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## Buried Feelings, Standing Stones: Secularity, Animism, and Late-Victorian Pagan Revivalism

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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## Abstract

In this project, I argue that during the late-Victorian period a revived form of paganism developed in response to an emerging kind of secularity. My first chapter engages post-secularism as a framework for understanding how paganism responds to this new sense of secularity, which I demonstrate formed alongside developments in geology, archaeology, and anthropology. In chapter two, I show how ideas of “primitivity” and “animism” put forth by John Lubbock and E. B. Tylor influence what Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater debate as “the pagan sentiment.” The rest of the project concerns forms of what I call “pagan affectations,” authorial personae which cultivate counter-secular, pagan modes of subjectivity that make room for kinds of feelings such as ecstasy, “primitivity,” and a sense of immersion in an ecology of animistic agencies. Chapter three situates the popularity of the goat-god Pan within this developing paganism. I argue that Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Machen, and George Egerton offer Pan as an icon of competing pagan masculinities within the context of the contrast between Victorian secular ways of being worldly and pagan revivalist ways of being earthly I set out in the previous chapter. My fourth chapter examines how Richard Jefferies adopts and adapts a unique form of pagan affectation. I argue that Jefferies affects a paganism grounded in intimate connections to the Wiltshire landscape that is in conflict with Victorian secularist ideas of archaeological and ecological relationality. Chapters five, six, and seven turn to questions of “Celticity” and the Victorian racialization of Celtic peoples. In these chapters I focus on Robert Louis Stevenson’s engagement with Celticity and the ways in which he challenges Anglo-Saxonist claims of aesthetic and epistemic superiority. I argue that Stevenson queries Celticity as a means of access to a deeper, transancestral Paterian “universal pagan sentiment.” Throughout these chapters, I will also demonstrate the importance of affectations of pagan Celticity to his genre fiction, style, and theories of Romance. Overall, my research contributes to Victorian scholarship by showing how creative writers from the 1860s to the 1890s participated in the revival of paganism in ways that respond to and challenge Victorian secularity.

## **Keywords**

Paganism, Victorian Pagan Revivalism, Animism, Post-Secularism, Victorian Secularity, Celticity, Victorian literature, Robert Louis Stevenson, Richard Jefferies, Walter Pater, Matthew Arnold, John Lubbock, E. B. Tylor, The God Pan

## Summary for Lay Audience

My research focuses on the revival of paganism in Victorian literature. I demonstrate the ways in which Richard Jefferies and Robert Louis Stevenson leverage the iconography and themes of paganism against emerging Victorian ideas of secularity. The specific form of paganism I discuss drew upon traditional notions of ancient myth and spirituality, while also incorporating contemporary understandings of native British forms of prehistoric “animism.” My project contributes to scholarship in my field by locating paganism as a reaction to Victorian secularity and, specifically, by tracing how writers associated with pagan revivalism developed unique creative projects by engaging with contemporary archaeology, anthropology, and racial “science.” Pagan revivalists both participated in and challenged these assertions by championing “prehistoric” modes of feeling and experience over and against Victorian secularity. Throughout, I explore the importance of pagan revivalism to Victorian concerns with gender, human-ecological relationality, the reception of the prehistoric past, and new notions of “race.” I begin by surveying traditional notions of the “secular” and “secularization,” which I demonstrate historically re-invoke fallacious paganisms as a foil to changing ideas of secular worldliness. Then, I delve into the works of Victorian archaeologists and anthropologists to present prehistoric pagan “animism” as yet another form of pagan falsehood, but one which appeals to revivalists as a counter-secular way of being earthly. I explore the ways in which this form of animistic paganism catches hold in the imagination of Walter Pater, Richard Jefferies, and Robert Louis Stevenson. I show the importance of this clash between secular worldliness and pagan earthliness in famous texts such as Pater’s *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*; Jefferies’ *Wood Magic*, *The Story of My Heart* and *After London; or Wild England*; and well-known books by Stevenson such as *Kidnapped* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and lesser-known works such as his folk horror stories “Thrawn Janet” and “The Merry Men.”

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## Introduction

The Victorian era is often thought of as a time of accelerated change, as well as intellectual and cultural (if not political) revolution. There was an acceleration of industrialism, transportation, and colonialism, and revolutions in sciences such as geology, biology, and medicine. It was also once typically thought of as an age that saw another kind of accelerated revolution, an acceleration of secularization. Many “secularizing” reforms were enacted. Catholics (1829) and Jewish people (1858) were granted the right to sit in parliament. The University Tests Act, passed in 1871, meant that applicants to Oxford and Cambridge no longer had to be Anglican. It was the age of Darwinism, Huxlean “agnosticism,” and of outspoken atheists like Charles Bradlaugh engaging in public debates with renowned Churchmen. Indeed, the Victorians, or at least a group of them, headed by George Holyoake inaugurated “Secularism,” a movement which sought to promote neutrality on theological matters in order to focus on the material circumstances of everyday life.

However, it was also an “age” of revivals: Evangelicalism reinvigorated missionary zeal in the colonies, and Catholic revivals shook the predominantly Anglican homebase. Greek revivals, Gothic revivals, Anglo-Saxon revivals, Celtic revivals, Medieval revivals, Renaissance revivals abounded. History seemed to be churning up its previous ages, tempting Victorians backwards, confessing its cyclicity to a society that not only believed history advanced in a progressively linear direction, but that it was leading the forward charge. In this project, I study one such revival which complicates our idea of Victorian notions of the secular and religion, and Victorian conceptions of



time and historical change. I am interested in the ways in which paganism was leveraged as a source of Victorian secular disturbance, and how pagan affects and affectations of paganism bewitched the secular imagination.

My two main subjects are Richard Jefferies and Robert Louis Stevenson. I focus on these two writers because their contributions to pagan revivalism are either under-represented or not as thoroughly considered as some of their contemporaries (like Algernon Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, or Arthur Machen). Also, their influence can be recognized upon these more widely acknowledged contributors to late-Victorian and Edwardian paganism. Mostly, however, I focus on Jefferies and Stevenson because they are interesting in themselves as late-Victorian writers with unique aesthetic projects that employ the iconography, themes, and sentiments of the pagan revival in striking ways and to novel ends. Both Jefferies and Stevenson, I will demonstrate, turn to paganism as a mode of mediation that appears in contention with the tangled discourse of secularism and religion. While I argue that their modes of paganism function as a counter-secular iconoclasm, these authors nonetheless draw on terms that emerge from within what are frequently considered to be “secular” fields, especially anthropology and archaeology. Stevenson looms large over this project, being the subject of three chapters and featuring centrally in a fourth. This is because his interest in paganism extends across two unique topics of interest: his early fixation with the god Pan and his querying of the Victorian racialization of Celtic peoples.

This project attempts to understand paganism in light of recent scholarship rethinking Victorian constructions of religion and secularity, which often goes under the heading “post-secularism.” I will have much more to say about post-secularism in chapter

one, but for now I will note that it is a mode of critical inquiry which draws attention to the ways in which, as Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner put it, the “secular” and “religion” make and unmake each other in a “mutually constitutive dialogue” (4). The dialogic process marks religious differences and forms various kinds of secularity by mediating identities, subjectivities, and experiences, and, as such, this process makes worlds and worldly subjects. Paganism has always been a category into which uncouth, unsanctioned, anachronistic, occult, and false ways of being worldly have been gathered. In the period under question here, roughly from the 1860s to the 1890s, secular thinkers started to theorize that the long decay of pagan ways of being was almost at an end, save for dwindling “survivals” at the fringes of the “civilized” world. I will consider the ways in which Jefferies and Stevenson participate in the *revival* of this allegedly declining paganism as a mode of “feeling earthly.” Their writing supplies new aesthetic and affective experiences through supposedly recovering suppressed ways of relating to the earth, to the body, and to the self.

However, while I will demonstrate the ways in which paganism is imagined in contrast to varieties of Victorian secular experience, I am interested in the correspondences and points of contention between aspects of secularism and pagan revivalism. Over the course of the following seven chapters, I will consider how paganism is informed by, challenges, and often remains in tension with Victorian secularity with respect to several contested topics: history, time, gender, ecological relationality, and “race.” I will return to these points of contention when I summarize my chapters near the end of this introduction. In the meantime, I will situate my work within

the scholarship that has already been produced in relation to Victorian pagan revivalism in order to give readers a sense of what has been established and where my work fits.

Scholars have generally approached Victorian pagan revivalism with an eye to some of the specific rhetorical, thematic, aesthetic, and ideological uses to which it has been put. What such scholarship demonstrates, if often indirectly, is how Victorian pagan revivalism responds to certain perceived insufficiencies of modern secular and/or religious feeling. For instance, Peter Green interprets paganism as bourgeois escapism, a “drug” which is used to “stimulate” authorial projections of a “lotus-land” which served as an imaginary “retreat” for dissatisfied and disaffected urban-dwelling, middle-class professionals (112). For Green, then, paganism is a secular response to a secular discontentment with the changing pace and expectations of bourgeois life.<sup>1</sup>

Jennifer Hallett follows Green but makes a distinction. She notes the kind of “literary paganism” Green assigned to bourgeois decadence but records a second type which is found in the non-fiction works of some notable English socialists like William Morris and Edward Carpenter. The first mode is “a haughty rebuff to Christianity” that drew on a “ready made parlour of counter-cultural images” (164) but is ultimately a “pessimistic drug to release the individual from reality in the short term,” whereas the second is a utopian but nonetheless sincere and “optimistic endeavour to change modern reality wholesale” (178). Hallett, like Green before her, finds some pagans on the run from a secular reality, but adds that there were others who found in paganism a language

<sup>1</sup> In Green’s estimation of it, we can hear the echo of G.K. Chesterton’s humorous dismissal of late Victorian and Edwardian “Neo-Paganism” as a phenomenon mostly found in “fiction and light literature” wherein “pagans are depicted as above all things inebriate and lawless.” The term typically refers to “a man without any religion,” whereas in fact “a pagan was generally a man with about half a dozen” (69).

for modifying the terms of that reality. What both scholars also demonstrate is that there was a sense of self-awareness and a deliberate performative function to writers' interest in paganism.

William Greenslade also suggests paganism served secular ends with his quasi-ironic term "critical paganism." However, Greenslade grants even its bourgeois expressions a subversive potential that collapses the distinctions Hallett makes, associating, even if only by degrees, the kind of playful pagan self-fashioning in which Kenneth Grahame participated with the more critically engaged variety of Carpenter or Edward Thomas (145). Greenslade's "critical paganism," then, is at once a mode of self-stylization and a way of cultivating "forms of redundancy, eccentricity, and sheer uselessness" (145). For Greenslade, paganism is thus ultimately a strategic circulation of feelings of secular discontentment which might cultivate a taste for ludic disruptions of the rhythms of industrialization and urbanization.

Other critics have located paganism within larger literary movements, reading it as a means for the ends of those movements. For instance, the late Margot K. Louis notes an increasing trend among Victorian neo-Romantics who pitted the deities of chthonic mystery cults (Persephone, Dionysus, and Adonis) against the Olympian gods (such as Zeus and Apollo) as a critique of contemporary religion. She notes that "the mysteries were often used to represent what the author thinks religion ought to be" (24). Pagan revisions of orthodox religion, according to Louis, reevaluate religious feeling towards earthly, embodied life, in that "the exaltation of the mysteries became a way to celebrate the *sacredness* of this life, of sexuality, and the life force" (2, italics added). Louis makes a notable intervention into the scholarship in the way she argues for a genuine sense of

spirituality and redefinition of religion within literature. Like historian of Modern Pagan Witchcraft Ronald Hutton, she finds in Romantic and Victorian revaluations of paganism prominent antecedents for a new form of religion in literature. And, like Hutton as well, Louis draws attention to the role of artifice and self-conscious performativity within Victorian paganism, as opposed to sincerity of private belief, conviction, and/or faith, which are integral to Protestant and secular modern definitions of religion.<sup>2</sup>

Damon Franke also reads paganism as a reaction against orthodoxy. He argues that it is a form of “modernist heresy” that challenged orthodoxy in both its religious and secular expressions. For Franke, paganism is specifically a “syncretic heresy” (XVI), a way of amalgamating various ancient polytheistic religious iconographies, myths, and symbols ultimately for the purposes of modernist mythmaking in the interest of deconstructing rigid epistemologies, whether religious or secular. Similarly, Sara Lyons locates paganism within the Victorian Aesthetic movement, which she claims demonstrates “a kind of secular self consciousness,” a quality of ironic self-positioning towards secularity which compels its recuperation of certain aesthetic features of ancient and modern religions towards secular ends (21). In this light, she finds that “‘paganism’ often demands to be read as a form of secularism” in its “affirmation of . . . an ideal of human flourishing that is conceived without reference to the transcendent, or to anything beyond or higher than the human and the natural” (7). Paterian aestheticism is “a secularist discourse in the polemical and allegedly ‘pagan’ sense” which is really an “effort to assert the *sufficiency* of worldliness” (37, italics added). For Lyons, paganism is

<sup>2</sup> See “Finding a Language,” the first chapter of Ronald Hutton’s indispensable *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*.

a disenchanting re-enchantment of the secular wherein the irretrievability of authentic pagan epistemologies accentuates modern aesthetics. Yet, if the “worldliness” of secularity were sufficient, why the turn to paganism? I will come back to the question of what secular “worldliness” entails a bit further down.

Dennis Denisoff is the most prolific of Victorianists interested in pagan revivalism, and his work informs much of my own. He suggests that decadent writers affiliated themselves with pagan “nature worship” as a means for “conceptualizing and articulating their non-normative tastes and social values” (“Dissipating” 432). Furthermore, he contends, for such decadents, paganism presents a “counter-humanist” position that goes against nineteenth century liberal notions of the self, instead promoting a vision of “deindividuation and species intersubjectivity” which renegotiates the terms of subjective experience and earthly embodiment (433). More recently, Denisoff has focused on the way in which this decadent paganism developed in line with Victorian ecological thought. He demonstrates how numerous decadent writers like Walter Pater, Michael Field, Vernon Lee, and Stevenson “found sustenance from and gave nourishment to their ecology” in a way which claims “paganism” as “a particularly vital component of [decadent] thinking, writing, performances, and art” (*Decadent Ecology* 3). In his attention to the role that Victorian ecological and biological science informed decadent authors’ thinking and works, Denisoff also demonstrates how “paganism” came to be “inspired as much, if not more, by the scientific imagination than by religious tradition” (42). As such, paganism becomes a way of reevaluating conceptions of religious and spiritual experience by grounding these in an aesthetics that locates the rudiments of the spiritual in the realms of science and the aesthetic in the ecological.

Across these critical treatments of paganism, a number of common themes emerge. Paganism is a response to modern secular malaise, a reprioritization of secular values, and a way to reimagine and enact earthly embodiment and ecological relationality. What each of these scholars implicitly demonstrates is the *insufficiency* of the terms of what King and Werner called the modern “mutually constitutive dialogue” that generates the changing definitions of secularity and religion. The scholarship I reviewed also indicates that that insufficiency is related to the feeling (or lack thereof) of being worldly. Paganism represents many things for these scholars, but the constant theme they record is the requirement of a third term between religion and secularism that can sufficiently contain the desired aesthetic and affective alterity.

Building upon and questioning some of the implications of this scholarship, I will argue that paganism comes to represent a flexible concept that can accommodate ways of feeling and being earthly in contradistinction from either secular or religious ways of feeling and being worldly. Paganism thus serves revivalists as a way of renouncing the worldliness fostered by the secular-religious dialogue. In this, I follow global literatures scholar Zhang Ni, who, in *The Pagan Writes Back* (2015)<sup>3</sup> argues “the discursive history of the pagan other runs deeper than that of religion and the secular, and this history is worth investigating and retrieving” (10). Ni is interested in paganism as a “counter-category” that is “repudiated into being” by both secular and Christian “mechanism[s] of establishing truth over falsity, identity at the expense of the other” (4). By “recuperating

<sup>3</sup> Ni’s work does not directly address Victorian literature or Victorian pagan revivalism. Her approach is post-colonial and is concerned with retrieving the “pagan” otherhood of mostly contemporary, non-Western literature (Margaret Atwood being the exception). When she reads what “the pagan writes back,” it is with an eye to contesting settler-colonial and global imperial legacies of othering and cultural hegemony in a global context. I have some reservations about applying her ideas to colonial-era British literature and yet must acknowledge her influence upon my own thought.

the repudiated” in paganism (6), she says, we can discern “the prehistory and ongoing transformation” of the categories of “the secular” and the “religious” (5). Thinking through the triangulation of the secular, the religious, and the pagan, we can recognize some parallels and common patterns within and between both secularism and religion and recognize the ways pagan revivalists query the secular-religious dialogue.

I will mainly attend to the secular “side” of this dialogue in order to discern the way paganism articulates itself against what Ni calls secularism’s “particular vision of the world” (47). For, as she suggests, the history of secular thought constructed the “worldly” as “coterminous with the secular,” cultivating a sense of the “world unconstrained by any otherworldly authority” (47). This is a process that encourages a “conflation of the worldly and the secular” (50). I will demonstrate how ostensibly “secular” disciplines such as geology, archaeology, and anthropology mediate worldly experience in ways which enact that conflation.

Thus, as I will detail in chapter one, my approach is informed by the conjunction of post-secularism and affect studies. If, as Ann Cvetkovich has memorably claimed, “the history of affect is a history of secularization (and vice versa)” (199), then this is perhaps because secularism has always enacted its authority through mediations of affects. Islamic critics of Western secularism, Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood have presaged more recent interest in the secular mediation of affects in the historical and present iterations of secularism. Mahmood defines “secularity” as “the set of concepts, norms, *sensibilities*, and *dispositions* that characterize secular societies and subjectivities” (198, italics added). In *Secular Translations: Nation State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason*, Talal Asad notes the important functions of affect in what he defines as a secular



“discursive tradition.” (5). This discursive tradition shares some formal qualities or attributes with religion such as an “implicit continuity embedded in habit, *feeling*, and behaviour” and is transmitted within “a shared way of life” (5, italics added). Mahmood and Asad’s observations inform my consideration of Victorian secularity, which I will also suggest gains authority in part by shared sensibilities, which were substantiated by archaeology and anthropology. These disciplines established a shared sense of contemporaneity among the “civilized,” an “us” who are the vanguard of unidirectional historical advancement. The membership of the “civilized” was guaranteed by the non-belonging of “primitives,” a “them” who were thought to occupy various stages of prehistory, contemporaries with the ancient ancestors of modern “civilized” Europeans, and, so the story goes, soon to be assimilated or driven to extinction by a socio-cultural process as natural as human evolution. This temporo-historical othering was not only directed at peoples in the colonies. The double synchronization of the time of the “civilized” and that of the “primitive” also internally divided British subjects along both classist and racialist lines. Thus, the “superstitious” poorer classes in rural England, the so-called “criminal” class in the urban centres, and the marginalized “Celtic” populations of Great Britain and Ireland were also relegated to the time of the “primitive.” Among these populations, the “survivals” of paganism, or at least the endurance of certain pagan habits of thought, were most observable and, according to some, most in need of secularizing reforms of feeling that would bring them into modern times.

I will show how Jefferies and Stevenson fashion authorial personas in relation to what I will call “pagan affectations” over and against these secular modes of feeling and being worldly. With “pagan affectations” I want to evoke the double valance of “affect.”

Jefferies and Stevenson participate in pagan revivalism in ways that appeal to readerly affects that can stimulate supposedly deeply buried feelings associated with pagan epistemologies such as ecstasy, feelings of a-chronicity or timelessness, and the eeriness of animistic agencies within and about the self.

Also, with “affectations,” I want to draw attention to the role of the authorial mediation of affects and identities in pagan revivalism. Jefferies and Stevenson, in other words, do not only deploy pagan-affiliated affects, but they also *affect* their own pagan authorial identities. Both blatantly identify as pagan. Jefferies states outright “I am a pagan,” and as I will show in chapter four, he does so with regard to affect and feeling (*The Story of My Heart* 21). Stevenson also declares himself to be one of the “kind old pagans” (*Silverado Squatters* 46). But their efforts to accrue around their authorial personas an aura of pagan mystique are more nuanced and interesting than these intentional statements of affiliation indicate. Their affectations of paganism advertise them as conduits for and revivers of pagan feelings and pagan affiliations that can be participated in and shared by readers. I see this as not unlike twentieth century pop-culture efforts of self-branding such as “punk,” “Goth,” and indeed “Neo-pagan.” Jefferies and Stevenson were popular writers appealing to middle class audiences across the Victorian political spectrum, and their essays were published in both Tory and liberal magazines. This is perhaps why they are hard to pin down politically. Jefferies grew into something of a lapsed conservative with liberal sensibilities and socialist sentiments, and Stevenson a lapsed socialist with conservative sensibilities and liberal sentiments. Both sought wide appeal and paganism was a mode of self-fashioning that became popular

among many, including to radical Tories like W.E. Henley, to liberals like Pater, and to socialists like Edward Carpenter, regardless of their politics

What makes for such a broad appeal in paganism, I believe, is that it can embody what Raymond Williams calls “structures of feeling” (*The Long Revolution* 69). While such “structures of feeling,” for Williams, are by definition obscured and irretrievable, these “structures” are recognizable in the declaration of its loss. “Structures of feeling” are observable, for instance, in Pastoral literature which expresses a longing for perpetually receding ways of life that are invoked to give voice to the despair and discontent of contemporary life under the changing economic conditions occurring during the transition from agrarian to industrial capitalism (*The Country and the City* 12). Like pastoralism, pagan revivalism reveals a “record of omissions: the nourishment or attempted nourishment of human needs unsatisfied,” which registers the attempt to cultivate “a richness not evident in ordinary contemporary experience” (*The Long Revolution* 92). With paganism, those “unsatisfied needs” are perceptible in the contrast between pagan ways of feeling earthly and secular ways of being worldly.

The desires which paganism indulges respond to the developing sense of the secular self as “buffered,” to use Charles Taylor’s phrase. By the “buffered self” Taylor refers to a sense of interiority that is “no longer open” to or “vulnerable to a world of spirits and forces which cross the boundary of the mind” (300). This secular sense of self encourages confidence in a modern “sense of self possession” (300) and a celebratory belief that moderns are liberated from “captivity in an enchanted world” (301). Pagan revivalism records the desire to re-inhabit the body as a porous and expansive self, one which can achieve what Jefferies calls “a wider horizon of feeling” (*The Story of My*

*Heart* 30). As Louis and Denisoff have noted, paganism suggests itself as a mode of feeling that is open to the vitality of regenerative human and other-than-human processes, an immersive experience that entwines an earthly, embodied self within the networks of ecologically relational becoming. Denisoff insightfully calls this a “dissipative” and “de-individuated” model of subjectivity, and I will extend this further to suggest that the dissipation of the self into more-than-human earthly ecologies also is an expansion of the self in time, a desire to displace the self from the unidirectional advance of secularization, to become out of synch with the time of secularity and open to other temporalities.

I will come back to Williams’ idea of the “structure of feeling” frequently when speaking of pagan revivalism. When using this term, I want to always have in mind the sense of irretrievability that runs counter to the very idea of “revival.” What Jefferies and Stevenson attempt is not a revival of an actual pagan “structure of feeling.” Rather, their affectations of paganism keep alive the feelings of discontent at the insufficiency of secular worldliness. I will thus read paganism as a mode of subjective mediation that can be analysed as a Williamsian “record” of secular “omissions,” of needs unsatisfied by bourgeois secularity.

In chapter one, I analyze what I quoted Ni above as calling “the prehistory and ongoing transformation” of the secular. Following Asad’s insight that secularism is a “discursive tradition,” I deploy a term coined by classicist Paul Hay, “saecular discourse,” in order to retain something of the etymological continuity I find throughout pre-Christian, Christian, and secular modern “discursive traditions” and as an umbrella term for two interrelated discursive processes. I use *saecular discourse* to rethink “secularization” and “secularity” as related terms that refer to different aspects of secular

and religious world-making. Following Hay, I submit that “secularization” is a mode of historiographical thought that conceives history as a more or less linear series of successive *saecula* or “ages.” This conception of historical unfolding fosters “secularity,” which, inspired by Mahmood, I define as a mode of feeling worldly, an affective orientation towards the present and the world that entails certain beliefs, sensibilities, and self-conceptions. In tandem with the developments of this *saecular discourse*, I also trace the ways in which paganism has, in Ni’s phrase, been “repudiated into being.” As I will show, Christians and secularists alike have had an almost compulsive obsession with paganism that has contributed much to its mystique as an alternative to their own orders.

