emotion through the choice of physical objects and sensations. Machen used the same idea as the basis for his works, but he preferred to use the term "sacrament." Basically, all his novels and short stories develop the theme that the physical world is a sacrament or symbol for a spiritual reality which lies beyond. Whether or not a work of art leads the viewer to such a sacramental appreciation of his existence is the touchstone for great literature as he developed the idea in his critical statement Hieroglyphics.
In a group of novels and short stories, including *The Secret Glory* and "A Fragment of Life," the author probes beyond the veil of matter into the spiritual world of good. In such stories as "The Great God Pan" and the "Novel of the White Powder," however, the author probes the mystery of the extent to which the material veil hides a spiritual evil. Likewise, Machen finds in the folklore of Wales a system of symbols which masks a world of evil.

Although Krutch recognizes in Machen the mystic, the term does not help in any way to understand the particular complexities of Machen's view of spirituality. Likewise, when Vincent Starrett calls Machen in the title of his essay *A Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin*, he is making a claim which is so broad that it covers practically everyone. Spirituality, for Machen, is developed primarily through his use of sacramentalism and bears closely upon the symbolism adopted by Yeats and the other members of the Celtic Revival. The concept is tied down more directly to the Welsh element, however, in that Machen makes frequent reference to the spirituality growing out of the Celtic Church and being founded in Druidic practices and cults of the saints. In "The Secret of the Sangraal" Machen traces the effects of Celtic spirituality into the Middle Ages and finds in the
Romances a highly developed use of Celtic sacramental ideas and ecclesiastical traditions.

Machen's masterpiece of imaginative escape is *The Hill of Dreams*. Lucian Taylor is born in Wales and keeps always before his mind's eye, even when perishing in the urban squalor of London, that his value as a human being grows out of his spiritual identity. Finding the practical affairs of city life deadening, he finally escapes into the beautiful world of his own fantasy and never returns. All the Celtic traits are present in Lucian. He lives completely on the level of the spirit, he is obsessed with the Celtic sense of loss and failure, he looks on nature as "magical" in its revelation of a deeper spiritual reality, and he gives himself to literary "Pindarism" as defined by Arnold. He is consciously Celtic in every sense.

Study of Machen has, up to this point, suffered from a lack of orientation. Although much of what has been said of him in the past has been quite true, the comments have tended to exist in isolation rather than to complement each other. When viewed from the perspective of the Celtic Renaissance, the Symbolist and Aesthetic Movements, Machen's use of literary themes and ideas demonstrates an origi-
nality which allows him to express his own contemporary Celtic convictions within a rich and highly developed tradition.
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VITA

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Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: Arthur Machen and the Celtic Renaissance in Wales

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Date of Examination:

April 27, 1973