In chapter two, I discuss the ways in which the *saecular discourse* undergoes adaptations by Victorian thinkers. I turn to John Lubbock and E.B. Tylor as examples of how Victorian adaptations of *saecular discourse* in anthropology and archaeology repudiated a paganism against which Victorian secularity articulates itself and within which paganism becomes a celebrated alternative. Then I examine Matthew Arnold’s and Walter Pater’s discussions of what they refer to as “the pagan sentiment,” and how they deploy paganism as a way of being worldly under the changing terms of the *saecular discourse*. Their ideas about “the pagan sentiment,” especially Pater’s, have a profound influence upon other revivalists, and I will come back to both in successive chapters.

Having laid out the framework and context for my analysis of paganism as a mode of counter-secular feeling, I will spend the rest of this project undertaking a series of illustrative case studies which attend to the ways in which pagan revivalists engage and contest the *saecular discourse* on three distinct topoi: gender, ecological relationality, and race. I have laid these chapters out in such a way as to demonstrate the mid-Victorian

shift from a more familiar classical form of paganism centered around the god Pan, to native British forms of prehistoric animism in Jefferies and Celtic paganism in Stevenson. Paganism itself did not necessarily develop strictly along these lines, as it is more like a cauldron in which all sorts of religions, folklores, rituals, and mythologies were brewed. However, I want to draw out the ways in which, after about 1860, British writers begin becoming more interested in the possibility of a uniquely home-grown variety of paganism.

In chapter three, I examine a male pagan revivalist interest in a form of pagan affectation I define as “Panoleptic masculinity:” the male aesthete’s longing for Pan’s possession. I take as my central example Stevenson’s essay “Pan’s Pipes,” which I read as in part an expression of discontentment with a dominant form of secular masculinity. Then I study how Stevenson’s Panoleptic masculinity prompts further contestations of the relation between pagan and secular gender constructions in Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894) and George Egerton’s “Pan” (1897).

Chapter four interrogates how Jefferies develops a unique form of authorial pagan affectation which responds to some of the insufficiencies of Victorian secularity. However, in works such as *Wood Magic* (1881), *The Story of My Heart* (1883), *After London; or Wild England* (1885), and *Amaryllis at the Fair* (1887), I argue, he also internalizes some of the assumptions of the *saecular discourse*. His mode of pagan revivalist subjective mediation reveals a tension between an animistic dissipative model and a mystically intonated desire for individuation. Here we see in Jefferies a struggle between the pagan revivalist desire for a porous, fluid, and expansive self and the secular “buffered” self.

From here, my project turns to consider Victorian notions of Celtic paganism. Chapters five, six, and seven all deal with Stevenson's treatment of Celticity as a pagan affectation and a racial category. Across these three chapters, I show how Stevenson considers Victorian anxieties about who is and is not "Celtic" and what that entails. I keep Stevenson in dialogue with Matthew Arnold, whose *On the Study of Celtic Literature* was an influential source of Victorian ideas about Celtic aesthetics, moral character, and temperament.

Chapter five introduces the subject and demonstrates some of the ways in which the development of race corresponds with certain features of the *saecular discourse*. Then I demonstrate Stevenson's querying of race, Celticity, and the insufficiencies of secularized racial identity in *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Chapter Six looks at how some of the characteristics of Arnoldian Celticity inform Stevenson's theories of the composition and consumption of romance literature and style. As they appear in essays such as "A Chapter on Dreams" (1888), "A Gossip on Romance" (1882), and "Pastoral" (1887), I will attend to two pagan affects: "ecstasy" and "primitivity," which find Stevenson thinking through and beyond Celticity to a deeper, transancestral pagan sentiment.

Chapter seven considers another side to the affectations of "Celticity" in Stevenson's "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men" (1887), I show how these two tales stage a conflict between secular and pagan modes of subjective mediation, by exploiting racialist fears and anxieties about "Celts." Here, Stevenson deploys an affect which I read as "the eerie" as Mark Fisher defines it. The eerie instigates a slow break down of the secular "buffered" self by antagonizing it with a creeping uncertainty about the agencies

at work within and without the racialized body. I will then offer a brief conclusion that sums up some of the suggestions I have made and reflects on some points of departure for future scholarship on the Victorian pagan revival.



## Chapter 1

### **Fallacies in Duration: The Saecular Discourse and Christian, Secular, and Pagan Ways of Being Worldly**

In this first chapter, I will detail the post-secular critical framework I draw on throughout this project. I will also use post-secularism to consider what Zhang Ni calls “the prehistory and ongoing transformation” of the discursive processes which determine the categories of “the secular” and the “religious” (5). Focusing on the place of the “pagan” as an integral third term in the religious/secular entanglement, I will explore how paganism was, as Ni puts it, “repudiated into being” cyclically as the terms of the “secular” were renegotiated before and into the Victorian era (4). However, what I want to focus on are the ways in which paganism is given its appeal as an alternative mode of subjectivity because of the dominant and official ways of being worldly. This “prehistory” of the “secular” and the “pagan” will serve to introduce the relevant pre-nineteenth century context, historical continuities, and deviations from which Victorian secularity and pagan revivalism emerge.

Overall, in this project I will argue that mid and late Victorian writers begin to affiliate with a novel sense of British paganism that develops in the wake of shifts in the cultural imaginary following the excavation of caves such as that in Brixham, Devonshire in 1858-59. There, found amidst the bones of ancient beasts were the flint tools unmistakably crafted by human hands. The finds at such sites confirmed for most paleontologists and geologists the recently postulated uniformitarian deep-time scale which pushed the origins of the human species to times unimaginably remote from the Victorian present, in which the British Empire defined itself as the pinnacle of

civilization, with complex technologies such as telegraphs and dizzyingly fast railcars that rhetorically affirmed its self-aggrandization.

Speculation as to what those early peoples believed and how they perceived and felt the world soon became as interesting to archaeologists and anthropologists as the implements of prehistoric material culture. To supplement the irretrievable aesthetic and spiritual domains of prehistory, the Victorians looked to the Indigenous peoples who had long been familiar as both colonial and anthropological subjects. Older terms such as “primitive,” “savage,” “barbarian,” and “pagan” were given new life and character by the adoption of newer terms such as “fetishism” and “animism.” These words were used to describe and bring to life in the imagination of experts and the interested public something of the quality and character of the religious beliefs and experiences of prehistoric people.

Thus, after 1860 “paganism” gets a renewed character that pushes it back far earlier than the familiar ancient Greeks, Romans, or Egyptians, who were frequently the models for earlier poets and, more recently, Romantics such as Shelley and Keats, and Victorians like Algernon Swinburne. This new sense of paganism develops alongside and is directly influenced by archaeology and anthropology, which had re-popularized an interest in the prehistoric occupants of Britain such as the Celts, Vikings, Danes, and Saxons, but now projected back even further into the murky “ages of stone.” The traces of a Stone Age spirituality suggested to Victorian archaeologists a mode of perception in which the human is barely distinguishable from the animal, a tribal world replete with the tools and weapons of “savages” and the stone monuments, temples, and burial chambers

piqued the public's curiosity about that "prehistoric" human world still in some sense accessible in worlds buried beneath the surface of modern Britain.

The word "prehistory," used for the first time in English by Scottish archaeologist Daniel Wilson in around 1850, conjured up a world of cave dwelling, flint knapping, scantily clad "savages" whose religion—if they had one—was a pre-polytheistic woodland supernaturalism, intensely superstitious and in supplication to entities that represent the basic elements of nature. Though the leading theorists presented this "primitive" condition as at worst dismal and depraved or at best ignorantly enchanted, it was nonetheless seductively suggestive for many creative writers who wanted to capture something of the terror and titillation of this prehistoric pagan sense of the world. From archaeology and anthropology, then, the pagan revivalist imagination begins to pose "animism" and "primitivity" as a more earthy aesthetic challenge to a prominently secular vision of Victorian modernity, which boasts itself as having achieved near-mastery of the Earth and those very elements the prehistoric pagans feared and revered. As I suggested in my introduction, pagan revivalism forms something of a Williamsian "structure of feeling," but one which desires paganism as a response to the sensual, affective, and aesthetic insufficiencies of Victorian secularity as a mode of subjectivity. Pagan revivalism thus emerges in contradistinction to what I will define as a specific strain of Victorian secularity. I will argue that this secularity captures the new way of being worldly developing in conjunction with the shifts in and co-ordination of the disciplines of natural and human history, specifically geology, archaeology, and anthropology.

This first chapter will consist of two parts. In the first, I will situate my own approach in relation to recent developments in critiques of modern secularism that have typically been brought under the heading of the “post-secular.” I will then give a very brief overview of some of the relevant ways post-secularism has been deployed by Victorianists in order to align my study of paganism as a response to secularity with the good work already produced on this topic. In the second part, I will argue that in order to appreciate the shift in Victorian conceptions of “the secular,” we need to revise our account of what “secularization” is and how it works. In this regard, I hypothesize that secularization is less of an actual process that has occurred in history the way it has typically been imagined, and more of a mode of conceptualizing how history itself unfolds, that is, as a series of successive “ages” which transition into each other in succession. The main thrust of post-secular critique emphasizes the entangled nature of religion and secularism, and I want to approach this as a deeply rooted feature of the Western historical imaginary by suggesting that notions of the “Earth” and the “World,” whether in an explicitly religious context or not, have always been marked by the Christian adaptation of Roman historiography and its “*saecular discourse*,” a term which I borrow from classicist Paul Hay in order to rethink the category of the “secular.” I attempt this inclusive (but not exhaustive) post-secular retelling of the prehistory of secularization in order to contextualize the pagan revivalist response to Victorian secularity. Integral to my argument is the role that paganism has played in this historiographical discourse. As I will show, from Christian formulations of the secular to more secular versions of Victorian thought, paganism has compulsively been part of each because Christians and secularists alike have pathologically kept paganism alive in their

presentation of it as a false secularity—a bad way of being worldly—in order to articulate and authorize their own visions of secular and religious history. I will bring the Victorian *saecular discourse* into focus by this chapter’s end, concentrating on how it informs Victorian geology, especially in the work of Charles Lyell, and how it repudiates paganism into being under a new set of terms.

### ***Post-Secularism, Victorian Secularity, and Pagan Revivalism***

In this section, I frame my discussion of Victorian pagan revivalism within recent reconsiderations of the relation between “secular” and “religious” under what has been called a “post-secular” critique of modern secularism. While some iterations of this theory take “post” to mean beyond or as having been surpassed, I follow those who position secularism as “post” because familiar theories of secularization have proven unreliable for the study of religious and non-religious beliefs, practices, and identities throughout Western history and into our contemporary moment. This is the case not simply because religion is still a major political, social, economic, and cultural force in the West and around the globe, but also because the entire project of defining “religions” and delineating their field of influence from something called the “secular” has been troubled by powerful critiques from Western and non-Western theorists.

The Victorian and modernist story of the gradual secularization of society and the corresponding retreat of religion has been the subject of critique since the mid-twentieth century, and in the last two decades the perception of this narrative’s power as on the wane has met with wide acceptance in scholarly studies of the secular. This is not to say that *secularism* has declined, nor is it to say that something called “the secular” does not

exist. It is the story once told about the inevitability of secularization that is frequently being rejected.

As Monique Scheer, Brigitte Schepelern Johansen, and Nadia Fadil argue, a post-secular critique proceeds under the assumption that “[s]ecularization is no longer viewed as a gradual disenchantment of society, a quasinatural evolution in which religious beliefs and practices lose their validity and relevance.” Rather, a post-secular approach reveals the ways in which secularism operates as “a set of forceful distinctions, connections and logics,” which “re-organizes and re-evaluates a broader set of categories such as knowledge, belief, rationality, irrationality, factuality, history and transcendence” (5). Therefore, post-secularism is a framework from within which to rethink secularism as the formation of false dichotomies which structure thought and feeling in particular ways towards particular ends. Insights from post-secularism will therefore be useful in approaching Victorian pagan revivalism because it is informed by and responds to mid-to-late nineteenth century disciplines and debates that sought to reorganize and reevaluate knowledge, belief, rationality, and history in the sense Scheer et al. describe.

However, while post-secularism may retrospectively conclude that secularization as a project of modernity was not successful or perhaps never even really took place to the degree once assumed, Victorian thinkers, especially disciples of Comtean positivism and Huxleyan naturalism, often did imagine themselves as participating in what we would call “secularization,” even though they frequently regarded their projects as part of a reformist paradigm.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in what follows, though I will take a post-secular approach to track the dual emergence of a certain mode of Victorian secularity and the revival of

<sup>4</sup> See Ruth Barton *The X Club: Power and Authority in Victorian Science* (370-75).

paganism which directly contrasts itself to that secularity, I will also present Victorian thinkers who conceived of themselves as secularizing in the sense rejected by post-secularists. In this section, I will initiate my study by laying out the relevant theories and scholarship on Victorian secularity which inform my work and upon which I will build. I want to gather a sense of the way secularity has been reconceived under post-secularism, survey what Victorianists have determined about Victorian secularity in light of the “post-secular,” and suggest how these developments will contribute to my analysis of pagan revivalism.

Of the many theorists of the secular, philosopher Charles Taylor and anthropologist Talal Asad have provided perhaps the most widely cited, debated, and deployed theories of the secular, secularism, and secularity (though both avoid the use of “post” to describe their approaches). Victorianists tend to rely on one or the other or both, and therefore it is useful to present some of their basic conclusions, as I will be situating my own understanding of Victorian secularity in relation to scholars who have drawn on these two theorists. Taylor argues that secularity is neither simply the separation of Church and State and the relegation of religion to the private sphere, nor is it the result of what he characterizes as a “subtraction story”—his phrase for the traditional secularization narrative which heralded the waning power of religion and its influence over the greater number of peoples’ lives in the “modern” world (22). This second sense of “secularity” (as subtraction of religion) is in part the target of Taylor’s critique. The definition of secularity Taylor offers as more accurately capturing the modern secular condition is defined by a paradigm shift that he claims has occurred over the last half millennia which finds belief in God to be no longer “axiomatic” (3). “Secularity” in this

sense describes what it means to live “in a secular age” (3), wherein the entire context of our understanding is now defined by a proliferation of options available along a continuum between belief and unbelief in God. Under this sense of secularity, doubt, we are told, has become the more plausible option for most and a “presumption of unbelief” has “achieved hegemony” in “academic and intellectual life” in the Anglo-American West (13). This overarching condition of secularity is the horizon upon which the modern self searches for, creates, or adopts meaning, whether spiritual or otherwise. Taylor performs a phenomenological enquiry into modern secularity that finds him ultimately defending secular pluralism because it not only fosters religious commitments, practice, and experience, but ironically underscores “belief” as existentially more rewarding than the forms of unbelief that have proliferated under secularism.<sup>5</sup>

Asad performs a Foucauldian discourse analysis of secularism that is less interested in the horizon upon which a supposed majority of modern Europeans form their beliefs and is more concerned with the ways secularism operates as a mode of power, an operational principle inherent to the modern nation-state that mediates its subjects’ identities and experiences. In *Formations of the Secular*, Asad shares with Taylor an attention to how secularism mediates the ways in “which individuals simultaneously imagine their national community” and works to “construct the sensibilities that underpin” both the imagination and the community that is imagined (*Formations* 5). Such states “construct categories of the secular and the religious” which “mediate people's identities, help shape their sensibilities, and guarantee their

<sup>5</sup> See Nash in *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion* (95).



experiences” (*Formations* 14). But whereas Taylor is interested in the existential import of secularism throughout modern history and contemporary life, Asad is interested more in the ideological and political work that it does to shore up a modern neoliberal regime of power and control, especially as it operates upon religious minorities. Moreover, “the secular” neither emerges from religion, nor appears as a dramatic break from religion; Asad explains that the secular is neither a continuous development of a tradition that builds upon Christian values (as some have argued) nor is it the opposite of religion (25). Rather, though not a unified conceptual category nor historically “stable” in its identity, the secular “brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life,” and “it works through a series of particular oppositions” (25), such as modern/premodern, secular/religious, enchanted/disenchanted, and so forth. In other words, secularism, for Asad, is a “grammar,” a foundational structuring principle that operates by creating dichotomous categories which shape the lives of the modern nation-states’ subjects by coordinating their values, beliefs, experiences, and sensibilities.

The Victorian period occupies a prominent place in both Taylor’s and Asad’s analysis just as it does in traditional secularization theories that evoke the nineteenth century as a period of accelerated and intensifying disenchantment and secularization. However, it would be misrepresentative to cast Victorian secularity as identical with the fully modern form Asad describes. Building on the insights of Taylor and Asad, Victorianists who study nineteenth century secularism and religion frequently take a revisionist approach to understanding the relationship between secularism and religion in their historical period. What is sometimes referred to as the “religious turn” anticipates post-secularism in that it had begun to challenge previously entrenched interpretations of

Victorian literature as evidence for the recession of religion, the waning of faith and belief, and a record for the reliability of the traditional secularization thesis.<sup>6</sup> For instance, in 2006 Mark Knight and Emma Mason called for scholars to “remain alert to the mutability and plurality of belief as we (re)construct our own narratives of nineteenth-century secularization and religion,” reminding us, furthermore that it is not usually very useful or accurate “to characterize people’s beliefs as either religious or secular,” for just as often what we take to be essential to each of these categories can be seen to overlap and mutually implicate each other (167). This “religious turn” has led to some fundamental revisions not only in the ways we read the Victorians, but in the ways that we can become attentive to how we take for granted the fixity of our basic categories such as “the secular” and “religion.” For instance, in their introduction to *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion* (2019), Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner adopt a post-secular framework for engaging nineteenth century religion, in order to pay attention to the ways in which “[t]he modern category of ‘religion’ now appears a particularly Western construction, one generated and reinvented in mutually constitutive dialogue with ‘the secular’ forms of secularism” (4). Part of the work of Victorian post-secularism, then, is to be reflexively aware of the ways in which we reaffirm problematic definitions of religion, which are themselves part of imperial and colonial processes of categorizing various practices and behaviours (processes derived from eighteenth and nineteenth

<sup>6</sup> Representative of the once-customary confidence in the traditional secularization thesis is George Levine, who in 2008 could still turn the endurance of Victorian religiosity into a testament of secularization: “The great resurgence of religious activity among the Victorians suggests something of how enormously difficult it was for the Victorians to come to terms with that naturalistically described world that science was so successfully describing and that increasingly secularizing world that the literature was intimating” (10). Levine assumes an alliance between science and literature (especially realism) as secularizing forces confidently overwhelming religion as faithful hangers-on plug up their ears and lay their hands over their eyes, refusing to “come to terms” with inevitable secularization.

century scholarship that is informed by Protestantism). These definitions cast religion as “essentially a matter of private belief and inward experience” (7), and, by implication, give the false impression that it is more ideologically suspect than a presumably neutral secularity.

The “post-secular turn,” however, offers a further means of paying attention not only to the persistence of religion and the overlaps between religion and secularity, but the nuances of Victorian thought which did not assume neat divisions between the religious and the secular in the first place. For instance, Charles LaPorte not only adopts post-secularism to challenge Victorianists’ long-standing tendency to assume “secularization as our master narrative” (280), but he also attends to the ways this narrative was critiqued from within Victorian prose itself, demonstrating how Victorian intellectuals of both religious and secular stripes “critiqued triumphalist history” while also “producing it” (281). LaPorte urges Victorianists to take account of not only the persistence of religion, but also to “make more visible this kind of internal critique” (286). By the end of next chapter, I will suggest that Walter Pater’s turn to paganism participates in the sort of construction and critique of “triumphalist history” LaPorte describes.

Following from observations such as LaPorte’s, Victorianists have re-examined the nature of secularity as a nineteenth century mode of experience. Michael Rectenwald studies the reverberations of the Victorian Secularist movement founded by George Holyoake and locates our own post-secular moment as having a precedent in the Free Thinker’s Secularism. Rectenwald insists that “with the term ‘secular’, Holyoake did not signify the absence or negation of religion, but rather *indicated a substantive category in*

*its own right*" (72, italics added). Beyond the Secularism of Holyoake, Victorian secularity can be thought of as an "optative condition" that is, not as something inevitable and guaranteed, but a socio-cultural condition to be hoped for and which self-avowed "Secularists" like Holyoake, and I will argue self-described "reformists" like Huxley and E.B. Tylor saw themselves as working towards (Rectenwald 8). As I have suggested above, post-secularism, especially in the Asadian vein, tends to think of secularity as structured by a dichotomous logic that evacuates any substantive content in order to posit oppositional terms. Yet as Asad claims, secularism also forms and propagates discernable sensibilities, beliefs, and experiences that exemplify a sensorium that shapes perception, thought, and experience (*Formations* 5). So, although there is nothing particularly determined or inevitable about the shapes secularity can take, there are discernable affective and cognitive features of secularity that can be observed and analyzed. While Holyoake and his Secularism do not figure in my analysis of Victorian secularity, I suggest, from LaPorte and Rectenwald, Victorian pagan revivalism ought to be understood in relation to the "substantive category" of secularity that is gaining its modern character and has come down to us as secularism, despite the distance many Victorian secularizers put between themselves and Holyoake and his fellow Secularists. Following LaPorte's lead, I will position paganism as a kind of "internal critique" of certain aspects of Victorian secularity, in so far as it is derived in part from liberal Anglicans like John Lubbock and liberal agnostics like E.B. Tylor who pursue, in different ways, a secularizing agenda.

To do this, I will build on two further important studies of Victorian secularity which also work under a post-secular framework to characterize secularity as, to borrow

Rectenwald's phrase, a "substantive category:" Sara Lyons' *Algernon Swinburne and Walter Pater: Victorian Aestheticism, Doubt and Secularisation* (2015), which I mentioned in my introduction, and Sebastian Lecourt's *Cultivating Belief: Victorian Anthropology, Liberal Aesthetics, and the Secular Imagination* (2018). Lecourt rightly stresses that there is no "monolithic Victorian secularity" but "competing secularities" (28). The two he discusses are classical Protestant liberal secularity, which "valorizes personal privacy, freedom of conscience, and negative liberty" and "aesthetic secularity" (with which he is primarily concerned) that "emphasizes hybridity, heterogeneity, and the ability to balance multiple values" (28). Lecourt demonstrates that from the 1860s onwards, a number of prominent liberal writers began theorizing religion as "racially embodied," one of the "unconscious inheritances of the past." An important implication of this theory was that "religious identities . . . preceded any personal belief" (2). By "relocating religion within the sphere of ethnicity," these authors envisioned an "alternative to the austerity and abstraction of classic Protestant liberals" who held that the essence of religion resides in private conviction and willful belief (16). Lecourt's aesthetic liberal secularists (among whom he classes Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, and E. B. Tylor) privileged "non-voluntaristic" embodied practices of religion, such as ritual, which do not exclusively value conviction as superior in terms of its religiosity (28). Liberal aesthetic secularity, according to Lecourt, has at its core a desire to harmonize involuntary inheritances (which include the racial and the cultural). In this liberal aestheticism, the self can "keep its contradictory pasts in play" and thereby "develop a complex individuality" (17). This liberal aestheticism also requires a neutral self capable of disinterested reasoning that can compare, balance, and subordinate the various ethnic,

religious, and cultural inheritances it moderates. I will adopt Lecourt's model of liberal aesthetic secularity in so far as I will argue that the strain of Victorian secularity to which pagan revivalism develops itself in contrast borrows from and challenges this liberal model of secularity. As a substantive category, aesthetic liberal secularity (which I will henceforth refer to simply as "secularity" for brevity's sake, and since I believe that it was the dominant form and came to have the most influence in the history of secularism, though I do take Lecourt's point and also do not think there is only one form) foregrounds racial and hereditary determinism that exhibits a model of the self or psyche which pre-supposes an organic communion with the deep history of a particular people. Despite its contention with earlier models of secularity and its revision of forms of religion, the aesthetic liberal variant Lecourt studies can nonetheless function via the same binary logics described by Asad and Scheer et al. above. Whereas secularity can be seen to privilege a model of subjectivity that gains command over the racialized inheritances of which it is comprised, and valorizes the cultivation of rationality and its ability to distinguish subjective from objective reality (making disenchantment a positive virtue), pagan revivalism will present these racial and/or cultural inheritances as suppressed modes of subjectivity, which, if cultivated can permit access to feelings of immanent earthly belonging, evocative of what Tylor will call "animism." Animism is thus recuperated by pagan revivalists who see it as satisfying a yearning for sensual, affective, and aesthetic experiences not permitted by secularity.

Sara Lyons' study of the relationship between Victorian secularity and Aestheticism will therefore also prove useful to my project. She demonstrates the interdependent relationship between pagan revivalism and secularity, arguing that these

two movements complement and qualify each other. Paganism, she argues, is granted new life by aesthetes who revived earlier Romantic engagements with Greco-Roman myth and iconography in order to secularize aesthetically valuable content from religion while still remaining irreligious. Aestheticism, in her account, is not entirely separable from religion, but rather it adapts what is “compelling or beautiful” in religion for its own purposes and seeks to “liberate its anthropological essence” (21-22). In this, she argues, Victorian aestheticism anticipates “a kind of secular self-consciousness,” an ironic self-awareness of the “derivative status of the secular” (21). Lyons calls this “pagan secularism” and shows how it has its origins in German Romanticism, especially in Schiller, for whom paganism functioned as a way to re-enchant a modern estrangement from nature. In this Romantic paganism, “the classical gods are ciphers for a subversive, secularizing message” (29). Lyons finds the “pagan secularism” of Victorian Aestheticism reviving this earlier Romantic trend and employing a deliberate, self-reflexive reliance on disenchantment for its own re-enchantment. For Lyons, then, “pagan secularism” is a mode of feeling that gathers something essentially earthly and human from religious phenomena via the bypassing of religiosity and the grounding of aesthetics in a pretense of pre-religious enchantment. In her emphasis on the interdependence between secular aestheticism, anthropology, and religion, Lyons complements the post-secular reevaluation of the traditional secularization thesis, yet she maintains a secular/religious binary by subsuming both Aestheticism’s anthropological appropriation of religiosity and paganism into secularism.

Conversely, I will argue that, although Victorian pagan revivalism as I explore it in Jefferies and Stevenson does turn to anthropology for aspects of its aesthetics, its

primary target of criticism and its motivating contrastive impulse is not against religion as such (although both are cold or indifferent towards Victorian Christianity), but rather against some of the elements of secularity that close off crucial kinds of aesthetic experience, such as its denial of cyclical temporality, animistic engagement with nature, and affects such as ecstasy, enchantment, and eeriness. Whereas in chapters two and three, I will agree that there is something performative and affected about pagan revivalists' affiliation with ancient epistemologies, Jefferies and Stevenson are both interested in what enchantment would look like not simply as an ironic pretense tempered by disenchantment, but as a mode of subjective mediation which can compel feelings and aesthetic experiences that do not fit the terms of a secular/religious binary logic. In this regard, Lyons' observations about the relationship between Victorian aesthetics, anthropology, and secularity, with the attendant evocation of the enchantment/disenchantment dichotomy will be part of the background against which I will foreground the pagan revivalists' conflict with secularity.

To this end, I am interested in the place of pagan revivalism within what Jason A. Josephson-Storm considers as "the myth of disenchantment." His insights are fundamental to my understanding of the history of secularization I will present and the pagan revivalism in Victorian literature which I will argue is a reaction to nineteenth century developments in secularization. Modern secularist claims of disenchantment, Josephson-Storm demonstrates, functioned to establish "the paradigm of modernity" as a standard assumption of the human sciences which secularized the previous religious impetus to vanquish "superstition" in all its forms (16). Yet, as Josephson-Storm points out, this supposedly secularizing mission revived "the very thing it characterizes as



expiring, stimulating magical revivals, paranormal research, and new attempts to spiritualize the sciences” (16) and thus, he concludes, “disenchantment already included re-enchantment” (93). This took place due to two important features of the project of secularization-as-disenchantment. In the first, the rhetorical use of supposedly obsolete or erroneous epistemologies such as paganism gains appeal because of the way both science and religion are cast in binary opposition to each other through the language of “superstition,” and thereby maintain popular and alternative cultural appeal to what these central paradigms profess to diminish. As Josephson-Storm shows, in the attempts at “[p]olicing” such epistemologies, they in turn “became part of the way that the categories of ‘religion’ and ‘science’ were formed in differentiation” (15). Moreover, “the rejection of ‘superstition’ was necessarily incomplete, and hence it was always possible to partially transform it into a site of resistance” (15). Josephson-Storm demonstrates how the attempt to quell or suppress superstition inadvertently revived it and even infused it with new relevance and value in opposition to both scientism and religion (15). Linking this back to Asad’s insights into the oppositional categories of modern secularism, we can see how by recasting these old dichotomies in light of modernity, secularity itself pathologically revives paganism.

The second way modern projects of secularization revive discredited epistemologies is through secular academic disciplines, especially religious studies, which Josephson-Storm argues have inadvertently occasioned the creation of new forms of religious phenomena, for “the academic study of religion” has frequently reflexively influenced the very thing it takes up as its object of analysis (12). I will argue that Victorian archaeology and anthropology do something very similar for “animism.”

From my overview of post-secularism and the Victorian scholarship which deploys it, I will continue with the following assumptions in mind. Following Asad, I proceed by developing a definition of secularity that draws attention to the ways it informs “modern” sensibilities by posing oppositional binaries in relation to which it mediates modern experience (secular/religious, disenchantment/ enchantment, pre-modern/modern, superstitious/scientific, and primitive/civilized). However, following Rectenwald, I see Victorian secularity as a “substantive category,” even if this is not a stable category and even if the content or “substance” of that category is protean. I will adopt the insights of Lyons and Lecourt into the relationship between secularity, aesthetics, and anthropology, bringing an emphasis to the ways in which anthropology, along with geology and archaeology, determine the substantial features of secularity and thus also make decisive contributions to emergent Victorian secular sensibilities. With this end in mind, the following section will attempt a hermeneutics of “secularization” and its derivatives in the mid-to-late nineteenth century British context, which has both a historiographical and an affective register. In the next section, I will trace the modern idea of “secularization” back to roots in ancient Roman historiography, noting the ways this mode of historical thinking is adopted and adapted by Christianity, which delineates the worldly as “secular,” a distinct domain of embodied existence upon the Earth. Then I will show how Christian secularity develops into a form that limits itself to the domain of the earthly, and which I argue is the grounds for Victorian secularity. This is to say, I am interested in showing how the theorizing, writing, and exhibition of history, in which is included the vast sweep of Earth-time in geology and the expanded sense of what Lyell called “The Antiquity of Man,” comes to inform a special Victorian sense of secularity—

a worldliness, a feeling of hereness and nowness, that is “secularized” in a new sense, having been informed by shifts in the development of the Western historiographical imaginary.

***The “Saecular Discourse:” Secularization and the Grounding of Victorian Secularity***

As textualized memory, secular history has of course become integral to modern life in the nation-state. But although it is subject, like all remembered time, to continuous re-formation, reinvestment, and reinvocation, secular history's linear temporality has become the privileged measure of all time.

-Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, p. 43.

How did this happen? How did linear temporality come to acquire this privileged status as structural to history in Euro-Western modernity and in what ways has this “textualized memory” been reformed, re-invoked, and reinvested? I will argue that in part secular temporality can be understood as the secularization of the Western historiographical imaginary. With this last phrase, I am adopting Charles Taylor’s definition of “imaginary” as the complex horizon of beliefs, assumptions, sentiments, and practices that are for the most part unreflectively at play as history is being written as “textualized memory” in Asad’s terms. This is to say that the writing of history has long been a secularizing process, despite never achieving secularization in the familiar sense of that word. Adopting Asad’s insights about *secularism* as a grammar, I want to rethink *secularization* as a mode of historiography, as an *ization* (the process of making) of history as *secular*.

From its etymological roots through its various uses across languages and discourses, “secular” is a word and an idea that has to do with *time*, *history*, and the *world*. “Secularization,” as I will examine it, is a mode of conceptualizing the relationship between time and history as determined by the assignment of “ages,” or “epochs,” or “eras,” a means of determining the “age” or “ages” of various temporally situated historical movements, figures, or qualities, such as the reign of a queen (“Victorian” literature), of sweeps of time defined by biological or geological forms (the Mesozoic period, the Anthropocene), vast sweeps of human history (the Middle Ages, Taylor’s “Secular Age”), of times without “history” (Prehistoric Times, The Stone Age), and so on. I want to focus on how secularization as a historiographical imaginary has frequently been deployed to contrast hegemonic “textualized memory,” whether it is in the Christian religious context or an allegedly neutral social-scientific context, with forms of ulterior historical and temporal memory derisively referred to as “pagan,” or related terms used in similar ways (such as “heathen,” “savage,” “barbarian,” and so forth). Something of this tension between secularity and paganism is embedded in the history of the word “pagan” as much as in the word “secular,” in so far as both words temporally orient that which they are used to signify. Despite etymological inaccuracies, “pagan” has been understood as and used to refer to “backwards” peoples, peoples whose religious beliefs and ways of relating to history, the present, and the world in general are anachronistic, fallacious, and sinful (Hutton 4). Furthermore, as Robert Young points out, frequently in its nineteenth century usage, “pagan” was synonymous with “ethnic,” and thus a pagan was as often an other from another place as from another time (X).

The etymological and ideological history of the term “secular” is instructive for our understanding of the nineteenth century historiographical tendency in geology, archaeology, and anthropology to substantiate cultural-evolutionist narratives of inevitable secularization and modernization. “Secular,” and its derivatives, as others have noted, is etymologically descended from “saeculum,” a word that eventually came to distinguish worldly, historical time from the eternality of the divine, but it originally merely referred to an “age” or the span of a generation.<sup>7</sup> Classicist Paul Hay demonstrates how Roman poets and historians deployed *saecula/saeculum* as part of a convention that formed a “saecular discourse,” which Hay defines as the “narrativization of history through qualitative periodization” (218).<sup>8</sup> As Hay shows, Roman *saecular discourse* developed into a historiographical strategy which amalgamated “a certain duration of years by flattening out all the distinctions between them and exaggerating differences from other periods” (Hay 216). This rhetorical strategy allowed Roman historiographers to tell “tightly focused narratives” from a “single angle” which assigns “qualitative characteristics to an entire age” (225). *Saecular discourse*, then, in this early context, was a way of marking time as historically qualitative, a means of assigning durations of time, the boundaries within which it gains a particular historicity characterized by certain qualities, which also differentiate these periods from others. Hay lists a variety of different ways *saecular discourse* was produced and employed, from the mythic and

<sup>7</sup> See Rectenwald (4), Taylor (53-55), and Morrow (27); see also “secular” in the Oxford Dictionary of Atheism.

<sup>8</sup> Classicists, Hay tells us, usually “focus on the ancient Romans’ own efforts of periodization, particularly when the term *saeculum* is used” highlighting two ways the word is deployed (216). The first use of “saecular discourse” focuses on how periodization is an instrument of imperial propaganda, as in the “Age of Augustus” or the “Sullan Age.” The second, often overlapping use, is mythological, as in the “Golden Age” (217-218).

cosmic cycles of world history to the reigns of emperors, and narratives of moral and cultural progress and decay. Already, then, in its usage in Roman antiquity, the *saecular discourse* operates in a similar way as to what Asad suggests is a form of “textual memory” that is re-constructed and re-invested to serve rhetorical ends, and which operates via a binary logic that mediates experience and identities by defining historical epochs qualitatively in relation to each other. The difference is that Roman *saecular discourse* was not exclusively linear in its understanding of temporality. Linear temporality was not a necessary condition for the unfolding of the “ages,” and there was no inevitable direction to the course of history. This section will posit that the Victorian historiographical imaginary, with the aid of geology, archaeology, and anthropology internalizes a *saecular discourse* in the sense Hay elaborates.<sup>9</sup> Going forward, I want to borrow *saecular discourse* as an umbrella term for two related processes: secularization as historiographical periodization and the felt sense of belonging to and within a saecula or “age,” which I will refer to as *secularity* or *secular worldliness*.

Christianity adopts crucial features of this earlier *saecular discourse*. In Christian theology, the “secular” domain of experience refers to earthly existence in profane time, but, unlike the Roman historiographic sense, a Christian sense of the “secular” requires a continuous flow of unidirectional time necessary to the secular unfolding of the Biblical narrative upon Earth. Secular or “ordinary” time is offset by the ritual participation in the liturgical calendar with reference to which Christians can share in sacred, timeless times and thereby participate in the eternal even as they live in the *saeculum* (Taylor 55).

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, such reductive streamlining is exactly what John Lubbock, who I will discuss below, was accused of by critics of his prehistoric periodizations. See O’Connor (41) and Rowley-Conwy (264).

However, though these categories are distinct, they nonetheless necessarily overlap. As Jeffrey Morrow notes, prior to the sixteenth century, “(t)he secular simply denoted the world and time, both of which God created,” and furthermore, “although sacred and secular referred to distinct realities, they were not completely separate” (27). Nonetheless, early Christian theologians, similar to Roman historiographers and poets, invested worldly temporality with historicity, though the Christian conception marked all time as a feature of an ontologically divided creation which exists and endures in time, but is contrasted with a higher mode of being in eternity. A decisive shift in the moral and spiritual value of secular experience and history did occur with the Protestant Reformation, and many theorists of the secular, following insights from Max Weber, mark this as the turning point in the history of modern secularization. In this development in the history of Western secularity, we can note the beginnings of what Lecourt has described as Protestant secularity.

With the Reformation, the secular domain became open to possibilities of both individual spiritual fulfilment and grander theological significance. Early Church reformers’ main critiques of Roman Catholic institutional practice demonstrate this shift in priorities. The requirement that Christians live with true conviction and felt faith whatever their relationship to the *saeculum*—the demand that deeds alone will not save the soul—as well as the emphasis on scriptural authority over clerical authority, and the advocacy of a direct communion with God and Christ that does not rely on the intervention of elite clerical authorities all demonstrate this shift in the valuation of secularity and how the faithful relate to it. Historian of early modern Britain Ethan H. Shagan argues that the English Reformation in particular “placed Christianity resolutely

and unapologetically in the world” (77). It is thus possible to locate historically a kind of Christian secularity, which appears as a vital aspect of Christianity’s own cosmic and social imaginaries. However, Protestant distrust of clerical power had the effect of reconceiving the relationship between the secular and the religious, renegotiating how religion engages the world. This reinvestment of religion in the *saeculum* had two major consequences, according to Shagan. Protestant Christian secularity entailed a “radical flattening of the distinction between spiritual and temporal” experience, which not only de-emphasized the division between worldly and religious existence but also, in turn, encouraged the sanctification of “professional life” (Shagan 80). Under English Protestantism, then, “secularity is unavoidable” and “the job of religion” is to “fill up and sanctify the saeculum rather than to flee from it” (Shagan 81). Therefore, it seems that just as modern secularism is historically reliant upon religion for its own self-articulation, so too is Christianity (despite some denominational differences) also dependant on “the presence of secularity as a predicament in which it is embedded” (87). Shagan presents this episode in Christian history as an example of the way Christianity has adopted different strategies for “navigating” the secular, strategies for negotiating and maintaining a balance of both spiritual and political power and authority. In this, Shagan alerts us to how theories of secularization overlook the ways in which Christianity, in the Anglophone world at least, has tactically “navigat[ed] . . . the *saeculum*” by periodically retreating from and then re-submerging in what it has always defined as “secular,” that is, its own worldly context, and that this is a definitive feature of Christianity itself (75).

However, Christian secularization of history and the Protestant sanctified secularity also retains traces of pre-Christian sources. Christianity attempts to mediate the



experience and understanding of temporality via theology, cosmology, and historiography against pagan cosmologies, temporalities, and notions of worldliness. In the history of Christian *saecular discourse*, paganism has not only been a bad way of being religious (i.e., “idolatry” or “worship of false gods”), but it has also been a bad way of being secular or worldly. In reconsidering the relationship between secularization and Christian thought, we get a glimpse at how modern Euro-Western historiography is underwritten by a tension between its pagan and Christian antecedents in ways that return even as “secularization” (in the conventional sense) purports to have dramatically broken with earlier forms of historical consciousness, especially ones which relied on mythic formulations. As Martin Rudwick demonstrates, the seventeenth century witnessed the flourishing of a scholarly discipline of “chronology,” which attempts to chronicle the history of “Creation” (specifically the Earth and Nature) in line with the biblical narrative and its vision of the relationship between God and humanity. These efforts were also motivated in response to the resurfacing of ancient non-Christian cosmogonies, histories, and temporalities, such as those of familiar ancient Mediterranean cultures, but also Chinese and Egyptian histories, as well as those found in the accounts of explorers’ and colonists’ representations of the material and intellectual cultures of Indigenous peoples of the “New World.”<sup>10</sup>

Chronology is exemplified by such figures as Bishop James Ussher and his famous “young Earth” timeline, published in *Annals of the World* (1650) (Rudwick 11). In this practice, we see a similarity to the *saecular discourse* of the Roman

<sup>10</sup> See also Julian Thomas’, *Modernity and Archaeology* (51) and David Wengrow and David Werner’s *The Dawn of Everything* (31).

historiographers, but written under a much more unified, centralized, and controlled authority. Christian chronological science is a process of secularization in the sense I am tracking, and it was often deployed rhetorically to shore up Christian secularity against ancient and contemporary pagan temporalities and histories. The chronologists' precise chronologies gave a human shape to Earth history by tracing its development across "a meaningful sequence of periods" (Rudwick 17). As Rudwick also shows, however, this Christian cosmological sense of temporality and historicity of the Earth and nature ran directly opposite to well-known and much-opposed "pagan" theories of "eternalism." "Eternalism" assumes "time—or rather, the history that unfolds in time—is . . . in some sense cyclic, not arrow-like or uniquely and irreversibly directional" (Rudwick 28). This pagan "eternalism" is supposedly patterned upon seasonal cycles which structure and determine the lives and livelihoods of people and their everyday realities, amounting to what became known as the "'*steady-state*' view of human cultures, of the Earth, and of the universe as a whole" (29). This "pagan" understanding of time, the planet, and the cosmos is used as a rhetorical contrast to the Christian unidirectional conception of time, history, and nature as unfolding along a single discernable course from beginning to end.<sup>11</sup> I am suggesting, following both Rudwick and Asad, this sense of unidirectional temporality motivated chronological science to establish scholarly authority for the Protestant Christian *saecular discourse* against its alleged "pagan" competitors. Both Christian secularity and its modern agnostic derivative, therefore, have always been in

<sup>11</sup> Although Christianity reiterated its linear time and historical unfolding in the organization of festivals and holidays in yearly repeated cycles that represented a microcosmic picture of the cosmos and punctuated the ordinary reality of human lives (Rudwick 28-29), the "larger-scale" vision of the cosmos, the earth, and humanity was structured by an "irreversible" and "arrow-like" flow of time (Rudwick 28).

contention with its pagan prehistory, which has consistently resurfaced to assert ulterior modes of experiencing time and the earthly present.

We find an example of Christian *saecular discourse* and its attendant secularity articulating itself in contention with paganism in the writing of Ussher's contemporary Sir Thomas Browne. Browne's *Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial, or a Brief Discourse of the Sepulchral Urns lately found in Norfolk* (1658) takes its titular excavation as an occasion to contemplate mortality and memorialization. Browne's essay is an early example of the antiquarian interest in the pagan past as it is inscribed in the British landscape. The essay is also representative of the contest between Christian Protestant secularity and the traces of pagan eternalism as it persists in the uncanny ruins scattering the landscape and being found underfoot on English soil. Browne's discussion of the titular burial urns benefits from being contextualized in relation to contemporary chronologists' timelines, like that of Ussher, which determined the duration of secular time and its relation to Christian eschatology. Browne attempts to date the urns in relation to "the Meridian of time" (308), which C. A. Patrides tells us refers roughly to "100 BC, the mid-point of the world's history" (308). Browne's marginalia confidently affirms that "the world may last about six thousand years"—4000 BC until 2000 AD (Browne 308n18; see also Patrides' explanatory note on page 429) Patrides observes that Browne's eschatological framework assumed "[t]he universe . . . to have been created in about 4000 BC" and that it would end "by the year AD 2000" (429). In failing to leave an inscription for posterity, the pagans of Norfolk commit in Browne's memorable phrase, "a fallacy in duration" because their ignorance of the revealed history of scripture left them unprepared to reckon with the true nature of secularity (308). Browne interprets in these ruins of lost

ages and people, a pagan failure to preserve their own historical legacy for future antiquarians such as himself. But he also suggests a deeper sense of futility of enduring merely in the temporally limited domain of the Earth. “Had they made as good provision for their names,” Browne writes, “as they have done for their Reliques, they had not so grossly erred in the art of perpetuation. But to subsist in bones, and be but Pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration” and a testament to “Pagan vain-glories which thought the world might last forever” (308). Browne’s reproach of paganism features telling condemnations. Not only do they err in their spiritual priorities, but these pagans also damn themselves to oblivion by lacking the foresight to preserve their own memory in secular time, by implication, because they misunderstood the finitude of their own world. I dwell on this because it is one of many examples of British antiquarianism<sup>12</sup> reckoning with the pagan past and its intimations of ulterior temporalities. That past continuously announces itself to their own secular experience as it contributes to much of what makes the familiar British landscape so distinct. For although it is familiar, it is nonetheless a landscape riddled with uncanny reminders of a pagan past which competes with the efforts of clerics and scholars who try to maintain epistemic and cultural authority. Though the context will change, this is a theme that will repeat as Victorian archaeologists and anthropologists reconstruct the prehistoric pagan past with reference to their own *saecular discourse*.

<sup>12</sup> Other antiquarians such as John Aubrey and the later William Stukeley concern themselves with Britain’s “antiquities” in a more sustained and thorough manner. For a dated but nonetheless rich account of British antiquarians and the history of ideas of pre-Roman Britain up to the eighteenth century, see Stuart Piggott’s *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination*.

This tension between Christian and pagan modes of secularity is carried along with the development from chronology to geology, a development in which Rudwick sees an important continuity. The earlier chronologists' "conception of world history" is "*structurally* similar to modern ideas about the Earth's history" (20, italics in original). According to Rudwick, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century geological recognition of "deep time," which gave the Earth an overwhelmingly "pre-human" temporal existence, shared a key structural assumption about nature with the earlier chronologists like Ussher (2). Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century geologists presented the planet as having "a basically historical character" which is "just as eventful and dramatic . . . as human history" (2). The Biblical narrative "facilitated" geology's "discovery" of the Earth's deep history because scripture "pre-adapted" early chronologists to historical thinking about nature and the planet (4). However, the development from chronological to geological science does show a change in conceptions of temporality, in that the former entails a limited duration of worldly existence (where time, like the world, has a beginning, middle or "meridian" to use Browne's phrase, and an end), and the latter an unlimited duration and no necessary beginning. In this development as well, that old tension between pagan and Christian secularity is visible still.

A century after Browne, detractors of geologist James Hutton's early theory of uniformitarianism echo Browne's sentiments about paganism and the indefiniteness of the Earth's historicity. Charles Lyell, for instance, in his sections on the history of geological thought, reports that Hutton's more orthodox critics condemned his theory as an attempt at "reviving the *heathen* dogma of an 'eternal succession,' and denying that

this world ever had a beginning” (Lyell 17, italics added). With the emergence of geology and especially the development of uniformitarianism, although there is not a dramatic break with the Christian chronological sciences, as Rudwick suggests, there is nonetheless a new iteration of secularity being formed alongside the changing *saecular discourse*. Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth* (1788) is an example of what Adelene Buckland explains as a geological theory that is underwritten by an “Enlightenment cosmolog[y]” which envisioned “the earth as a complex but ordered whole whose past, present, and future, could be fully explained by reference to eternal law” (34). But Hutton’s was a world with “no beginning or end,” a geology premised upon a cyclical understanding of regenerated planetary surface “designed to ensure the ongoing habitability of the earth” and the “preservation of mankind and the ongoing development of his reasoning powers” (34). So, although as Rudwick suggests, nineteenth-century geology may have been pre-adapted by Christian chronological science, the *saecular discourse* developing with Hutton’s Enlightenment geology exclusively grounds itself in the secularization of the Earth, and in turn, the Earth supplements God as the origin and impelling force of historical development. The Earth’s role in the historiographical imagination is now no longer merely “Creation,” but is in a sense “creator” and sustainer of human flourishing and historical development. At the emergence of modern geology out of chronology, then, we witness a renegotiation of Christian secularity, wherein the Protestant imperative to sanctify the secular by attempting to historicize the Earth itself in accordance with scriptural interpretation gives rise to a revision of the historiography of “Creation.” This revision gives narrative pride of place not to God’s unfolding plan but posits the unfolding of geological history as the necessary pre-condition for the unfolding of the

plans of men. The human shape given to the Earth's history by the chronologists is therefore carried forward in geology. This form of science adapts something of the Protestant strategy of navigating the secular by also sanctifying human historical development in the form of gradual Enlightenment and expansion of human ingenuity in ways that are not exclusively predicated upon theological assumptions or Biblical "textual memory," but are rather being written as an extension of Earth history. Geology, in a sense, becomes a way of textualizing the memory of the Earth.

This development is registered at the level of prosaic style in geological texts. At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, Buckland demonstrates, when the term "geology" was beginning to be used in wider circles, poetic form, specifically epic, and especially epic as adapted by Milton, became integral to the ways in which geologists presented their accounts. "Miltonic epic," Buckland writes, "with its claim to describe the total history of a nation or a people from beginning to end, could give dramatic shape to the history of the earth," one which described a dramatic and grand story of the development from primaeval physical substance to humankind across vast millennia (100).

Charles Lyell revived and reworked Hutton's "heathen" theory, but was, in the earlier part of the publication history of his *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), adamantly anti-progressionist in his geological theories, arguing forcefully against any "continuous 'story of the earth'" (Secord xviii). Lyell's geology continues the geologization of nineteenth century *saecular discourse*, but not in the sense that he was attempting to overcome Christianity by pushing an exclusively non-theological theory. For example, among his "Concluding Remarks" in *The Principles*, Lyell writes that "in whatever

direction we pursue our researches . . . we discover everywhere the clear proofs of a Creative Intelligence, and of His foresight, wisdom, and power” (437). Lyell’s theories secularize through his insistence that that natural, geological forces act and have always acted as they do in the here and now.<sup>13</sup> Eternity is thereby secularized, made a feature of worldly temporal unfolding in that, so far as the Earth is concerned, the way things work in the here and now is the way they always have. This is to say, Lyellian geology secularizes “Creation” in a new way: the earthly plane is structured and regulated by natural laws that are themselves eternal. The relationship between profane, secular time, and eternity is thus finally divided in a way which had not previously met with wide acceptance. Hutton’s theory postulated something of this, but Lyell made it palatable to theologically inclined and agnostic positions alike.

Lyell defends his theory against criticisms of atheism or of a Huttonian revival of the “heathen dogma” of eternalism by insisting on the limitations of geological science, limitations which he claims preclude him from crafting the history of the Earth as a story. He concludes *The Principles* by reiterating he has in no way been trying to tell a story, and noting the limits of his own committed empiricism: “To assume that the evidence of the beginning or end of so vast a scheme lies within the reach of our philosophical inquiries, or even our speculations, appears to us inconsistent with a just estimate of the relations which subsist between the finite powers of man and the attributes of an Infinite

<sup>13</sup> Lyell’s two most basic geological principles were: A) the only causes that have ever acted are those that are observable in the present; and B) that these causes have always acted with the same degree of energy as they exert in the present. This first principle meant that geologists should forego any notions that “some past processes might no longer be active or might not yet have been seen in action in the present world” and the second meant that there were no “overall directional trends” nor “exceptional catastrophes” (Rudwick 166).



and Eternal Being” (438). Lyellian uniformitarianism, then, secularizes not by opposing religion, but by limiting his scope to an exclusively earthly domain, while also limiting his scientific aspirations and methods for comprehending geological laws. However, Lyell also shored up his bracketed secularity by rhetorically denigrating certain pagan cosmologies. In this, he turned the tactics of Hutton’s attackers in his own favour, discrediting rival theories by comparing them to outmoded superstition. For instance, Lyell recapitulates an Enlightenment narrative of disenchantment occurring in the sciences generally, and geology more specifically: “By degrees,” he writes in his chapter on “Theoretical Errors,” “many of the enigmas of the moral and physical world are explained” not by “the intervention of demons, ghosts, witches, and other immaterial and supernatural agents,” but by reference to “fixed and invariable laws” (27). While it may be tempting to think that Lyell is veiling his critique of Creationist views of nature in pagan rags, it is not so. Lyell is hoping to find common ground to dismiss theories that are not properly empirical, not properly secular because based in “superstition,” which is the enemy of both faith and reason. Here, as above in Browne, a certain kind of pagan “fallacy” is being evoked to rhetorically pivot the asserted secularity against. As Josephson-Storm has pointed out, such moves are typical of what he calls “the myth of disenchantment.” Disenchantment appeals to the elimination of superstition as a way to establish epistemic authority. By distinguishing themselves from “superstition” and “magic,” both science and Christianity “gained coherence” in such rhetorical oppositions. In this formulation, “superstition” appears as the “false double” of both religion and science. “Superstition,” in such instances, carries the trace of “older polemics,” but has

gone from being fallacious due to being “pagan” (as we saw in Browne), “to being mistaken for being antiscientific” (15).

But Lyell was not only trying to define science proper against pagan “superstition.” According to James Secord, Lyell’s geological theories cannot be divorced from his political and professional commitments. He describes Lyell as “an ardent Liberal Whig” who advocated reform while also attempting to reach political opponents through a kind of professional and public diplomacy by presenting “the study of nature” as “politically and theologically neutral” (xii-xiii). In this, if he does not initiate it, Lyell successfully pursues a political agenda which relies on secularity that presents as politically disinterested, but which explicitly “targeted a conservative and respectable readership,” who regarded geology as atheistic, and who “needed to be convinced that science had nothing to do with materialism” (xiv). He also held out against “transmutationist” theories, especially those associated with Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and radical French politics. In this stance, he sought to deny the “the assumption of a progressive history of life” (Secord xxxi), arguing that “there is no foundation in geological facts, for the popular theory of the successive development of the animal and vegetable world, from the simplest to the most perfect forms” (Lyell 91). Secord suggests that, given his desire to appeal to Tory skeptics, by “annihilating Lamarck” Lyell “established” his “orthodox credentials” (xxxii). As Buckland observes, Lyell’s vision of Earth history at first tended to avoid cosmological narrative and “plotting,” instead

presenting geological deep history as a fragmented succession of vignettes rather than a coherent narrative arc (21).<sup>14</sup>

However, the “blank spaces” left between geological periods “allowed the geologist to construct a chronological sequence or narrative of Earth history without *requiring* an underlying plot to explain it.” These could be “hinted at, suggested, or left hanging on a tantalizing thread for the reader” (Buckland 21, italics in original). Darwin, who famously became a great admirer of Lyell and began to theorize his own approach to the natural history of life “in private dialogue with the *Principles*” (Secord, xxxvi), picked up this thread. Darwin’s evolutionary time span requires Lyellian uniformitarianism and the deep-time history of the Earth, and thus he plotted his theory of evolution upon a Lyellian deep-time scale of Earth history.<sup>15</sup> By the 1860s, as *The Principles* went into its tenth edition, Lyell had not only backed off on his offensive against progressive developmentalism, but he had also begun to argue in favour of it, and even link progress and evolution in a way which Darwin resisted (Secord xxxvii-viii). Lyellian uniformitarianism thus marks an important but subtle shift in the *saecular discourse* I have been tracking, not only because he legitimized the trend of geologizing secular historiography, but also because he successfully did so as a new way of navigating the secular, both in terms of his politics and in terms of his initially non-narrative mode of geology gradually being adapted to the changing nature of secularity to

<sup>14</sup> John Lubbock, as we will see next chapter, will credit archaeology with being able to fill in these gaps and convert these vignettes to historical texts.

<sup>15</sup> Lyell, whom Darwin playfully referred to in correspondence as his own “Lord High Chancellor in Natural Science” (Radick 157), was finally converted to evolutionism over the course of a drawn-out friendly debate about the evolution of dogs, and it was thanks in part to their shared views on race and abolitionism that Darwin adapted his theory to quell its initial polygenist implications and successfully convert Lyell to his variety of evolutionism (Radick 170-71).

which his own work was so formative. This is not to say that Lyell secularized in a way which outrightly leaves no room for religion, but, in so far as theology becomes a secondary concern with regards to Earth history, religion becomes a matter for a separate field of inquiry. In this, he also laid the foundation for the naturalization of a new of form secularity.

Following Lyell, nineteenth century geology participates in secularization, deepening the geological time scale such that it, in effect, becomes, if not eternal, then at least indefinitely extended both into the past and forward into the future. But geology undergoes secularization also in the sense that it takes its material record, the earth's strata, as marking off qualitatively distinct eras of Earth history. Despite there being initially a resistance to linear progressivism, this mode of geological secularization nonetheless nurtures a mode of secularity which is an implication of Lyell's uniformitarian approach. This makes secularity a matter of being present in the here and now and experiencing geological time, history, and the relationship between them as an excess of temporality, a feeling of timeliness, of belonging to the present age by virtue of constant comparison with earlier "times" which have not simply preceded but have been developed upon and given way to the present.

This new mode of secularity does not deny religion or spirituality, but it more frequently opts for the kind of neutralization of affect and assumption of "disinterestedness" with which secularism has ever since been associated.<sup>16</sup> Although such a change of mind was by no means inevitable, it does showcase, as Buckland

<sup>16</sup> Scheer et al. note that "the secular" is often "represented in ways that empty it of . . . affective and emotional textures, for example by emphasizing neutrality, impartiality, factuality, rationality and reason as its constitutive features" (2).

argues, the “powerful epic promise” of geology, even in its counter-developmental forms (102).<sup>17</sup> This “epic promise,” I am suggesting, is central to the emergent secularity that is no longer exclusively defined by Christian theology. It does not necessarily reject or disprove or “secularize” in the typical sense of that word, but it does position secular experience as earthly in the sense that the Earth increasingly becomes the domain of historical unfolding understood on its own terms and without an obligatory reference to scripture. Under this mode of secularity, Christian theology can be considered ancillary to natural history and science as opposed to the latter’s being subordinate to or being required to reconcile itself with theology.

This nineteenth century secularization of Earth, nature, and man, like the earlier iterations of conceptions of the secular, is a *saecular discourse* in the sense that I discussed with reference to Hay in that it sought to historicize by chronological periodization which not only often attempted to quantify the temporal duration of these epochs, ages, and stages, but also to qualitatively distinguish them. For instance, John Phillips presented the fossil record in a manner which divided Earth’s history in to three epochs: the Paleozoic era, which housed the most ancient forms of life; the Mesozoic era, which housed “middling life”; and the Cenozoic era, which is the home of the most recent forms of life (Rudwick 220). As Rudwick points out, Phillips’ model was

<sup>17</sup> So, in contradistinction from Charles Taylor’s claim that a Victorian “dark abyss of time” entailed a conceptual shift “unprecedented in human history,” a vision of creation and history devoid of “any clear sense that” this new immense deep-time history of the Earth and all its features are “shaped and limited by an antecedent plan” (325), uniformitarianism made room for a secularity that could support visions of teleological purpose unfolding through nature. See also “The Future Evolution of ‘Man,’” by Ian Hasketh in *Historicising Humans: Deep Time, Evolution, and Race in Nineteenth-Century British Sciences*.

analogous to “the traditional threefold division of human history into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern,” an analogy which would have been clear to his contemporaries (220).

At the regional level, other geologists periodized the Earth’s history in ways that nominally blended geology with something like an ethnically specific psycho-geography. Specific geological systems, formations, and strata first identified in Wales were named after ancient inhabitants of those areas, and even turned the rhetoric of native British paganism in its favour. For instance, geologists defining the Paleozoic era, such as Adam Sedgewick, categorized lower strata in Northern Wales as “Cambrian” after the “Cambria” which is a Latinate rendering of “Cymru,” the Welsh word for Wales. Likewise, Roderick Murchison categorized the above strata as “Silurian,” named from the local tribe the Romans called the “Silures” (Buckland 167). Similarly, the Ordovician is named after the Ordovices, another ancient Celtic tribe also met by the Romans. Along with “Devonian” (named after Devon, itself carrying the trace of “Dumnonii”—the tribe who occupied that territory), these place names mingle Britain’s pagan past with its deep geological history, retroactively inscribing their presence and character on the land well before it was inhabited by any humans, and thereby encouraging associations which link the modern Welsh and Celtic speaking peoples with a submerged prehistoric landscape. This periodization geologizes a trend already deeply interwoven with the British imagination in that these landscapes are also sites of pagan monuments frequently associated with the Celts via the Druids. This mode of secularization not only projected the ancient Celts into deep geological history, but it also geologized the modern descendants of those thought to be of Celtic ancestry, contributing to the *saecular*

*discourse's* construction of the Celtic "race" as inherently primitive, and Celtic landscapes as geologically primordial.

The mode of secularization I have been tracing culminates in the establishment of something very much like a Victorian heralding of what has become known as the "Anthropocene." For example, Chris Manias observes that the early phase of Victorian paleontological thinking expressed "concepts derived from naturalistic scientific ideas of change in the natural world and more theological notions of human providential mastery [that] could both be expressed in a language of development and transition" ("Contemporaries" 41). Though twenty-first century geological and cultural critical conceptions of "the Anthropocene" tend to assume that their own revelations about the sweep of human impact upon Earth systems are recent, it is in this period under question, from the late 1850s to the 1890s, that something very similar was first systematically theorized, sometimes with celebratory confidence and sometimes with lamentations. For instance, Manias notes that "[h]umans were constantly presented as at least aspirational masters of the world and the slow developments over prehistory showed an increased mastery over nature as human civilization, culture, and technology progressed" (41). Such progressive mastery was frequently "presented as directly opposed to wild nature," while "the growth of civilization was contingent upon the extinction of large and dangerous animals, the clearing of wild spaces, and the use of medium-sized mammals either for hunting or as domesticates" (41-42). Moreover, paleontologists, having taken stock of the importance of extinction within the archaeological record, observed "a steady decline in animal life" that was ongoing (Manias 36). These were "understood in terms of an epochal transformation, as the "Age of Mammals" gave way to the "Age of Man," a

predicament which was assumed to be “necessary for the growth of human society and civilization, with the wildness and diversity of the fauna decreasing as humans gained ‘lordship’ over the Earth” (36). Manias further points out that such theories resembled those of non-Darwinian biologist and paleontologist Richard Owen (who coined “dinosaur”) and whose “concepts of providential change, with the next stage of Earth’s development—its use by ‘man’—requir[ed] a reordering in the dominant forms of life” (36). In marked contrast to the story told in the Bible, where the Earth is the creation of a deity who assigns Man stewardship over it as a kind of birthright, this new view of Earth history has “Man” gradually ascending to dominance over slow ages of gradual change and adaptive continuity, of extinction and survival. The new secularity I am describing emphasizes the unfolding of history from the early origins of the Earth to the future reign of Man, and the gradual human shape nature and the planet seemed poised to accept.

In this chapter, I have considered the ways in which a post-classical *saecular discourse* has undergone numerous changes and adaptations. However, as I have also shown, these adaptations of the *saecular discourse* demonstrate how attempts to establish authority over “pagan” epistemologies pathologically revives them. Thus, “pagan” ways of being earthly have also been internalized into the *saecular discourse* and have confronted Christian and agnostic secularities with potent counter visions of earthliness. In my next chapter, I will consider the Victorian adaptations of the *saecular discourse* as initiating new modes of secular mediations of subjectivity and identity. I will focus on how archaeologists and anthropologists internalize and substantiate the secularization of the deep human past in ways which shape Victorian secularity.



## Chapter 2

### Secular Sensibilities and Pagan Sentiments

In this chapter I argue that archaeology and anthropology demonstrate the modes of secularization and secularity which come to characterize the Victorian iteration of the *saecular discourse*. These emerging disciplines carry forward the trend of juxtaposing modern conceptions of secularity against pagan ones which I outlined in chapter one. My case studies will be John Lubbock's *Pre-Historic Times* (1865)<sup>18</sup> and anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871). These works both describe the material, spiritual, and aesthetic character of their prehistoric pagan subjects and present a form of secularity that affirms the contemporariness of the Western European and Anglo-American "civilization" against the "primitivity" of ancient and modern "savages" who are displaced from the timeline of civilization and made to reside asynchronously at various stages of development and early "ages" of history. Then, having developed the titular "secular sensibilities," I turn to a seminal debate between Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater that concerns what they refer to as the "pagan sentiment." Pater and Arnold made a major impact upon expressions of paganism from the mid-Victorian into the early twentieth century, and their influence will be explored in my later chapters where I turn to Richard Jefferies and Robert Louis Stevenson as case studies in the variations of pagan revivalism in Victorian prose. Both Pater's and Arnold's treatment of the pagan sentiment demonstrate their engagement with the developing secularity I explore, but

<sup>18</sup> I draw on both the first edition of 1865 and the third of 1872 of *Pre-Historic Times* because whereas in the first edition Lubbock merely mentions "fetichism," by the third he has embraced and elaborated upon the term.

Pater especially presents a revival of pagan animism as a driving factor of history and a crucial feature of modernity.

Before I turn to explore the place of archaeology and anthropology in the *saecular discourse*, I want to briefly acknowledge the significant developments in Victorian historical and theological thought. In *God and Progress: Religion and History in British Intellectual Culture, 1845–1914*, Joshua Bennett gives a thorough analysis of the debates concerning Victorian ideas of progressive history within both Christianity and secularism. Bennett explains that “[s]ociologically minded accounts of historical progress, which located its crucial motor in the spread of an anti-metaphysical, scientific epistemology, stimulated opposing, theologically apologetic interpretations” that engaged progressive stadial logic to account for the ways in which earlier periods of Christian history “had prepared the ground” for the new era of Christianity in the nineteenth century. “Behind these debates,” Bennett demonstrates, “stood competing philosophies of history” (52). However, as Bennett also notes, secularist thought was not always in direct conflict with theology. The adoption of German “higher criticism” within Biblical hermeneutics, culminating in the controversial Broad Church affiliated *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, exemplifies something of the secularity that I am tracking in that this approach attempts to reconcile the Bible as an authoritative religious text and its status as a historical literary text (Mason & Knight, 131-32). We can see in the reception of these shifts in Biblical scholarship the weaving together of the secular and the religious in ways that processes the Bible as part of the secular “textual memory” reflected upon by Asad. *Essays and Reviews* also exemplifies the ways in which the Victorian *saecular discourse* continues Protestant strategies of navigating the saeculum as discussed by Shagan. As

many scholars have noted, the after-effects of German Biblical criticism resonate through many fields, and the impetus to attend to and interpret the material historicity in cultural artifacts gets a wider application in the fields of archaeology and anthropology. I want to keep in mind the convergences and divergences of purely secularist and what we might call a kind of Victorian Anglican secularism as I proceed, especially in relation to John Lubbock, who was a devote Anglican, yet nonetheless participates in the *saecular discourse* taking shape during the period under question. This is also true of Matthew Arnold, who I turn to in the second section of this chapter. What I am arguing is secular in a new sense, whether in the case of agnostic or Anglican secularizers, is the way the deep history of the planet itself reframes human history.

Archaeology is particularly crucial to this picture. As archaeologist Alfredo Gonzalez-Ruibal notes, “Archaeological time, perhaps even more than historical time, is strongly associated with change, which is itself related to notions of origins, process, evolutions and progress” (“Introduction,” *Reclaiming Archaeology* 10); for this reason, the discipline has historically “naturaliz[ed] particular hegemonies” by defining “dynamic societies” as those “in perpetual flux” (10). Archaeology’s secularizing qualitative periodization gains a particularly modern character through a process anthropologist Johannes Fabian has called “the denial of coevalness” (Bunzl viii-ix)—a means of establishing “primitive” from “civilized” races based on temporal belonging. In its contributions to and transformations of mid-nineteenth century *saecular discourse*, then, Victorian archaeology substantiated this secularity, and anthropology helped determine the character of “civilized” and “primitive” cultures being contrasted to determine who was and was not coeval. However, in doing so, they also compelled a

revival of paganism, especially in the reconstructions of the prehistoric past, by giving shape to that past via organizational periodizing schemes and collating material cultural finds with these periods, as well as the anthropological notions of “animism,” “survival,” and “revival.” Post-Brixham archaeological writing illustrates the naturalization of hegemonic secular social forms and the “denial of coevalness” Gonzalez-Ruibal and Fabien respectively describe, while also offering itself as a rich source for the reconstruction of prehistoric British paganism.

By the mid-Victorian period, archaeologists began to present their theories and findings with a sense of structure and continuity that could bridge Earth history and human history. This sense of continuity between Earth and human history is exemplified in the works of leading archaeologists like William Boyd Dawkins who opened his 1880 *Prehistoric Man in Britain* by declaring that archaeology has provided “the knowledge of the steps by which man slowly freed himself from the bondage of the natural conditions under which all other creatures live; of the successive discoveries of the use of polished stone, bronze, and iron; of the domestication of animals; of the cultivation of the fruits of the earth; of the introduction of the arts; in a word all of those things by which man becomes what the historian finds him” (2). For Dawkins archaeology is a field of inquiry which fits the human into the deep geobiological timescale: “The history of the earth is necessarily the history of man” (3). Earth history and human history are consolidated by archaeology, and indeed, geological history itself becomes something of a prelude to the human story. Perhaps even more concise, Henry Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, in his 1875 essay “The Evolution of Culture” claims that “The principle of variation and natural selection have established a bond of union between the physical and cultural sciences

which can never be broken. *History is but another term for evolution*” (24, italics added). Such comments by Dawkins and Pitt-Rivers are not unusual for social and historical thought formulated in the wake of geological uniformitarianism and Darwinian biological evolutionism, though this evolutionism was not accepted unanimously, nor was it all of one kind. A mainstream school in the study of history, as Ian Hasketh has recently demonstrated, followed Comtean positivism in diverse ways with greater or lesser demands for a rigorous scientific approach, as demonstrated in England by Henry Thomas Buckle and in Germany by Leopold von Ranke, who argued that history progressed in accordance with natural laws (*The Science of History* 3-5). Hasketh writes that “the creation of scientific history in Victorian Britain” is the “creation of its central myth” (10). Both archaeology and anthropology substantiated this “myth” and, in doing so, established the kind of secularity that emerges during this period and the pagan reaction to it.

### ***Indiscriminate Worship***

With regards to Victorian pagan revivalism and secularity, perhaps the most important work in the field of archaeology is that of John Lubbock. Lubbock is often credited with promoting and securing the wide acceptance of the Three Age System in British archaeology. He also formulated the divisions of the stone age into paleolithic and neolithic *eras*. In these ways, the book demonstrates secularization as the periodization of world history that I have been attempting to trace out. However, Lubbock makes a more subtle contribution to the *saecular discourse*. Ruth Barton demonstrates how he

participated in the broader project of his “X-Club”<sup>19</sup> associates in popularizing evolutionism as a transdisciplinary principle and in establishing “a unified account of nature that left no gaps between culture and nature, humans and animals, life and non-life” (422). Lubbock’s *Pre-Historic Times: As Illustrated by Ancient Remains and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* opens with the announcement that “The first appearance of man in Europe dates from a period so remote, that neither history, nor tradition, can throw any light on his origin, or mode of life” (1). Archaeology, however, can fill in the narrative gaps: “[S]ome have supposed that the past is hidden from the present by a veil, which time will probably thicken, but never can remove. Thus our prehistoric antiquities have been valued as monuments of ancient skill and perseverance, not regarded as pages of ancient history; recognized as interesting vignettes, not as historical pictures” (1). However, Lubbock will present those as “pages of ancient history” that previous antiquarians have been unable to write. For “Archaeology forms, in fact, the link between geology and history” (2).<sup>20</sup>

*Pre-Historic Times* is a simple, but fascinating main title for a book of its kind.

The *Times* of the title is interesting in this regard because it draws specific attention to temporality while also secularizing in a more casual way—that is, by implicitly

<sup>19</sup> The X-Club is the famous dining club to which Lubbock, Huxley, Tindall, and Spencer, among others, belonged, which promoted Darwinian evolution, the popularization of science, and monogenesis in anthropology, along with other liberal social and educational reforms.

<sup>20</sup> Lubbock also sought to demonstrate the distance in time modern European civilization has advanced from its primitive beginnings. Natalie Richard notes that Lubbock had his own private collection, and the displays of the artifacts he possessed reconstruct the developmental sequence which he espouses. Such organizations of material inform the structure of *Pre-Historic Times* and the way the archaeological record was perceived by many students of archaeology for over half a century following (Trigger 171). These displays “created categories in which to classify implements” which presented Lubbock’s “formulations of a global order in which objects or categories were related to one another in a meaningful sequence, which could be translated into a narrative” (Richard 14).

juxtaposing the historical and temporal quality of all that antedated “history” against recorded history, or “textual memory” in Asad’s phrase. With the title, Lubbock evokes a sense of the daily existence of life in remote antiquity, of human life beyond the archives of textual memory, even perhaps suggesting that something of a parallel account of *those times* can be read in the pages of his book and that his book is the nearest thing readers may hope to get to *The Prehistoric Times* daily. He does claim to be able to render those “interesting vignettes” of the antiquarians before him in to “pages of history,” after all. In textualizing prehistory, Lubbock’s book presents something of a travelogue through time, inviting readers to imagine the past, its peoples, and their customs. Moreover, there is a polemical tone throughout the work, perhaps even something of a gospel in it, in that by the conclusion of *Pre-Historic Times*, Lubbock has pronounced the “good news” that the slow climb out of prehistoric “savagery” is an ascension towards paradise on Earth.

For instance, Lubbock writes that “the most sanguine hopes for the future are justified by the whole experience of the past” (490), due to processes that have been at work “for so many thousand years” and which he argues are still visibly at work in the nineteenth century present (491).<sup>21</sup> For, “both theory and experience point to the same conclusion,” which is that “Utopia . . . turns out . . . to be the necessary consequence of natural laws” (491-92). Lubbock’s narrative of inevitable progress establishes the archaeological record as supplemental to the biblical narrative, although not in the sense

<sup>21</sup> Although Lubbock does hold that Euro-Western modernity is the highest form yet attained in this uniformitarian progressive picture, he insists that “he must be blind who imagines that our civilization is unsusceptible to improvement, or that we ourselves are in the highest state attainable by man” (491). This unfinished state of improvement makes the reformist impulse in his writing all the more urgent. Nevertheless, the course of the future is clear to Lubbock based on his study of the past and his acceptance of uniformitarian assumptions that the “laws” observed are guaranteed to act in stable and predictable ways across time and space.

that earlier antiquarians like Browne attempted. He does not use archaeology to legitimate Biblical events. Rather, he uses it as a secularized version of the biblical plot to suggest that laws of history are working towards establishing an eventual paradise upon Earth. Lubbock's archaeological utopianism extends that story from brute beginnings to an Anthropocene modernity where "savagery" is exorcised and innocence is restored, and the steady march of improvement has increased happiness throughout the world, all guaranteed by "the great principle of natural selection" (491).

I want to refer to the title yet again, but this time draw attention to the subtitle: "*As Illustrated by Ancient Remains and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages.*" Here we can also see how Lubbock conceives of his project and methodology in another way that is demonstrative of the Victorian *saecular discourse*. Lubbock sought to unify international archaeological finds; organize these by ages or epochs; and then locate them upon a vast temporal-historical continuum. Overall, he tells a story of gradual improvement of technological skill, liberation from a state of subjection to nature, the improvement of scientific knowledge, of progressive development of social customs, and of the enlightenment of moral and ethical conduct. The book is not systematic in its approach to reconstructing the prehistoric past. It is rather organized in two parts, the first dealing with the international archaeological record, and the second devoted to "the Modern Savage," and how the conditions and cultures of this figure throw light on European prehistory. In its structure, the book establishes a particular sense of secularity in its European readers as a feeling of grateful contemporaneity within a civilized, technologically improved, and morally refined modern age by presenting prehistoric cultures in a scattered way. The second part consists of a similarly unsystematic and



arbitrarily arranged procession through the cultures of various “modern savages.” To this latter end, Lubbock often writes of Indigenous people around the world with an air of antipathy, at times verging on the sensationalist in his incorporations of the reports of missionaries, explorers, and military men, and in his selective censoring of their reports (which he frequently claims to do to spare the reader horrific details). Lubbock’s rhetorical strategy is to proclaim the moral and spiritual superiority of (Anglican) “civilization” by evoking what he, following his sources, construes as horrors of “primitivity.”

In this, we find a particularly forceful example of what anthropologist Johannes Fabian famously called the “denial of coevalness.” To be “coeval” means to “share the same Time” (30). Fabian argues that although it is posited as a naturalized difference among human groups, “coevalness has to be *created*” (31, italics in original). Archaeologists and anthropologists have historically denied coevalness via “*a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse*” (31, italics in original). In his book’s title, we can see how Lubbock’s methodological assumption displaces the “modern savage” from contemporaneity with “modern” Europeans and synchronizes them with prehistoric Europeans. As Fabian observes, “What makes the savage significant to the evolutionists’ Time is that he lives in another Time” (27). For Lubbock, the “modern savages” reside in the titular “Pre-historic Times,” and, as such, they serve as foil to modern, civilized Englishmen, and as living archaeological artefacts to be studied in part to access the lost ages of the past and to help complete the picture of the transition from prehistory to modernity.

As a whole, the book firmly establishes the contemporaneity of the civilized, the unidirectionality of deliverance out of the primitive past as a movement out of sin, cruelty, and ignorance. Lubbock's consolidation of archaeological artefacts substantiated and naturalized the Victorian *saecular discourse*. It was also a reassuring methodological construction that served to promote the English brand of middle-class, capitalist, liberal civilization, and to naturalize and justify colonial violence as a process of techno-cultural (and divine) salvation from the prehistoric half-wild subjection to nature (Trigger 176). This kind of secular progressivism, then, is reliant on the denial of coevalness of "primitives" and the simultaneous establishment of contemporaneity between modern "civilized" peoples. However, this sensibility relies on and invokes the prehistoric paganism it attempts to denigrate.

Lubbock shares in the tradition of Browne and Lyell in his evocation of the rhetoric of superstition and relegation of non-Christian peoples to a state of benighted immaturity. Since much of the evidence he collects deals with death rituals such as burial styles, sepulchral structures, and monuments supposedly meant to celebrate or honour the dead, Lubbock's work is suggestive of a widespread prehistoric spiritual culture. Lubbock notes that similar stone monuments such as the standing stones, dolmens, barrows, and burial mounds found on English soil are found all over Europe, India, and Asia, implying a universal spiritual, psychological, and cultural condition shared by all prehistoric human societies (107). Lubbock's suggestive study of countless artefacts, along with his comparative analysis conflating numerous cultures of contemporary Indigenous people with prehistoric Europeans, makes *Pre-Historic Times* both a grab-bag of forms of spirituality and a treasure trove for the imaginative reconstruction of

prehistoric European paganism. Moreover, he presents this in ways that suggest either how familiar monuments like Stonehenge or other fixtures of the British landscape become charged with a new kind of exotic mystique while also suggesting that the beliefs or the echoes of those beliefs can still be witnessed in the present.

Lubbock regards “savage” religion, prehistoric and modern, as characterized by a belief “in witchcraft,” which is due to a “(c)onfusing together subjective and objective relations” that “leaves them prey to constant fears” (470). In the 1872 edition, Lubbock adds that “Fetichism” is “almost the opposite of religion; it stands towards religion in the same relation as Alchemy to Chemistry, or Astrology to Astronomy” (624 [1872]). “[T]he savage” he tells us, “accounts for all action and movement by life; inanimate objects, therefore have spirits as well as men” (625 [1872]). Lubbock claims that for “modern savages” and their prehistoric European counterparts, “Everything is worshipped indiscriminately—animals, plants, and even inanimate objects” (624 [1872]). This indiscriminate worship of things (which Tylor will term “animism”) is both a bad way of being religious and a misapprehension of the nature of worldliness—a bad mode of secularity.

Furthermore, Lubbock’s construction of prehistoric spirituality involves an immanent metaphysical domain that is co-extensive with the world of the living and seemingly features no conception of an existence beyond the earthly world. In this characterization of the non-Christian, prehistoric religious conception, Lubbock shares with Browne the assertion that pagan peoples fail to distinguish between their worldly context and the higher significance of divinity. Prehistoric belief, on Lubbock’s account, imagined the world as a plane shared by the living and the dead. The afterlife, in this

picture, is the continuance of worldly existence in worldly terms—an afterlife that is still “secular” in a sense. Lubbock almost echoes Browne exactly when he declares that prehistoric primitives seem “unable to imagine a future altogether different from the present, or a world unlike their own” (89). He finds in various prehistoric cultures a reverence for cyclical rather than linear time, which also implies an inability to progress beyond a certain stage of development. In his reconstructions of prehistoric European spirituality, then, Lubbock presents various prehistoric and modern cultures as venerating an immanent plane that conflates the natural and the supernatural, the sacred and the mundane, the spiritual and the secular.

Yet, the “savage,” prehistoric or modern, seems to pose some measure of underlying threat, especially because this figure has proved appealing to so many. Denouncing some “primitivist” inclinations perhaps found in Rousseau, Whitman, or Thoreau, Lubbock writes, “There are, indeed, many who doubt whether happiness is increased by civilization, and who talk of the free and noble savage. But the true savage is neither free nor noble; he is a slave to his own wants, his own passions” (484). Lubbock perhaps recognizes the seductive appeal of the characterization he has presented, the liberation of sexual, psychological, and aggressive urges beckon as a kind of escape, maybe even liberation, from the repressions, restrictions, and responsibilities of the civilized. Savagery is also something to be disciplined and reformed. Lubbock compares the English “criminal population” with “mere savages”: “[M]ost of their crimes are but injudicious and desperate attempts to live as a savage in the midst, and at the expense, of a civilized community” (489). However, following a similar reconciliatory logic as his theologically minded Anglican peers in *Essays and Reviews*, he thinks that

the teachings of science and religion are co-extensive and even ought to be recognized as a powerful means for evangelizing the gospel and encouraging salvation. Lubbock writes “suffering is the inevitable consequence of sin,” and “as surely as night follows day,” this “is the stern yet salutary teaching of science” (489). Science and religion, according to Lubbock, are “the two mighty agents of improvement” which have been separated to the “great misfortune of humanity” and this separation “has done more than anything else to retard the progress of civilization,” for, although “science will not render us more virtuous, it must certainly make us more innocent” (488). Such a merger between Broad Church moralism and secular scientism guides his reformist politics as well as his archaeological speculations. The strong sense of duty and reformist enthusiasm palpable in Lubbock’s vision of his vocation, which echoes the Protestant sacralization of the secular, and though Lubbock still retains a pious sense of secular duty in the name of religious salvation, his example is carried on in a more purely secularized manner in the anthropology of E. B. Tylor, to whom I now turn.

Tylor was greatly influenced by Comte’s positivism and his progressive, secularizing vision of the movement from metaphysical to scientific thought throughout intellectual history, as well as the stadial historicism of earlier figures like Adam Smith, David Hume, and Jacques Turgot. Like the three age periodizations of Lubbock and the new archaeologists, Tylor’s theory of cultural evolution formulated three stages of socio-cultural development: “savagery,” which he equated with hunter-gatherer tribalism; “barbarism,” which he equated with pastoral and agrarian economies; and “civilization” which is industrial and capitalist. Tylor is perhaps most famous for his theories of “animism” and “survivals,” which had a major impact not only on the anthropological

study of religion, but also upon the development of Neo-paganism. The idea that paganism survived under a thin veneer of Christianity in Britain was widely accepted during the late nineteenth century and influenced the rise of “new age” religions in the mid-to-late twentieth centuries (Hutton 124). In looking at Tylor’s theories of animistic survivals, I will show how he develops the Victorian *saecular discourse* by defining modern secularity in opposition to “primitive” animism, and how in turn this animism, like the prehistoric primitivity we saw in Lubbock, suggests itself as a structure of feeling that nurtures late-Victorian counter-secular iconoclastic pagan revivalism.

Tylor’s work must be contextualized within the geological and archaeological developments of the Victorian *saecular discourse* I have been tracing. The development of Tylor’s theories, as Katy Soar demonstrates, is indebted to three recurring theoretical assumptions which became entrenched post-Brixham. Firstly, The Three Age System, popularized by Lubbock, of the new evolutionist archaeology supplied the “material signposts” that allowed Tylor to chart an evolutionist developmental theory of culture (143). Secondly, the theory of the “psychic unity of Man” (the belief that mental processes are uniform across the species in terms of content and development, regardless of geography or time), which Soar defines as a “holistic notion” imposes upon “all human capabilities and practices” a unifying “coherency and logic” and endorses a global study of human material and cultural phenomena which can be brought under the rubric of “a single discipline” (Soar 142-43). Thirdly, uniformitarianism’s “mechanism of known, observable causes” convinced Tylor that human development is “the result of slow-acting cultural evolutionary processes” and this “provided an epistemological framework” from which he developed his own version of the “comparative method which

became the hallmark of his anthropology” (151). These three historiographical assumptions structure and legitimize Tylor’s ethnography and connect it to the *saecular discourse*.

This is demonstrable in the way Tylor’s method converts “memory” in the form of folklore, belief, and practice into textualized memory in ways that substantiate secularization-as-historiography and establishes the grounds for a new mode of Victorian secular worldliness. Citing the work of folklorist Gillian Bennett, Ronald Hutton also demonstrates that the folklorists who adopted Tylor’s theories of survival and animism also drew on geological discourse and archaeology. The conception of “the Earth’s past as recorded in layer after layer of strata” when “[a]ppplied to the development of human” served to indicate that folklore and belief could thus be processed as “textual evidence for pre-literate peoples” (116-17). Thus, the *saecular discourse* taking shape from geology through archaeology compelled an anthropological approach that was methodologically informed by stratigraphy and cross-comparison, while psychological universalism provided a pan-human mental continuum upon which to chart various cultures as developing, and uniformitarianism provided the requisite deep-time scale and vindicated a comparative orientation towards the cultural phenomena of the deep-past.

In his landmark two volume *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (1871), Tylor explicitly conceives of “the science of culture” as “essentially a reformer’s science” (2:539). It is the task of the ethnographer<sup>22</sup> “[t]o impress men’s minds with a doctrine of development” and “to

<sup>22</sup> I use “ethnographer” and “anthropologist” synonymously, although the two words now refer to different but related disciplines. The history of how Victorian “ethnography” birthed “anthropology” is a fascinating

continue the progressive work of past ages, to continue it the more vigorously because light has increased in the world” (2:539). For Tylor, it is the “office of ethnography to expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction,” thereby contributing to the work of “aiding progress and . . . removing hindrance” (2:539). Tylor understands ethnography as playing a crucial role in helping civilized and yet-to-be-civilized races alike reach the natural ends towards which cultural evolution, as a rule, slowly but surely advances for the achievement of “wiser,” “happier,” and “more capable” societies (1:31).

Tylor is explicit that such improvement is gained by adopting Western scientific ways of knowing and industrialist exploitation of the environment. To foster among “savages” and “barbarians” an “[a]cquaintance with the physical laws of the world, and the accompanying power of adapting nature to man's own ends” will bring them the benefits “civilized” nations enjoy (1:27). Here we can see Tylor, characteristic of his age, class, and politics, suggesting, as Lubbock before him, something like an Anthropocene mastery of the Earth. The mark of “civilization” is the ability to master the natural world. The degree at which a society is morally improved, able to maximize their innovative capacities, and achieve a level of general well-being coincides with how well a people can establish the crucial distance between their subjective conceptions of the natural world and that world itself, in order to be able to control it.<sup>23</sup>

one that I do not have space for here. See Barton (232-238) for an excellent and fascinating overview of the debates between the “Ethnologicals” and the “Anthropologicals” and the place of the “X Club” in it all.

<sup>23</sup> In this, Tylorian secularity evinces Asad’s suggestion that calculative rationality and secularism are based on a division between subject and object that is one of the results of disenchantment, for, in the Tylorian theory, as superstition recedes, and human groups learn to master nature, they advance ever more surely towards civilization (*Secular Translations* 104).



Tylor formulates his theory in a way that succinctly captures the form of historiographic secularization I am tracking. He asserts that cultures advance through “stages of development or evolution, each the outcome of its previous history and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future” (1:1). Here we see echoes of Lubbock’s archaeological utopianism, but, like Lubbock’s, Tylor’s conception of the relation between historical epochs and temporal duration is not deterministic nor do his laws of cultural development appeal to a strict timeframe for progression from stage to stage. Rather, the uniformitarian timescale grants his evolutionism all the time it needs for “Civilization” to stride across the globe. He even gives this a “mythic” metaphorical formulation:

We may fancy ourselves looking on Civilization, as in personal figure she traverses the world; we see her lingering or resting by the way, and often deviating into paths that bring her toiling back to where she had passed by long ago; but, direct or devious, her path lies forward, and if now and then she tries a few backward steps, her walk soon falls into a helpless stumbling. It is not according to her nature, her feet were not made to plant uncertain steps behind her, for both in her forward view and in her onward gait she is of truly human type. (1:69)

So, though the path from “savagery” to “civilization” is not a straightforward nor linear one, it is inevitable and unidirectional.<sup>24</sup> The inevitability of this social-scientific “law”

<sup>24</sup> Such an endorsement of imperial expansion and colonialism demonstrates, as Grahame Harvey has noted, why Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* ought to be considered “a building block in the construction of colonial modernity” (“Fetishes” 30).

ensures the righteousness of his cause, while the vulnerability of the process as it unfolds justifies the ethnologist's interventions.

Thus, *Primitive Culture* exemplifies a major intervention in the history of modern "secularization," in that Tylor, even more than Lubbock, makes the engine of history the evolution of cultural and intellectual forms from the "primitive" to the modern. As Sera-Shriar observes, Tylor sought "to bring religion under the domain of scientific understanding" (68-69). He does this by incorporating not only the methods and scientific ideological underpinnings of archaeological discourse, but also by extending mid-Victorian racial science to his treatment of culture. Though Tylor was adamantly on the side of the monogenesisists in the debates about racial origins that raged between Victorian anthropologists in Britain and America, and had previously split the Ethnological Society, his theory of cultural evolution accounted for cultural difference by an appeal to racial difference. In this, Tylor's anthropological stages are an example of the ways in which secularization was racialized.<sup>25</sup> For, as Sera-Shriar notes, according to Tylor, "[a]s races became more civilized they also become more secular, replacing their religious beliefs with rational scientific thought" (82). Tylor rejects racial essentialism, preferring a graduated scale of cultural evolution, but one which retains a racialized hierarchy that swaps racial essence for cultural development. The "lower" races are naturally more superstitious, more conservative,<sup>26</sup> and static, where as the "higher" are more liberal, secular, and adaptive.

<sup>25</sup> I will discuss the role of race in the *saecular discourse* in more detail in chapter five when I turn to Victorian race theory as it relates to questions of Celticity.

<sup>26</sup> Tylor takes none of the pains of Lyell or Lubbock in making theories and agenda palatable for his Tory readership. Instead, he draws explicit connections between what he views as "primitive" beliefs and habits,

However, something of that racial history seems to be archived in even the “civilized,” “higher” races. Tylor suggests that the stratified forms of belief are not simply overcome during cultural evolution, but are buried under the detritus of development, perhaps even awaiting excavation or re-emergence. And, whereas Lubbock can displace the threat of “primitivity” onto prehistoric and modern “savages” and “criminal populations” in civilized countries, Tylor finds something of primitivity within civilized culture, perhaps even within the civilized self. Such suggestions are evident in his theorization of the “survivals” of “animism,” which have an active influence upon the “civilized” mind and culture. I will now take a closer look at these two theories, their implications for secularity, and their influences upon pagan revivalism.

Tylor postulates that animism<sup>27</sup> is both the primeval form and enduring essence of religion, and all religions—all metaphysical philosophies—reveal animistic traces

and conservatism. He is firmly committed to a project of exposing illiberal opinions and habits, and the most consistent mode of doing so is to propose a kinship between conservatism and “savagery.” Indeed, for Tylor, ethnologists have

continual reason to be thankful for fools. It is quite wonderful, even if we hardly go below the surface of the subject, to see how large a share stupidity and unpractical conservatism and dogged superstition have had in preserving for us traces of the history of our race, which practical utilitarianism would have remorselessly swept away. The savage is firmly, obstinately conservative. No man appeals with more unhesitating confidence to the great precedent-makers of the past; the wisdom of his ancestors can control against the most obvious evidence his own opinions and actions. (1:156)

For Tylor, “unpractical conservatism and dogged superstition,” though useful to the ethnographer due to the petrification of primitive thought and custom, are also to some degree threatening to the process of cultural development. Breaking the uncritical acceptance of the past as authority over the present and the future by providing evidence and changing opinions is the main task of the ethnographer.

<sup>27</sup> Grahame Harvey explains that the concept of “animism” has undergone revision since Tylor deployed the term. I need to make a distinction here, because I want to be clear as to the kind of animism I see Victorian pagan revivalists adopting from Tylor. Tylorian animism, according to Harvey, is adopted from the Latin *animus* meaning “life.” The eighteenth-century German physician Georg Stahl, who theorized that “anima” is a physical element that “vitalizes living bodies,” an element contrastable to “phlogiston” which causes matter to degrade in ways like burning or rusting (“Animist Paganism” 395). Tylor took this discredited scientific theory and used it as a label for what he defined as the primeval and essential property of religion, and (perhaps ironically) used Stahl’s theory, itself discredited, to describe an epistemology which Tylor sees himself and the project of modern science as systematically discrediting for the betterment of humankind the world over. An erroneous, but completely rational belief in Tylor’s account,

(Larsen 23). However, it is ultimately, like Lubbock's "fetichism," a bad way of being worldly. There are two ways in which the Tylorian animist can be said to foster this false secularity: in the way the animist attributes vitality and spirit to things, and in the idea of the soul, which Tylor sees as the most basic and enduring of animistic survivals. In the first case, Tylor theorizes animism as the endowment of the world and all earthly phenomena with non-material animating entities individuated to each phenomenon or object (winds, rivers, trees, stones, tools, weapons, etc.). For, "the savage theory of the universe refers its phenomena in general to the wilful action of pervading personal spirits" (2:194). However, animism is a "Natural Religion" because it responds "in the most forceable way to the plain evidence of the senses" (2:13). A major part of Tylor's definition, then, is the attribution of agency to things. This agency is personified such that natural things are endowed not just with life, but with spirit—both in the sense of a metaphysical property, and in the sense of spiritedness, an agentic, affective, self-determining, and even self-affirming subjectivity.

Tylor asserts that animism not only fallaciously regards earthly entities as ensouled but also misunderstands the nature of embodiment and thereby gives rise to the equally erroneous notion of the human "soul." Animism starts as a "doctrine of souls"—

animism is the assumption that matter is or can be invested with life or vitality, which he presumes is always "spiritualistic" or in the form of a metaphysical attribution to inanimate matter of spirit-beings, like ghosts, demons, gods, fairies, nature spirits, etc. Harvey distinguishes between Tylorian animism and the "new animism," which has regained theoretical prominence in anthropology and religious studies in recent decades. What is currently being called the "new animism" is not new at all and is actually older than the "old animism" of Tylor, in so far as "animism" in this "new" sense refers to a feature of many Indigenous languages which has more accurately been called "grammatical animacy." Grammatical animacy designates things as having personhood and/or the capacity to act or influence as persons depending on social context. Maureen Matthews and Roger Roulette describe this in the *Anishinaabemowin* context. Things are grammatically designated as animate or can become animated depending on how they are referred to in the linguistic context. Grammatical animacy regards social agency of objects when they exceed the boundaries of their materiality and become "persons" because of that social agency. This can operate on a scale from most person-like to most object-like (Matthews and Roulette 175-83).

conceptions of subjective interiority—that are then projected outwards and attached to natural phenomena. This process leads from animistic spirits to monotheism:

the doctrine of souls, founded on the natural perceptions of primitive man, gave rise to the doctrine of spirits, which extends and modifies its general theory for new purposes, but in developments less authenticated and consistent, more fanciful and far-fetched. It seems as though the conception of a human soul, when once attained to by man, served as a type or model on which he framed not only his ideas of other souls of lower grade, but also his ideas of spiritual beings in general, from the tiniest elf that sports in the long grass up to the heavenly Creator and Ruler of the world, the Great Spirit. (2:196)

Animists do not just inhabit the world in a misapprehended manner, but they also inhabit their bodies likewise (as do, by implication, all moderns who also hold a belief in the human “soul”). For Tylor, “primitive” self-perception divided the individual into the person and the dream-double (2:29-30). According to Tylor, “primitive man” had to account for subjective experiences like dreams by positing the actual existence of the separate self.

This process of dividing self from body led to a projection of disembodied spiritual properties on to all earthly phenomena: “[A]s the human body was held to live and act by virtue of its own inhabiting spirit-soul, so the operations of the world seemed to be carried on by the influence of other spirits. And thus Animism, starting as a philosophy of human life, extended and expanded itself till it became a philosophy of nature at large” (2:271). Tylor, as Lubbock before him, holds it as an anthropological orthodoxy that “[e]ven in healthy waking life, the savage or barbarian has never learnt to

make that rigid distinction between subjective and objective, between imagination and reality,” and to “enforce” this division “is one of the main results of scientific education ” (2:29). “Primitive” animists thus mistake the epiphonema of natural laws as supernatural phenomena, and the Tylorian secular reformist is tasked with the disenchanting duty of correcting this error. The Tylorian ethnologist must expose all instances of animistic thinking as retarding cultural progress and cleave modern subjectivities from the objective world of things.

Although animism is a bad way of being secular, it is originally a worldly orientation and remains persuasive because it attempts to account, often effectively, for the natural laws that the scientist tries to describe. In this sense, the discrete influence of animistic habits of thought which pervade modern religion and its rawer superstitious survivals in folklore are in direct competition with secularity. Tylor addresses this as one of the urgent matters with which his own vocation is tasked: “[S]o well, indeed, does primitive animism account for the facts of nature, that it has held its place into the higher levels of education” (2:13). Animistic thinking is perpetuated throughout the civilized world in children’s play and imagination, but also in religion, philosophy, and art. Tylor formulates this as the essence of what it is that “survives” in his famous “survivals.”<sup>28</sup> Seemingly baiting Victorian aesthetes, he directly marks out poetry as a potent cite of animistic survivals:

<sup>28</sup> Ronald Hutton notes that “the theory of ‘pagan survivals’ was a major prop of both [Tylor’s] faith in the overall progress of humanity and his determination to break the grip of primitive modes of thought upon modern life, by exposing them for what they were” (118). Because Tylor comes across as zealously fixated upon these “relics of heathendom,” despite his anti-religionism, Hutton humorously quips that “Tylor was a puritan preacher, reclad as a Victorian liberal humanist” (118).

Poetry is full of myth and he who will understand it analytically will do well to study it ethnographically. In so far as myth, seriously or sportively meant, is the subject of poetry, and in so far as it is couched in language whose characteristic is that wild and rambling metaphor which represents the habitual experience of savage thought, the mental condition of the lower races is the key to poetry (2:533).

Tylor here rejects Romantic pretensions of visionary revelation but also the milder elitism of the Victorian aesthete who would hold poetry as the mark of higher culture, suggesting instead that poetry relies upon anachronistic habits of mind. Tylor's theory not only homogenizes cultural forms and the underlying beliefs that compel them, but it also grants the ethnologist a monopoly on all domains of cultural knowledge. As we will see in later chapters, such self-aggrandizing of secular scientific methods and disciplines will court the patronizing and ironic scorn of pagan revivalists like Robert Louis Stevenson who attempts to recuperate exactly the sort of "wild and rambling" character of poetry (in Stevenson's case, under the banner of "Romance").

This term "survival" is a telling descriptor for what he is trying to capture, in that, given his quasi-Spencerian formulation of cultural evolutionism, what Tylor designates as "surviving"—animism—is actually unfit for survival. As I have noted, animism is that which his "reformer's science" endeavours to bring to extinction.<sup>29</sup> Survivals, Tylor tells us, are "processes, customs, opinions and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society, different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of Culture out

<sup>29</sup> On the influence of Spencer over Tylor, see Lecourt (137).

of which the newer has evolved” (1:16). Distinct myths, customs, and rituals develop according to ‘primitive’ peoples’ conceptions of nature, and though, according to Tylor, as the process of cultural evolution unfolds, these ideas diminish in their value, nonetheless, “old habits hold their ground in the midst of a new culture which certainly would never have brought them in, but on the contrary presses hard to thrust them out” (1:71), and these compulsory activities and habits of mind cling on long into the future. The “survival” is the basic unit of evidence for cultural evolution, in that the various survivals are vestiges that are no longer serving the new cultural forms in which they find themselves and therefore are the trace of a prior cultural form. But it is also a source of internal tension in the overall theory.

For Tylor, these survivals persist often out of sheer force of habit. They underlie the conservative tendencies in society that breeds a reactionary denial of change and hesitancy to embrace a scientific view of the world and its workings. But, although these show the endurance of illiberal thinking, they are nevertheless marked for extinction: “The history of survival in cases like those of the folk-lore and occult arts . . . has for the most part been a history of dwindling and decay. As men's minds change in progressing culture, old customs and opinions fade gradually in a new and uncongenial atmosphere, or pass into states more congruous with the new life around them” (1:137). One reason that Tylor gives for the tendency for these affective influences to be so persistent is that they offer a kind of relief from what can to some seem a stifling, reductive secularity born of the rationalism of nineteenth-century positivistic science. Many civilized people are hindered by “a craving for the marvellous, an endeavour to get free from the tedious sense of law and uniformity in nature” (2:231). In this regard, we can see Tylor



inadvertently positioning animism and its survivals as a reservoir for resistance to secularization and secularity.

Scholars note that there is potential in the Tylorian survival for more syncretic forms of something more like the kind of cultural evolution Tylor himself advocates. Tylor indicates this in his own theory of “revivals”—his category for the occasions in history where dwindling vestigial animist forms of thought become temporality reinvigorated. For example, Paul-François Tremlett demonstrates that in Tylor’s own formulations, survivals are not simply fossils or relics, nor mere redundancies. That animism can lead from object-spirits, to elves, to monotheistic deities already indicates this. The survival is “a catalyst for cultural of religious genesis, whereby elements from different contexts are combined to produce something new. . . a hybrid assemblage of religion-culture” (190). And though Tylor himself imagines that survival passes into revival only when vestigial habits of mind are adopted for new ends and given new life, as he thought was the case with Spiritualism, it seems as though all survivals also carry the potential for revival, and moreover, that the very Tylorian method that would expose them and eradicate them as “illiberal” can also revive them.

Tylor, despite his own best efforts, does not present a straightforward narrative of progressive development. Rather he envisions the advancement from “savagery” to “civilization” as complex and impelled by both internal and external forces. The history of the belief in witchcraft in Europe presents a particular problem to his theory, which he addresses by arguing that survivals can, given particularly unprogressive times, morph into revivals. “For,” Tylor writes, “the stream of civilization winds and turns upon itself, and what seems the bright onward current of one age may in the next spin round in a

whirling eddy, or spread into a dull and pestilential swamp” (1:136-37). In these instances, “we may now and then trace on from the very turning-point the change from passive survival into active revival. Some well-known belief or custom has for centuries shown symptoms of decay, when we begin to see that the state of society, instead of stunting it, is favouring its new growth, and it bursts forth again with a vigour often as marvellous as it is unhealthy” (1:137). Tylor’s metaphors of light and dark, onward currents, and swamps will be thematized in both Jefferies and Stevenson, who affect paganism in ways that play on these liberal secular anxieties and insecurities about the course of history, the racialized other, and the threat of the pagan past.

But there is already in Tylor’s language an internalized complication of his own secularizing vision of history. As Tremlett observes, Tylor’s juxtapositions of metaphors of “dwindling and decay” alongside ones which evoke more of a sense of “winding” and “whirling” throughout *Primitive Culture* reveal that Tylor “imagines time as both linear line and spiral, and in doing so switches between the idea of religion’s extinction and the idea of adaptive change” (190). The persistence of witch trials into the Late-Middle Ages and Early Modern periods serve as his examples, and he addresses these with a defensive tone against those who “dwell willingly on the history of witchcraft” because they “desire to show that, with all our faults, we are no wiser and better than our ancestors” (1:137).

Tylor saves face for his theory by arguing that the belief in witchcraft during these periods “was a revival from the remote days of primaeval history” (1:138). As we have seen above, he equates the conservative tendencies within Western society with the racial inheritance lingering on from the unfinished process of cultural and psychological evolution. The “lower races” are once again enlisted as scapegoats. He frames the belief

in witchcraft as a “disease that broke out afresh in Europe” but “had been chronic among the lower races” because, as Lubbock before him, he holds that “[w]itchcraft is part and parcel of savage life” (1:138). By tracing the phenomena of “witchcraft surviving throughout the barbarian and early civilized world,” he finds it in existence into the “11<sup>th</sup> century” when “ecclesiastical influence was discouraging the superstitious belief in sorcery”; however, “a period of reaction set in,” and by “the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the spirit of religious persecution had begun to possess all of Europe with a dark and cruel madness, the doctrine of witchcraft revived with all its barbaric vigour” (1:139). Nonetheless, argues Tylor, this only demonstrates “the extent and accuracy with which the theory of survivals” explains the revival of witchcraft, for in its revival, “there may be traced a tradition often hardly modified from barbarous and savage times” (1:140).

As evidence, he turns to the folklore around protection from bewitchment, which deploys iron as a protective charm against the witch. Tylor traces this back to other folkloric instances in which iron “drives away fairies and elves, and destroys their power” (1:140). From this he deduces that witches, and the fairies and elves which predate them are “creatures belonging to the ancient Stone Age, and the new material is hurtful to them” (1:140). In Tylor’s example here we can note both the threat that paganism poses, that is, the threat that, if unchecked, survivals can be worked into full-on revivals, but also the ways in which his own “science”—that of ethnology—is a secular talisman against the threat of Stone Age “savagery.” Also of note is the way that Tylor gets the civilizing forces and figures of progressive history off the hook for nurturing survivals into revivals. Rather it is “savages,” the peasantry—who in their state of benighted unenlightenment are coeval with the “rude races of Australia and South America”—and

even more so, West Africans (of whom Tylor reassuringly informs his readers “it has been asserted that the belief in witchcraft costs more lives than the slave trade ever did” [1:138]) who are to blame. Subtly, also, Tylor has aligned not only European peasantry and rustics with these “lower races,” he alludes to conservative reactionaries, who by implication, though seemingly civilized, deny their own coevalness by clinging to harmful traditions.

Tylor uses his discussion of “savage” survivals of witchcraft developing into full-blown revivals to pivot to what he sees as a contemporary example in Spiritualism. He writes that “modern spiritualism” is “a direct revival from the regions of savage philosophy and peasant folk-lore,” an example of “a great philosophic-religious doctrine, flourishing in the lower culture but dwindling in the higher” having “re-established itself in full vigour” (1:142). Now “the world is again swarming with intelligent and powerful disembodied spiritual beings, whose direct action on thought and matter is again confidently asserted, as in those times and countries where physical science had not as yet so far succeeded in extruding these spirits and their influences from the system of nature” (1:142-3). “As of old,” Tylor laments, “men live now in habitual intercourse with the spirits of the dead” (1:143). The Victorians, Tylor warns, are witnessing a “spiritualistic renaissance” (144).<sup>30</sup> Putting this all together, we can see, though this is not the whole thrust of the two-volume work, pitting the forces of secularization against paganism is an important way in which Tylor conceptualizes the urgency of his vocation as an ethnologist. By affirming the mode of secularity that denies coevalness and puts its faith in progressive agents of reform, “civilization” can stay “her” course and resist

<sup>30</sup> On Tylor’s view of Spiritualism as a revival of animism, see Josephson-Storm (99-101).

revivals of paganism. But he grants power to the survivals of animism, not only to endure the rigorous process of cultural evolution but to dog the reformist pedant, and to even be seductive enough to be worked up into a full-blown revival that mystifies and enchants the very thing Tylor is trying to demystify and disenchant. It is the revival of survivals of animistic paganism in the Tylorian sense that I will pursue going forward, beginning with one of its earliest and most influential figures in Walter Pater, who theorizes cyclical revivals of paganism as meliorating the kinds of conservatism and orthodoxy Tylor opposes.

So far in this chapter, I have demonstrated the integral role archaeology and anthropology played in the formation of the type of Victorian secularity I have been tracking. This secularity, as I have suggested has been the case with earlier forms of Christian secularity, has also revived paganism but with a new defining quality: animism. Animism adds a fascination and sense of enchantment to “lower” races, bringing Victorian anthropological reconstructions of their cultures in line with aesthete’s and creative writers’ already existing admiration of the paganism of classical Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians. Animism also pivots the discourse of paganism in a new direction from the kind of anti-Christian iconoclasm that is prevalent in early Swinburne, and offers animistic, prehistoric paganism as a new mode of subjective mediation to oppose and resist the secularity being formulated by Victorian “human sciences” like archaeology and anthropology which claim a monopoly on cultural forms.

Both Lubbock and Tylor have served as examples of how the Victorian development of the *saecular discourse* regards modern civilization as bearing traces of the deep history of cultural development, and though they present that development as

progressively advancing, in both writers the traces of the pagan appear as a seductive threat. The sense of secularity I want to gather from my brief look at their major books lies in the sense of worldly presence, of here-ness and now-ness and of ecological relationality they both either imply or demonstrate. In both, there is an emphasis on the linear nature of temporal and historical feeling, that is, the sense of “hope” for Lubbock and of obligation for the Tylorian “office of ethnology” and its responsibility to change the minds and feelings of those illiberal members of civilization.

In this sense of linearity, both figures deny coevalness to “primitive” peoples, but they also enchant the time of the “primitive” with a counter-modern, illiberal, animistic, not-quite-secular but not-quite-religious way of relating to the world. This anachronistic, pagan mode of thinking and feeling is both a threat and a kind of charm to secular modernity. It is a threat because it is anarchic, overly sensuous, as well as superstitious, and unprogressive because presented as in a state of developmental suspension and stupefaction, incapable of progressive change and evolution. However, for both Lubbock and Tylor, although for different reasons, non-modern, “primitive” epistemologies and modes of feeling are seductive because they present a kind of false liberality and a negative freedom—the freedom of lawlessness, freedom from English customs and manners, freedom from reformist interventions in social and political processes, but also as Tylor suggests, freedom from the monotony of rationalism and the rigorous process of disenchantment—the freedom to satisfy those cravings for the marvelous.

Moreover, in Lubbock and Tylor, there is also a strong urge to cultivate a new secular sensibility. Secular moderns are to orient themselves in relation to the world in a specific way, namely a modern subject must not conflate subjective experience with

objective realities being authorized by positivist science. Such a conflation is by degrees too pagan. The modern adult (male) ought to be incapable of being affected too deeply by art or nature. He must not have too much of a “craving for the marvelous” as Tylor puts it. However, both Lubbock and Tylor rely upon contrasted parallels between modern and non-modern cultures and they both stress distance in time (and space), while also inviting comparison, and even stimulating a sense of charm for the “primitive” other that we will see in both Jefferies and Stevenson.

### ***“Buried Fire:” Animism and Pater’s “Primaeval Pagan Sentiment”***

In this section, I will argue that in his notion of “the primaeval pagan sentiment,” Walter Pater formulates a paganized counter-secularity, a pagan way of being earthly (100). Recent scholarship often presents Pater’s interest in paganism as secular in nature. For instance, Sara Lyons argues that Pater’s “‘paganism’ often demands to be read as a form of secularism insofar as [he] generally celebrates paganism for its affirmation of . . . an ideal of human flourishing that is conceived without reference to the transcendent, or anything beyond or higher than the human and the natural” (7). Furthermore, the revival of paganism is “polemical,” for Lyons, in that it is part of Aestheticism’s secularizing “effort to assert the sufficiency of worldliness, the mortality and materiality of the beautiful, and the claims of life here and now” (37). While Pater’s aesthetics is devoted to worldliness, it is worth asking why frame this in relation to paganism, and specifically a “primaeval” *paganism*? Why would Pater opt for that description as opposed to, say, a “secular sentiment” that is the core of paganism?

The retention of a not-quite religious, not-quite secular frame of reference is deliberate and Pater's turn to a "primaeval" paganism captures something more than "sufficient" worldliness. Rather, Pater's aesthetics requires a "pagan sentiment" because that sentiment is attached necessarily to the earthly in a way that avoids compromising aesthetics to either a secular or Christian form of disenchantment of earthly experience. Thus, whereas Lyons reads Pater as secularizing paganism, I will argue the reverse—that Pater paganizes the mode of Victorian secularity taking shape under the influence of archaeology and anthropology. While it is true that Pater does not pursue a transcendentalist aesthetics, his turn to paganism engages in an archaeology of religious and aesthetic experience that is coloured by Tylor's two major concepts of animism and the survival of animism as a "primitive" mode of subjectivity. But, Pater's "pagan sentiment" is recuperated as a counter-secular aesthetic impulse, basic to human psychology rather than simply "basic" or "primitive" in the Tylorian pejorative sense.

Pater's conception of "the pagan sentiment," furthermore, is formulated in a debate with Matthew Arnold. Sebastian Lecourt argues that both Pater and Arnold participate in what he calls a particularly "liberal" form of "aesthetic secularity" (28). While there are strong currents of liberalism in both of their aesthetics, I want to qualify that sense of "secularity" in both by considering what each means by "paganism" and how it informs their aesthetics and their ideas of worldly belonging. Arnold's "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment" (1864) adjudicates a proper form of secularity by cross-comparing "religious sentiments" of previous ages. Pater's *Renaissance* directly responds to Arnold's denigration of paganism by evoking and recouping Tylorian animism. Thus, to fully appreciate Pater's "pagan sentiment," we must first consider how Arnold defines



and deploys “paganism.” While they inherit some elements of secularization and its attendant secularity, both Arnold and Pater make notable departures from the Victorian *saecular discourse* in how they imagine historical procession as revolutions in cultural sentiment that put secular and religious forms of the past in generative intercourse with each other. Their respective aesthetics involve archaeological and anthropological revisionary engagements with subcultural forms and seek new ways of being worldly in processes of excavation, revaluation, and recuperation. In this section, then, I will first show how Arnold’s secular liberal humanism develops in contrast with forms of pagan affectivity. Then I will show how, in contrast to Arnold, Pater imagines a way of being earthly he defines as a “primaeval pagan sentiment” (100).

Arnold’s version of what Lecourt identifies as “aesthetic secularity” takes shape during the mid-to-late 1860s. During these years, Arnold participates in the Victorian *saecular discourse* both in the ways he secularizes history into epochs and in the way he identifies sensibilities as racial and cultural inheritances of the past active in the present, which are understood as either too secular or too religious (Lecourt 70). As Lecourt observes, Arnold’s theory of cultural dialectics is racialized in that he views the self “comprised of multiple, incommensurate racial instincts” (69). This liberal model of the self is integral to Arnold’s view of culture as “a secularist ethos that can gather up older, illiberal principles like religion and harmonize them in their ideal relations” (71-72). As such, Arnoldian secularity reflects Asad’s claims that modern secularism is a mode of subjective mediation based on an underlying grammar that structures affect, experience, and sensibility, which also informs identities in ways that blur the lines between the ethnic and religious. That kind of mediation is what Arnold sees as one of the main jobs

of the literary critic. Arnold suggests that a form of secularity (as I have been defining it—Arnold would not have used that word) that is appropriate for modernity must be developed to mediate these inherited sensibilities by keeping the contiguous racial-cultural inheritances of the past in a progressive, dialogic intercourse towards a perfected humanity. However, though culture can collect and revalue some older forms of experience, there are certain forms that it must censor, completely assimilate, or exorcise. Forms of paganism and associated cultural, epistemic, and spiritual attributes belong to this category.

Arnold's aesthetics were once synonymous with the narrative of the secular replacement of religion by art and/or cultural criticism,<sup>31</sup> and his picture of culture and his vision of the vocation of the cultural critic does entail secularization in both the typical sense and the special sense I have tried to define.<sup>32</sup> However, as Lecourt demonstrates, Arnold's notion of culture does not propose to replace religion, but to incorporate religion and aesthetics in a dialogical process. Arnold infamously defined "culture" as a "pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know . . . the best

<sup>31</sup> For instance, Tracy Fessenden claims that the post-secular is a rejection of "Arnold's replacement story" (164), and Michael Kauffman references Arnold's supposed belief that the study of art and literature could function "as a substitution for religion" (610).

<sup>32</sup> For example, in his famous definition of "disinterestedness" as being a "love and a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake" ("The Function of Criticism" 141), Arnold demonstrates the kinds of secular affects Scheer et al. discuss. This tendency is also evident in his equally famous idea that criticism "obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of doctrine, politics, and everything of that kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best without the intrusion of any other consideration whatever" (141). The secularity of Arnold's criticism is interesting in regard to the role of affect. As Scheer et al. note, disciplines and domains of public life which are often defined as secular are "typically predicated upon an exclusion of the motional, affective and sensorial from their operations, often relegating these aspects to domains deemed 'private' or 'subjective'" (2). So, although Arnoldian criticism may present its inherent "disinterestedness" in alignment with secular "self-presentation and self-cultivation," which is "coded as 'rational' or 'neutral' in opposition to the 'irrational' and 'emotional,'" Arnold's description of it fits Scheer et al.'s suggestion that secularity appears "as a certain mode or style of affectivity invited by an ordering of the social" (2)—or, in Arnold's case, the cultural.

which is thought and said in the world” (*Culture and Anarchy* 6). The “perfection” that culture cultivates requires “developing all sides of our humanity” (6), which, in turn, requires consultation with (Anglican) Christianity. In “Sweetness and Light,” the first chapter of *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), for instance, Arnold clarifies his notion of how culture and religion are corrective and expansive influences upon each other. There is something quite literally essentially human in religion, for Arnold. For instance, Arnold writes, “Religion says the kingdom of God is within you, and culture, in like manner places human perfection in an internal condition in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality” (47). Here, then, “perfection” is brought into something not unlike the evolutionism of Lubbock and Tylor, a line of development, the condition arrived at when the human is most distanced from their animal-like subjection to nature. Arnold fashions this in terms of a struggle to retain humanity, and the quest for perfection is aided by the interplay of culture and religion, which, in Arnold’s account, is necessary in the struggle to conquer “the plain faults of our animality” (56). In this, then, we see that secularity is a modern condition that privileges a certain form of “humanity proper,” a notion of developmental process by which religion and secular culture, and the fruitful tensions between them, play crucial roles. Culture pursues “a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and it is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest” (*Culture and Anarchy* 48). However, there are forms of religion that are exempted from Arnold’s “many-sidedness,” especially excesses of religious or quasi-religious affects and sensibilities in the form of “Hebraism,” decadent late-Hellenic paganism.

For Arnold, “paganism” represents, as it did for Lubbock and Tylor, a modern temptation to go backwards or degenerate. Arnold uses the term “paganism” almost exclusively with reference to ancient Mediterranean cultures, and especially with a sense of amorality he sees as characteristic of late Hellenic culture. However, there is a second way that Arnold participates in the discourse of paganism that extends it to what he calls the “Celtic genius,” a sentiment over-determined by a reverence for “natural magic,” a close conception to Tylor’s “animism,” that Arnold assigns to the Celtic peoples of Britain, Ireland, and France. In both cases, the pagan is presented as too worldly, whether it is too sensuous and decadent as in the Hellenic version, or too close to nature and thus too far from civilized culture as with the Celts. Paganism, in either sense, read in the light of “Sweetness and Light,” is a form of secularity that revels too much in “our animality.”

For example, Arnold’s “Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment” (a lecture delivered at Oxford in 1864 and published in the collection *Essays in Criticism* the following year), demonstrates the development of his secularity. This essay also exemplifies the kind of secularist mediation of experience, identity, sensibility, belief, and epistemology that Asad has demonstrated as part of the “grammar” of modern secularism. Arnold takes the historical examples of pagan and Christian “religious sentiments,” compares and contrasts them, delineates what is good and bad within them, and ultimately presents his own secularized vision of the “best” that each of them has to offer modern culture and its quest for the perfection of humanity. These two inadequate forms of religious sentiment are exemplified for Arnold in literary history and the Medieval Christian “religious sentiment,” the best example of which are St. Francis’ “Canticle of the Creatures” and the pagan form in Theocritus’ fifteenth idyll. The latter

serves Arnold as an embodiment of “the paganism which all the world has in its mind when it speaks of paganism”—that is, the decadent form of paganism which gives Hellenophiles like himself an air of dandyish amorality from which he needs to constantly distance himself (121). One of the explicit objectives of the lecture is to denounce the kind of revived paganism celebrated by Heinrich Heine, which Arnold sees as degenerate, elitist, escapist, and ultimately existentially dangerous. Arnold reads the central hymn to Adonis recited in Theocritus’ idyll as revealing paganism as fit for “a gay and pleasure-loving . . . people who seem never made to be serious, never made to be sick or sorry” (126-27). Theocritus has crafted, in Arnold’s view, an accurate depiction of the pagan sentiment: pagan affect is not consoling to the masses, it fails as a “religious sentiment” because, to recall Shagan’s notion of Protestant strategies of secular navigation, paganism fails to sanctify the secular—it fails to spiritually “elevate” or “console” its adherents.

But there is a further problem with the pagan sentiment. It is a form of modern temptation because it encourages over-stimulation of the sensual side of human experience, and it is dangerous because it ends in catastrophe:

[T]he ideal, cheerful, sensuous pagan life is not sick or sorry. No; yet its natural end is in the sort of life we see in Pompeii and Herculaneum . . . a life which by no means in itself suggests the thought of horror and misery, which even, in many ways, gratifies the senses and the understanding; but by the very intensity and unremittingness of its appeal to the senses and the understanding, by its stimulating a single side too absolutely, ends by fatiguing and revolting us; ends

by leaving us with a sense of tightness, of oppression,—with a desire for an utter change, for clouds, storms, effusions, and relief. (137)

Here Arnold suggests that the decadent pagan sentiment was in a sense too much to withstand, and that a drastic event (his use of the eruption of Vesuvius is implicitly likened to the advent of Christ and the overthrow of paganism by Christianity) is inevitable. Given that Arnold will develop his special sense of culture as concerned with equality and a classless society, the implication being made here may be that without a proper “popular” religious sentiment, like that of COE moderate Anglicanism, the unrest of the populace may lead to an anarchy as destructive to modernity as the eruption of volcanoes was to pagan Rome. In all this, we see Arnold aligning paganism with a kind of decadent indifference that courts disaster and entrenches divisions in society and culture, but which ultimately reaches “a natural end.”

This essay finds Arnold interested in charting a middle course between extremes and pursuing an early form of what he will later describe as “disinterest,” a major secular virtue. Arnoldian secularity seeks a method of mediation between the two kinds of religious sentiments that are inheritances of past forms which need to be analysed and moderated by the cultural critic. From the decadent paganism found in Theocritus, Arnold salvages the latent religiosity of the festival of Adonis, which he sees as the dwindled remnants of a mystery cult that worshiped the changing of the seasons with a forward-looking hopefulness to the sun’s return after the cold and hardship of winter (128). Arnold finds in this worship a kernel of the proper form of religious sentiment which he defines as consolation and which he celebrates as reminiscent of the central message of Christianity. Moreover, as a leading example of this mode of secularity

needed for modernity, Arnold looks to the precedent set by Sophocles, in an era before the decadent decline of paganism. Sophocles makes an example for modern culture because he expressed reverence for the “august laws” of the cosmos while still venerating expressions of human freedom (128). As Richard Dellamora has observed, Arnold salvages from Theocritus’ hymn the tragic myth of Adonis, “the sacrificial death of a young man” as a “secular myth,” which he repurposes as a Christ-like example “of painful subjection” to a cosmic order (104). In this simultaneously Christianized and secularized recycling of Adonis, Arnold emphasizes “suffering” which is “inherent in the laws of nature” (Dellamora 103) and celebrates the “subordina[tion]” of “the body and its pleasures” to “‘laws,’ to culture, and to an idealized view of the state” (109).

We can see this required subordination in the name of “perfection” in Arnold’s treatment of the Celts and Celtic literature. The modern Celtic inhabitants of Britain and Ireland, in Arnold’s characterization, share certain things in common with Theocritus’ pagans. Arnold has more sympathy with and admiration of modern Celts than he does with late-Hellenic pagans, in large part because he sought to make Celtic literature a respectable field of study and because he advocated for union between England and Ireland. In *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1868), Arnold diagnoses the essence of Celtic culture as an innate racial component very much akin to what Tylor terms “animism,” though Arnold requires that it be absorbed, reduced, and made supplemental, rather than requiring its gradual eradication.

Arnold’s construction of Celticity paints them as a gendered, classed, and mystified “race.” The Celts have a “peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature,” they are “in a special way attracted” to “the secret of natural beauty and

natural magic” (107). The “Celtic genius,” in Arnold’s characterization, is at once “more airy and unsubstantial” but also beastly with “the head in the air, snuffing and snorting” (102). Celts’ “failure to reach any material civilization” is due to their being perpetually stuck in a lower class, both in terms of race, and literally in terms of class in that they are naturally given to poverty—they are described as chronically “poor, slovenly, and half-barbarous” (105). The Celt is “undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature” and, as such, makes for the ideal subject of the Saxon, who is “disciplinable and steadily obedient” (109). The “Celtic genius,” however, brings “sentiment,” which is its essential component, “love of beauty, charm, and spirituality” which are “its excellence,” to Germanic “steadfastness, commonness, and humdrum” (115). Arnoldian culture, then, can account for the plurality of cultural influences and origins within English culture while also privileging modern English culture and language as worthy of the hegemonic mediation of all racial inheritances in Britain. Arnold makes this clear in his essays on Celtic literature when he writes that

the fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogenous, English speaking whole, the breaking down of barriers between us, the swallowing up of separate provincial nationalities, is a consummation to which the natural course of things irresistibly tends; it is a necessity of what is called modern civilization, and modern civilization is a real legitimate force; the change must come, and its accomplishment is a mere affair of time. (12)<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Arnold is here talking about Welsh, a language which the sooner it “disappears,” the “better for England, and the better for Wales” because for him the Welsh language, Welsh literature, and the Welsh people, are not yet modern (*On the Study of Celtic Literature* 12).



The overall thrust of the book is concerned with reconciling English and Irish hostilities by suggesting a sympathetic, albeit patronizing reevaluation of the contributions of Celtic culture to England and the English. But we can see in Arnold's language here a use of racial theory towards an end of that Asadian definition of secularity that mediates and creates experiences, beliefs, and sentiments. Arnold's secularity features the sense of inevitability and naturalization of the course of time in bringing about historical development that has become a standard feature of secularization narratives down to the present, but it is his use of racial science that brings to the fore the role of race in constructions of secularity.

As Robert Young observes, "Arnold's vision of British history argues for a dialectic continuity between the races," and envisions it as "the task of the literary critic . . . to detect and chart the harmonious literary, strictly textual resolution of this racial dialectic" (151). Recalling Rectenwald's definition of Victorian secularity as a "substantive category" which is not imagined as finally achieved but as an "optative condition" (8), Arnoldian "aesthetic secularity" (Lecourt 28), imagines that substance as a compound of racial, ethnic, and cultural embodied inheritances, and the "optative" or hoped-for condition that would finalize that form of secularity is the hybridization of those forms, although under Anglo-Saxon or "Teutonic" oversight. Perhaps ironically, for Arnold, hedonistic late-Hellenic "pleasure worship" is too secular and too worldly, to be appropriate for the needs of modern culture and the modern self, and likewise, the animistic "Celtic genius" is not secular enough because the Celts are too spiritual and too mystified by natural phenomena to fully belong in secular modern times.

In both definitions of paganism, Arnold performs the kind of rhetorical juxtaposition of paganism as both bad secularity and bad religion that we have seen before through Browne, Lyell, Lubbock, and Tylor. Arnold's secularity, unlike that of Tylor, retains an important place for myth, spirituality, and religion (especially Anglicanism and the Church of England) both in terms of its influence over the majority of the populace, and crucial resource in the "perfection" of humanity. However, the role of the pagan, whether it is the decadent form of the late Hellenic world or the decayed anachronistic form of the Celts, is to reveal the limitations of both secular and religious epistemologies and the implications they have for modern aesthetics, spirituality, and morality. In other words, the Arnoldian critic, not unlike the Tylorian ethnologist, must participate in projects of cultural and social reform by identifying and hastening the overcoming of pagan survivals and curbing revivalist tendencies.

In the rest of this chapter, I will show how Pater's interest in paganism as a "sentiment" marks a modern intervention in the long history of contrasting Christian, pagan, and secular ways of being worldly. In *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), Pater offers a remedial view of animistic survivals and revolutions of the "pagan sentiment" which he claims can stimulate the expansion of modern culture rather than undermining, stalling, or upending it. This "primaeval pagan sentiment" (100) is a somewhat understated but critical feature of Pater's theory of cyclical renaissance revivals in the history of feeling. It is also integral to his call for a modern art and aesthetics that can satisfy the "desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life" that is built upon "the discovery of old and forgotten sources" and can be instrumental in creating "new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art" (9).

As such, Pater conceives of modernity and secularity in a way that is in implicit tension with that of Lubbock, Tylor, and Arnold, all of whom view revivals of primitive and/or pagan epistemologies and aesthetics as detrimental to modern culture. Pater theorizes these as a crucial element which, rather than being eradicated, suppressed, or repressed, requires the aid of the aesthete to nurture the survivals of the “pagan sentiment” into fresh growth and collaboration with modern conditions. My project demonstrates his success in this as the following chapters will show. Pater stimulates a new interest in paganism that reinvests it with an archaeologically and anthropologically recreated prehistoric animism as a mode of affectivity. Pagan revivalism contests and supplements modern secularity by recuperating archaic forms, affecting anachronistic ways of thinking and feeling as a means of developing new literary styles, and tapping into old myths and folklore for new ways of re-negotiating the experience of secular modernity.

Scholars have shown how Pater’s interest in “the pagan sentiment” is in direct response to Arnold’s lecture of 1864. Pater’s recuperation of the pagan sentiment evinces the syncretism at the heart of his aesthetics, which, as Sebastian Lecourt suggests, formulates “renaissance” as a “creative recuperation of older aesthetic forms” (132). Dellamora argues that whereas Arnold retains “the basic antithesis between spirit and flesh” (104), Pater “bases the aesthetic in bodily response” and connects this with endurance of “the pagan sentiment in modern Christianity” (112-13). Pater’s notion of paganism as a subterranean element in Christianity demonstrates his adoption of Tylor’s theory of survivals. Pater emphasises the internal tension in Tylor’s theories I discussed above, bringing the generative potential of the survival to the surface and presenting “survivals” as “a process halfway between passive reception and active recuperation,”

which permitted him to extend “his narrative of cultural revival back beyond classical Greece into the twilight of prehistory” (Lecourt 138). Pater adopted Tylorian survivals in his theory of the “pagan sentiment,” which he defines in terms reminiscent of Tylorian animism.<sup>34</sup> “Primitive” animism, then, for Pater, is a crucial component of human subjectivity and cultivating it is vital to a modern selfhood and a modern culture, the likes of which for which Arnold calls. So, whereas Lubbock, Tylor, and Arnold all imagine paganism as a degenerate anachronism to be rendered obsolete in modernity, Pater privileges the “pagan sentiment” as an urgently needed mode of feeling to be revived and reinvested in modern art and aesthetics.

To instigate this encounter, Pater performs a kind of archaeology of aesthetic experience, digging below Tylorian civilization, Arnoldian culture, and the history of Western religion, locating the basis of aesthetics in both the Earth and the body. Pater understands the pagan sentiment as a basic principle original to and operating below the surface of religion from well before the familiar forms of Greek polytheism down to modern Christianity. In contrast to Arnold who found in the pagan sentiment a decadent, excessive growth of only one aspect of what would amount to a properly balanced human spirit, Pater holds this sentiment to be the most fundamental element in all religious experiences. He proclaims, “the broad characteristic of all religions as they exist for the greatest number, is a universal pagan sentiment, a paganism which existed before the Greek religion, and has lingered far onward into the Christian world, ineradicable, like some persistent vegetable growth, because its seed is an element of the very soil of which

<sup>34</sup> On Tylor’s influence upon Pater’s idea of the pagan sentiment, see also Denisoff *Decadent Ecology* (40).

it springs” (99). Pater’s conflation of seed and soil here emphasizes his point—that there is something innately pagan in all religion. However, Pater’s metaphor also suggests that the pagan sentiment is deeply rooted in the human psyche and the human aesthetic response to earthly or natural phenomena.

Pater suggests that animism is an outgrowth of psycho-physiological, almost instinctual pre-apperceptive aesthetic responses to stimuli, and thus a crucial basic element of aesthetic experience.<sup>35</sup> He argues that religion and myth develop from basic ritual elements informed by routine daily tasks such as bathing, hunting, and harvesting (99-100). Paganism’s definitive “sentiment” is oriented towards what is earthy in our nature. “This pagan sentiment,” Pater writes, “measures the sadness with which the human is filled whenever its thoughts wander far from what is here, and now. It is beset by notions of irresistible natural powers, for the most part ranged against man, but the secret also of his luck, making the earth golden and the grape fiery for him” (99). These “notions of irresistible natural powers” correspond to Tylor’s theory of primitive animism and its assumption of discrete spiritual entities that inhabit natural objects and phenomena and engender them with human-like agency. For Pater, paganism is an animistic survival innate to conscious awareness, undergirding all religious and aesthetic experience. This pagan sentiment is both primitive in terms of the history of ‘civilization,’ and a

<sup>35</sup> In this, Pater anticipates recent interest in animist psychology. Arianne Conty argues that “studies in genetic and developmental psychology have shown that animism is a natural predisposition in the human being, unlearned only through a long process of socialization” (2). Moreover, Conty suggests that new psychological research indicates that “the repression of animism in modern thinking represents a major pathology” (2). Echoing Paterian calls for revival and cultivation of the “pagan sentiment” as a remedy to the faults of modern subjectivity, Conty argues that “[a]n animistic renaissance could thus function as an alternative to and a cure for the divisions and dichotomies founded in the human exceptionalism at the core of modern value” (2).

primordial aspect of human psychology that is not shed by cultural evolution, but which subsists in the basic aesthetic responses to stimulation.

Counter to Arnold, Pater contends that this sentiment is essentially consolatory. He argues that the pagan sentiment responds to the malaise that accompanies thoughts of what is beyond the duration of life and one's total days on Earth. It also reflects human vulnerability and insecurity, in that the pagan sentiment is the sentiment of a conscious being that finds itself in the midst of hostile forces. Furthermore, the pagan sentiment is a basic response to the conscious awareness of being alive, for it recognizes the potency of life by sensing human mortality. Pater writes that the pagan sentiment is also characterized by an anticipatory nostalgia for an earthly life inevitably lost: "it is with a rush of homesickness that the thought of death presents itself," for the pagan sentiment is actually a longing to "remain on earth forever" (99). Thus, the pagan sentiment, counter to Arnold's take on it, is essentially consolatory, not because it is religious in nature, but because in it is the expression of an aesthetic inclination to value earthly experience for its own sake. It is an instinctual attitude towards life that pre-empts our anxiety by attempting to balance suffering with joy and beauty. Pater thus grounds spirituality in a pagan aesthetics of earthly experience. In contradistinction to Arnold, Pater suggests that this "pagan sentiment" is actually one that has a more basic response to human suffering: "It is the anodyne which the religious principle, like one administering opiates to the incurable, has added to the law which makes life sombre for the vast majority of mankind" (100). Thus, rather than overstimulating the sensuous, as Arnold argues, the pagan sentiment for Pater appeals to earthly, embodied experience in a way that translates

it into a spiritualized condition, as an extension and elevation of the aesthetic, affective, and sensorial domains.

Demonstrating the ways in which Pater's aesthetics is an "archaeological exercise"<sup>36</sup> that "requires acknowledging the primacy of the material or physical dimension of human life," Linda Dowling defines Pater's aesthetics as committed to a "reconciliation with the earth" (210-11). Pater's archaeological excavation is thus also cultural recuperation, and the uncovered animistic survivals are not, as they are in Tylor, fossils of dead or dying cultural forms, but vital instruments in this reconciliation with the earth. I see this as a crucial element of Pater's engagement with the rhetorical positioning of paganism against secularity. Pater paganizes secularity by recuperating animistic relationality as part of what Dowling insightfully describes as his attempts to "reconcile himself and his readers emotionally to their new home in and of the earth" (221). Part of re-homing Victorian secular moderns is reconceptualising the individual subject as an animist ecology nested amidst and among animist ecologies. Dennis Denisoff describes Pater as "thinking through the body . . . as part of an animist collective" ("Dissipating" 439), even describing the aesthete as something of an arch-priest of what he calls "pagan decadence," which is defined by a "counter-humanist deindividuation and multi-species intersubjectivity" (432). Denisoff defines this as a "dissipative" model of subjectivity that highlights "the role of agents that are often inconstant and deindividuated" (432). Thus, Pater's "reconciliation with the earth" and the revival of animism requires not only a renewed form of aesthetic experience, but it also suggests a rejection of Arnoldian

<sup>36</sup> As Dowling also observes, Pater held an appointment in archaeology at Oxford and was even dubbed "the father of Archaeological teaching" (221).

humanism, which held that a proper religious sentiment appealed to a higher sense of development and spiritual consolation, a sense which guides us further to a more perfected human nature, away from our “animality.”

The revival of animism, for Pater, however, is in service to this reconciliation with the Earth, and is not an attempt to develop a neo-pagan religious system. Pater believes that modernity has made irretrievable “that naïve, rough sense of freedom, which supposes man’s will to be limited, if at all by a will stronger than his,” which Pater sees as part of all religions as such (117). Yet, Pater also resists the kind of disenchanted secularity of Tylor. He refuses any form of determinism or reductionist approach to human and earthly phenomena. Moderns, Pater insists, must no longer conceive of “necessity” as an external force “as of old . . . with whom we can do warfare” but rather as “a magical web woven through and through us . . . permeating us with a network subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet bearing in it the central forces of the world” (117). This speaks to Dowling’s definition of Pater’s “reconciliation with the earth” and Denisoff’s interpretation of Pater as presenting a form of counter-humanist deindividuation as part of Pater’s call to revive and renew the pagan sentiment. As I quoted above, the pagan sentiment “is beset by notions of irresistible natural powers, for the most part ranged against man, but the secret also of his luck, making the earth golden and the grape fiery for him” (99). In this, we see how Pater contests the forms of secularity I have laid out in this chapter and offers instead a recuperated pagan way of feeling, thinking, and being earthly.

Pater’s revival of the pagan sentiment is counter-secular, not in the sense that he attempts to revive a religious epistemology, or even offer a new form of spirituality.



Rather, it is counter-secular because he denies the view of secularization of stadial periodization and the secularity, the mode of being worldly in the here-and-now, that comes with that secularization. That mode of secularity entails estrangement from the Earth, the body, sensuality and animality. It requires what Charles Taylor calls a “buffered self”—a bounded, individuated, rational, and objectively oriented subjectivity, a remote, enclosed, and disenchanted self. Pater’s “pagan sentiment” captures the capacity for aesthetic experience that pre-exists religiosity or secularity. The pagan sentiment would rekindle a sense of aesthetic awareness that folds the subject back into the web of affects that blur subjective and objective, individual and animist ecological constituents, and returns the subject to the Earth and their innate earthliness.

I want to bring this together in a way that gathers Heather Love’s revision of Pater’s contribution to both queer history and modernism. She argues that “Pater’s turn toward the past aims to transform the present and the future; he explores such moments in an effort to ignite a cultural revolution in the present” that functions to incorporate “the past in part to break with it” (57). Pater “cultivates a modernist aesthetic based not on violent transgression but a refusal and passivity” (57). I think that Pater’s revival of animistic pagan sentiment does entail the kind of “refusal and passivity” that Love suggests. However, if there is a passivity in this aspect of pagan revivalism, it is closer to the etymological roots in Greek and Latin. *Pathos* and *passio*, as is well known, denote conditions of being affected, of being receptive to and moved by agencies beyond oneself, of suffering, enduring, but these words are also related to being overtaken or in thrall to passions that one cannot resist. Pagan passivity is counter-secular in so far as it is the overwhelming of reason by enthusiasms, superstition, or intimations of the

supernatural that was and is inappropriate and even a danger to secular order. But in Pater's case, the pagan sentiment, with its observance of agencies that entwine and undo the individual self, is counter-secular in that this model of subjectivity forsakes perhaps the greatest secular virtue: being in full command of one's senses and *oneself*. The secular sensibility that pagan revivalism most outrightly forsakes is this sense of individuated, rational control, the "buffered self" that is protected from animism, protected from foreign animating agencies, and from being forced out of itself or having something else force its way in. The secular self is buffered against forms of possession and immaterial agencies that wrest control. In this, there is a kind of queering of the secular human, which enacts its will upon the world. The secular human is the "civilized" human that Lubbock and Tylor define in contrast to the passive "savage" who lives in superstitious fear and subjection to nature, prone to ecstasies, possessions by spirits, enamored with their bodies and bodily experiences, and in thrall to demons, fairies, witches, and ghosts. It is also the model of liberal humanism of the "disinterested" Arnoldian secular critic who is able to remain unmoved by religious, political, or emotional biases as it distinguishes the "best" that has been thought and said in the world in order to cultivate and evangelize a vision of perfected humanity. The secularity of Lubbock, Tylor, and Arnold, it seems, advocates a humanism that seeks to establish a geologically new hegemonic Anthropos as the culmination of inevitable, though vulnerable, naturalized historical forces. Pater's pagan sentiment is a mode of counter-secular subjectivity which resists the New Man by turning backwards to a denigrated pagan animist structure of feeling.

In Pater's animistic queering of this secular self, Love identifies a "politics of refusal" which manifests as "a queer response to the experience of social exclusion." This response takes the form of reparative "backwardness" in Pater's aesthetics and writing (58). This "backwardness" draws on the connotations of paganism as a form of resistance of conscious anachronism (debunked, but influential) in the etymology of "pagan" as the uncouth rustic who refuses to convert to urban religions, who refuses to *be* anthropologically "civilized," or to be cultivated; however, it is also a form of resistance from below, the resistance of the survival that revives to inspire a renaissance, which Pater characterizes as the irrepressible burst of "buried fire" which rises "up from under the soil" (Pater 89). In concurrence with Love, Denisoff notes that Pater's is a "uniquely politicized aestheticism" that puts forward its own "queer way of envisioning . . . or . . . enacting a subject's relationship to the environment" through a kind of thinking-with the body and the Earth ("Dissipating" 439). Reviving the "primaeval pagan sentiment" means turning "backwards" and unearthing buried fire, being passively and passionately receptive to enchanting affects that dissipate the self amidst earthly agencies. This diffusion model of the self is one that foregrounds entanglement with the Earth, a model of selfhood that envisions a paganized secularity which entails affective entwinement with other-than-human agencies, and, as Denisoff suggests, perhaps even anticipates post-human revisions of speciesism. If we think back to the ways in which Lubbock and Tylor formulate their images of "primitive" epistemologies, subjectivities, and affectivity, we can see how the temptations of the primitive and primitive temptations are recuperated by Pater because of animism's plurality of ecological agencies that "dissipate" the subject and form an irreducibly multiple self that resists the kind of

secular mediation we see at work in the Victorian *saecular discourses* I have examined in this chapter.

Though as Love and Denisoff show, beginning with Pater, this form of pagan revivalism has generative implications for the emerging queer cultures of the late nineteenth century and beyond, as the following chapters will demonstrate, it has broader implications as well for constructions of masculinity, human-ecological relationality, and racialized identity models in Britain. From here forward, I will explore the ways in which Pater's revival and revision of animism compel and contribute to late Victorian counter-hegemonic models of masculinity that take the iconography related to the god Pan as a central thematic. I will then explore how Richard Jefferies incorporates something of a revival of prehistoric pagan animism in his ecologically engaged aesthetics, which explicitly counters secular temporality. Chapters 5 through 7 will show how Stevenson combines a form of Paterian pagan sentiment with a recuperated form of Celticity to contest Saxon supremacist models of racialized secular embodiment.

## Chapter 3

### **Panoleptic Paganism: The Goat-God as Masculine Muse**

In this chapter, I want to pick up on the relationship between pagan revivalism and its mode of queer passive resistance to secularity we saw in Pater. I suggested that Pater positions what he calls the “primaeval pagan sentiment,” which celebrates passive openness to states of affectivity such as enthusiasm, enrapture, deindividuation, and possession against individuated, rationally controlled, and regulated secular subjectivity—what Charles Taylor memorably calls the secular “buffered self” (300). In what follows here, I will interrogate how a distinct form of the Paterian pagan sentiment is articulated in relation to the goat-god Pan, who some pagan revivalists took up as central to their vision of pagan masculinity, which appears in response to an emergent secularized model of manhood and as a record of its affective omissions.

I take as an illustrative case-study the figure of Pan and Panic iconography developed in prose and poetry from the mid-Victorian to the Edwardian periods. I read Robert Louis Stevenson as an heir to the Paterian pagan sentiment who establishes the core motifs of Panic iconography which will go on to be renegotiated in later writers like Arthur Machen, George Egerton, E. F. Benson, E. M. Forster, Kenneth Grahame, Algernon Blackwood, and many others. Stevenson’s Pan appears in response to modes of masculinity that emerge out of and alongside the form of secularity I detailed last chapter. What I will define as “Panoleptic masculinity”—the possession of the male aesthete by Pan—is a form of pagan affectation developed in the cross pressures of secularity and

gender ideology which reappropriates affects and modes of masculine subjectivity which have been denigrated by the terms of the *saecular discourse*.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I will outline the form of secular masculinity to which I argue Panoleptic masculinity responds and show how this form of masculinity relates to broader secularized constructions of gender. Next, I will sketch the trajectory of Panoleptic paganism as it develops from the 1860s through to the Edwardian period, drawing attention to the way in which it develops a counter-secular vision of queered masculinity. In the third part, having established the character of Panoleptic paganism, I will back up chronologically to look closely at the way mid-to-late Victorians negotiated the changing sense of secularity, and the relationship between masculinity and aesthetics that occurred with it. I will detail Stevenson's Panoleptic masculinity by reading his essay "Pan's Pipes" (1878) in conjunction with the Pan mythos and Victorian hegemonic masculinity. Then I will show how Arthur Machen and George Egerton, from opposing positions, critique this Pan-centric paganism. What will be revealed by the end of this chapter is the way that pagan revivalism, in the figure of Pan, at once challenges Victorian secularity along gender lines and internalizes gender divisions and tensions which are inherent to Victorian secularity. In Panoleptic paganism, then, we will see how pagan revivalism interrogates and challenges secularity yet struggles to achieve full distinction from secularist social and cultural values.

## *Victorian Secularity and Gender*

What I am calling “Panoleptic masculinity” emerges as a pagan revivalist response to shifts in conceptions of gender that take place roughly from the late 1850s onwards. Concurrent with the rise of Victorian feminism, mainstream Victorian masculinity developed away from from the “Christian Manliness,” espoused by men like Thomas Arnold, Thomas Hughes, and Charles Kingsley, which adapted aristocratic gentlemanliness yet combined it with Broad Church moral, ethical, and spiritual values (Dellamora 198). Christian manliness merged with the form of secularity I described last chapter, reprioritizing how domestic and public labour is divided between the sexes, how sexuality is regulated, and how the body is gendered. During the time period under question here, Herbert Sussman has observed the rise of what he calls “[b]ourgeois industrialized manhood” which “defines manliness as success within the male sphere, the new arena of commerce and technology in which sexual energy is transmuted into constructive labour” (4). The new bourgeois masculinity ties the private and public aspects of men’s experiences to the broader set of values that are understood as vital to private and national economic prosperity: “self-discipline” and the “control [of] male energy” towards productive ends (Sussman 4), as well as “will, straightforwardness, and courage” and “self-improvement” (Tosh 111). These values were held to be essential for male success in private and professional life. “Bourgeois industrialized manhood” is a feature of secularity because, although it does not deny or undermine religious prerogatives, its main concern is to recalibrate male ways of being worldly. It reorients

manliness towards the secular, demanding from men a sacrificial translation of sexual energies in service of this-worldly labour and productivity.

This secularized bourgeois manhood also demonstrates Asad's observation, noted previously, that secularity mediates experience and informs how identities are constructed by a dualistic logic that organizes subjectivities according to oppositional binaries such as superstition/science or primitive/civilized. In the case of Victorian gender conceptions, male/ female and masculine/feminine correspond with such secular binaries and reinforce the infamous Victorian "two spheres" notion that assigned women to the domestic, private, and spiritual sphere and men to the commercial, public, and political sphere. Religiously oriented gender ideology was, therefore, preadapted by secular gender coding. However, both models are internally conflicted in terms of the way masculinity and femininity are imagined in relation to their earthliness. Women were "sentimentalized" as having elevated spiritualized natures, "portrayed as intellectually weaker" yet "moral[ly] superior" to men (Schwartz 16). Women's alleged "natural benevolence" contrasted men's "natural assertiveness and stronger physical and mental capacities" (19). As Amanda M. Caleb shows, "religion and science" both propagated the two-spheres model of gender, and eventually "science became the more dominant narrative" being used to bolster claims of "female inferiority," which followed "an evolutionary shift that focused bodily energy in reproductive organs" (289). Furthermore, Victorian sciences were, at this point, "male dominated fields" which maintained male hegemony because they were "by way of evoking an ultimate secular authority: nature" (297), which, Caleb argues, formed "part of a politically-motivated biological science designed to keep women out of the public sphere" (291). These newly scientifically



authorized gender divisions reinforced the private/public dichotomy inherent to Protestantism, which traditionally held that women were both more naturally “suited to domestic life” (Schwartz 16) and more naturally religious, possessing “greater *natural* piety” than men (19). These stereotypes carry forward a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourse that defined women as predisposed to “religious ‘enthusiasm,’” an often-dangerous excess of religious affect that took the form of “fits, trances, and visions” (Schwartz 19). Victorian constructions of femininity, then, formed a double standard: they were at once celebrated as more spiritual, and yet denigrated as lacking self-control, somehow at once elevated above their earthly conditions and yet essentially defined by their earthliness.

The naturalized divisions of gender were also adopted by the Victorian *saecular discourse* which I defined in the previous chapter. The form of masculinity that “validated the hegemony of the bourgeoisie” (Sussman 11) is also secularized in the sense that the rise of the male middle-class gets increasingly idealized as it becomes historically guaranteed by the process of stadial historical evolutionism I detailed previously, especially in the theory of “matriarchal prehistory” which gained wide acceptance in archaeology and anthropology in the mid 1860s. Cynthia Eller defines this as the conjecture “that the earliest human societies were woman-centered and possibly woman-ruled, only to be destroyed by a patriarchal revolution” sometimes equated with the rise of neolithic agricultural economies (285). While later feminists and Neo-Pagans would adapt this theory as a positive affirmation, “the nineteenth-century version was a myth of progress narrated mainly by men” (Eller 287). In Britain, the theory was popularized by John Ferguson McLennan in his 1865 *Primitive Marriage*. McLennan

posited stages of evolutionarily progressive forms of marriage that began in a matriarchally governed “Primitive Horde” and progressed towards monogamy, patriarchy, and “father-right,” a system that ensured the virtues of sedentism, private property, and the domestication of women—values of the ascending middle-class (291).<sup>37</sup>

As Eller points out,

if women’s position was regarded as a given (possibly by divine fiat) prior to the late-nineteenth-century explosion of interest in the matriarchal thesis, afterwards it was seen as the culmination of a long evolutionary struggle toward higher and better forms of human society. Women’s secondary status, her fitness for the private sphere—formerly secured by natural law or divine authority—was now secured by evolution, by the upward march of civilization. (302)

The secularization of male will, industriousness, and order, then, is ensured in the mutual secularization of women’s bodies and women’s evolutionary history, whereby patriarchy “domesticates” women and in so doing, “elevates” their nature. Victorian gender ideology is therefore an expression of Victorian secularity in that male hegemony is no longer merely a divine right granted to men, but a naturalized and necessary condition that has been historically guaranteed by a process of stadial evolution which has delivered men as patriarchs of bourgeois civilization.

However, just as femininity is internally fraught with contradictions between women’s earthly natures—their bodily impurity and their spiritual elevation or moral

<sup>37</sup> McLennan’s theory was accepted with modifications by Lubbock, Tylor (though later he rejected it), and Herbert Spencer who more thoroughly biologized the theory and argued that the subservience of women has over the course of their evolution become a biological trait—though both McLennan and Spencer supported moderate forms of Millian liberal gender reforms (Eller 294).

purity—so too were constructions of masculinity internally compromised. As Andrew Smith observes, Victorian masculinities presented “a divided male subject” that extends across religious and secular constructions of manliness (4). For instance, in Samuel Smiles’ 1859 *Self Help*, middle-class men are imagined as the custodians of public and national fitness, and his vision of the masculine ideal is concerned with worldly priorities: hard work and tight control of leisure time and energy (Smith 18). However, the emphasis on hard work entails not just industriousness and productivity, but also “a means of moral and physical control” in which the man is engaged in combat “against his own base instincts” (21). Smiles’ formulation of bourgeois masculinity exemplifies the place of masculinity in Victorian secularity, in that he holds up the healthy individual male as a paragon of national wellness, and yet his picture of men at war with their bodies and instincts demonstrates latent anxieties about men’s compromised earthliness. Furthermore, Smith suggests that this indicates “what really is at issue is Britain’s future . . . the failure of masculinity” which threatens “*national failure*” (21, italics added). Whereas femininity was internally conflicted due to its contradictory excesses of earthliness and religiosity, masculinity was likewise inherently fraught in the suggestion that men are once more naturally fit for public professions, business, and governance, and yet, at the same time, ever aware of the fragility of their command of themselves.

Bourgeois secular masculinity is also internally divided in terms of how men were oriented towards and within the domestic sphere. This is evident in the fact that “domesticity” was crucial to definitions of manliness in contradictory ways. On the face of things, conceptions of respectable manhood were captured in the image of the “paterfamilias”—the protective, attentive, family man who governed the household (Tosh

112). Yet, “manliness always presumed a liberal endowment of sexual energy” that was directed beyond the confines of the home. For instance, young men were often expected to exercise their vigorous libidos in the form of “[c]onquests” of the opposite sex which “were part of the accepted currency of manhood” and “often praised and condoned by fathers who expressed pride in their sons’ escapades” (Tosh 112). So, inherent to middle-class constructions of manliness is a contradiction in expectations in relation to the domestic sphere. Men were expected to be patriarchs of the household who nonetheless distanced themselves from it, to revel in their independence and sexual energies and to rein them in.

Moreover, as Tosh observes, “[i]f the lady’s standing in the home was ultimately a fiction it was one which demanded from men deference, self-control, and a considerable expenditure of time” (181). This resulted in what Tosh calls a “flight from domesticity,” the late Victorian increase of preferred bachelorhood, which Tosh suggests was a “turning away as much from patriarchy as from femininity” because such men were “disenchanted both with the rewards of patriarchy, and with the character traits which had earned the patriarch his prestige within the home” (183). Yet this was not so much a “protest” of that patriarchy as a “backlash” against both bourgeois manliness and the domestic sphere over which women had reformulated influence and command (183). The “flight from domesticity” that Tosh sees as a revolt against bourgeois manliness drummed up something of a crisis in the public image of masculinity, which led to a panic over the rising number of life-long or delayed bachelors. According to Tosh “bachelorhood as a preferred rather than enforced status was frowned on since it suggested an abdication from patriarchy and an indifference to lineage and posterity,”

which was ultimately cast as selfish and unmanly (173). However, Tosh discerningly suggests that this is a response to “men’s discontent” and “boredom” which grew out of the “sexual antagonism” associated with a male “perception that the home was feminine—even a feminized—sphere” (179). Going forward, I will argue that paganism, specifically when it is centered around the figure of Pan in men’s writing, is concurrent with the “flight from domesticity” and, as such, a response to male “boredom” and “disenchantment” with secular bourgeois manliness.

### *Panolepsy and the Male Aesthete*

Having described the secularized gender ideology in response to which Panoleptic masculinity emerged, I will now define it and trace its trajectory from the mid-Victorian to the Edwardian period. The cross-pressures, internal contradictions, male boredom, and sexual discontent that formed in response to secular masculinity can perhaps in part account for the rise in popularity and appeal of paganism in general and the Pan mythos in particular. As Denisoff observes, “pagan” became a byword for male promiscuity in the later Victorian years, even “a euphemism for the male aesthete, the emphasis being placed on the man’s vigorous sensuality” (“Women’s Nature” 125).<sup>38</sup> This sensuality was, Denisoff has suggested, queer in many respects, in that it presents sexuality and gender as fluid and non-normative, often overtly as is the case with the poetry of

<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, a pagan aesthete was even imagined as a kind of rakish man-about-town who opposed feminism in his “sexual liberalism” in that his exploitation of women “did not readily translate to women’s rights and freedoms of self-fashioning” (“Women’s Nature” 125).

Swinburne and the art of Aubrey Beardsley. More often than not, however, pagan queerness is veiled or subtextual. Since secular bourgeois manliness was militantly homophobic, paganism and Pan emerge as acceptable iconographical indexes in relation to which homoeroticism and other forms of “deviant” sexuality can be expressed. Pagan revivalism’s critical stance against secularized temporality, history, and nature blends together with a discontentment with secular manliness in the figure of Pan. Katy Soar postulates that Pan gained so much appeal in late Victorian literature because of his transgressive ambiguity. Due to the acceptance of inaccurate etymology that linked his name “Pan” with the Greek word *pan* (all), the goat-god’s iconography was taken to be all-encompassing (585). In this section, however, I want to narrow in on two intersecting aspects of Pan’s iconography as it relates to secular bourgeois masculinity: Pan’s capacity to represent masculine sexual and gender fluidity and pagan revivalist counter-secular elevations of male aesthetic and cosmic consciousness.

I will refer to the phenomena amidst male pagan revivalists who pursue an alternative masculine aesthetics through Pan as *Panoleptic masculinity* to distinguish it from the general trend across the pagan revival, which, while often evoking Pan or featuring him, does not take Pan as the central figure and inspiration. “Panolepsy,” as Philippe Borgeaud defines it is the seizure of a person, animal, or object by Pan. The Panolept is inspired or enthused by Pan, and “actually borrows his behavior from the god who invades him” (102). Thus, Panoleptic masculinity is a pagan revivalist aesthetic structured around male desire for possession by Pan. It embodies Pater’s pagan sentiment because the veneration of Pan frequently personifies a proto-religious worship of nature itself—the recognition of a wild demiurgic source of existence itself, something attractive

and repulsive, creative and destructive. In Pan, then, the internally conflicted constructions of both femininity and masculinity blur together. Panoleptic possession sanctions a fluidity of gender that spans the spectrum and mixes the excess of earthliness and spirituality of women with the barely suppressible restless sexuality of men. As such, Pan appears as a destination for the fleeing bored man.

Pan was a logical choice for a pagan revivalist masculine muse. To the Greeks, he was a god of the country folk, and many of his exploits are set in rustic and near-wild spaces. Such spaces are frequently imagined as exclusively male, homoerotic, and in a kind of *saecular* stasis, ageless and unaffected by the progression of history.<sup>39</sup> To Victorians reassessing Greek and Roman mythology, Pan appears as a combination of what can be retrospectively interpreted as counter-secular attributes, especially atavism, deviant enchantment, and panic terror in the face of nature. Pan was a god of wild places, ecstasy, and sublimity; of indiscriminate lusts, maddening sexual arousal and sexual frustration; and of unorderly music—sometimes sweet and seductive, sometimes shrill and repulsive. He is also a god of the hunt, of masturbation and romantic rejection, a god of rape and, of course, panic terror. He even became an idiom signifying homosexual desire and intercourse (Borgeaud 73). The Greeks themselves saw Pan as an archaic god, a god of the Arcadians, who were the “‘proselênoi,’ or Pre-Selenians,” a people so

<sup>39</sup> Examples are found throughout Hellenistic literature such as the *Idylls* of Theocritus and Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe*, and later Roman writers such as Ovid and Apuleius. Such writers often imagine a timeless Arcadian landscape peopled by shepherd men whose lives were bitter-sweet in their failed sexual escapades, and yet who more thoroughly sensually embodied and mystified closeness to the earth than their disenchanting urban counterparts.

ancient they pre-date the moon itself (Borgeaud 6).<sup>40</sup> Throughout classical literature, Pan appears as a nature divinity through whom is related erotic, terrifying, and/or sublime expressions of a primitivity at once threatening and alluring. Mark De Cicco argues that for late Victorians, Pan was representative of ancient forces which “lie beneath the surface of disenchanting, secularized modern life” (53). In this, Pan demonstrates the way paganism appears under secularization as eroticized re-enchantment of disenchanting earthliness. He embodies the horror and ecstasy of degenerate secularity, that is, of the exhilaration of the undoing of the myth of progress and the atavism lurking under the surface of the civilized bourgeois man.

Attraction and repulsion to Pan pervades literary dealings with paganism from the 1860s well into the early 1900s. Some notable examples are found in Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin. In “Lines Written Above Kensington Gardens” (1852), for instance, Arnold reflects that his aversion to the din of the city is a natural consequence of having been “breathed on by the rural Pan” in his “helpless cradle”—an image that (inadvertently) recalls the eroticized statue of Pan with young Daphnis, whom he is teaching to play the panpipes on his knee (23-24). Here, Arnold evokes the conventional iconography of the pastoral idyll, albeit located in the carefully cultivated urban garden, where the threatening elements of pagan sensuality are rendered inert. As a poetic convention, Arnold uses Pan as a neutered icon that can signify the poetic conceit of a taste for pleasant, controlled, and cultivated nature. This poetic conceit, therefore,

<sup>40</sup> Although Arcadia came to be associated with a kind of Edenic landscape, Arcadia and the Arcadians were thought of by the Athenians in similar terms as what Indigenous populations and lands were to Victorian imperialists, explorers, and colonists. For, to the ancient Athenians, Arcadia was “a barren and forbidding land inhabited by rude, almost wild primitives” (Borgeaud 6).



translates a potentially transgressive figure from classical culture into an appropriate ornamentation for urban discontent. In his evocation of Pan, then, Arnold initiates the theme of repressing pagan revivalism, which he will return to over a decade later. As I noted in chapter two, in his lecture “Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment” (1864), Arnold associated paganism with moral, social, and political degradation. He equates Theocritus’ *Idylls*, which are intensely nostalgic for a practically all-male space on the margins of civilization that is ruled over by Pan, with an unsustainable pagan sensuality that meets “its natural end in the sort of life which Pompeii and Herculaneum bring so vividly before us” (137)—that is, a way of life that ended in what Arnold imagines as the natural judgement of catastrophic volcanic eruptions. According to Arnold, the “intensity and unremittingness” of paganism’s “appeal to the senses” and overstimulation of “a single side too absolutely, ends by fatiguing and revolting us; ends by leaving us with a sense of tightness, of oppression,” that instills “a desire for an utter change, for clouds, storms, effusion, and relief” (Arnold 137). Although he omits the precise nature of his discomfort with pagan sensuality, the artifacts recovered from the ruins of these destroyed cities shed light on his discomfort with late antique paganism. Even more so than the winged phallus wind-chimes, recovered in 1752 with the excavation of Pompeii, a notoriously scandalous statue called “Pan and the Goat,” which depicts Panic bestiality, demonstrates the unseemliness of pagan sensuality which Arnold may have had on his mind.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> This statue has a fascinating history in and of itself, and although Arnold does not directly reference it, it is likely that he knew of its existence (even if only from the description found in Colonel Fanin’s account of the “Cabinet Secret” in *The Royal Museum at Naples*) as it was a notoriously controversial find,

John Ruskin's use of Pan demonstrates a similar kind of uneasy attraction and repulsion towards paganism, and, like Arnold, he does so in a way which incorporates aspects of secular bourgeois manliness. Although his mention of Pan in *The Queen of the Air* (1869) is brief, Ruskin upholds a traditional view of the goat-god and his music as degraded and ignoble. Pan appears as a problem for Ruskin, who wants to attribute the breath of inspirated music to Athena, yet cannot seem to avoid its associations with Pan. To grapple with this, Ruskin stages a kind of three-way aesthetic process between Athena, Pan, and Pan's old musical rival (and epitome of secular bourgeois manly art), Apollo. Ruskin imagines Pan's influence on art as necessarily suppressed by Apollo's order and restraint, yet he locates the source of Apollo's righteousness in the influence of Athena. The goddess represents "the air" as animating and inspiring substance for life and music, and as such she is "the symbol of its moral passion" (58-59). However, because "the passionate music is wind music" (59) and thus nears the realm of Pan-flute music, Ruskin makes a distinction between Athena's passions and impulses, which are of a moral nature, and those of Pan (and his Roman twin, the satyr Marsyas, who had a famous contest with Apollo, who flayed him alive). Ruskin's vision of Athena as a source of moral inspiration requires her co-operation with Apollo. Apollo as musician functions as "measurer and divider by length or tension of string into given notes" of Athena's moral passions (59). The contests between the cooperatively created music of Athena and Apollo and that of Pan thus are a contest between "intellectual" and "brutal, or meaningless, music" (60). Athena's moral passions are received by Apollo, who then

relegated to the "restricted collection" housed in the cellar of the palace in Naples where the rest of the artifacts from Herculaneum were long on restricted display (Fisher and Langland 93).

produces music in which “the words and thought lead, and the lyre measures or melodizes them” (60). Their moral and rational music is defined in stark contrast to that of Pan, whose piping is “music in which the words are lost and the wind or impulse leads” (60). In locating Athena as the literal inspiration for morality in Apollonian music, Ruskin ascribes to the feminine a moral agency that is exercised over and through the male body. The “kingliness” of the male agent over himself in measuring and chastening feminine passions affirms the gendered notion of masculine reason and rationality over feminine passion and emotion (60). Apollo and Athena, then, appear in Ruskin as analogues for the good middle-class husband and wife, Athena providing the elevating spiritual and moral influence, and Apollo labouring to convert this into a rationally ordered production that will contribute to the moral elevation of art. Pan, however, is the winking dandy tempting their ears with a lusty whistle—a sexual and aesthetically transgressive threat to domestic and gender harmony and cooperation that must be denied and defeated.

Jumping ahead to the fin de siècle and Edwardian period, we can see how in contradistinction to Victorian gender dynamics, male writers overtly espouse a masculine pagan aesthetic that jubilantly rejects the kinds of bourgeois secular gender dynamics found in Arnold and Ruskin. In making this chronological jump, I want to present the fullest development of Panoleptic masculinity, before returning to look at the way it underwent a contested development in the late Victorian period. In E. M. Forster’s “The Story of a Panic” (1902) and Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), we find Panoleptic masculinity most clearly functioning as a retreat from bourgeois secular manliness. Both writers evoke Pan’s music as a means by which the discontent male

becomes prone to erotically and mystically liberating Pan's possession. In his ancient mythos, Pan's music is indicative of unfulfilled gratification and the creative translation of unsatiated animal lust into artistic expression (Borgeaud 82-83). In Grahame, however, Pan's music is not only an expression of the god's inability to achieve gratification; it is also a celebration of that inability to sate lust. Pan's music represents a hybrid affect Grahame calls "divine discontent" which initiates and pervades *The Wind in the Willows* (1) and is perhaps indicative of the "flight from domesticity" that Tosh describes as a late-Victorian crisis of masculinity. Though he does not appear until the seventh chapter of the book, Pan's animating presence is felt in the very opening chapter, when Mole is enticed to give up spring cleaning to answer the summons of a immanent desire: "Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing" (1).<sup>42</sup> When Pan does appear to Ratty and Mole, both are rendered passive to his "dominant and imperious" presence, which is such a gratifying experience that it threatens to resolve that divine discontent with a sensuous and mystical intensity that recalls the kind of over-stimulation-leading-to-self-annihilation Arnold saw as the natural end of paganism (156). Ultimately, Pan prevents Ratty and Mole from forfeiting the rest of their lives in longing for him "[l]est the awe should dwell/ and turn their frolic to fret" by erasing himself and their experience from the characters' memories, commanding them to "forget!" (156). This forgetting is a counteractive element that strongly reflects Pater's pagan sentiment

<sup>42</sup> Pan's influence is also felt in Toad's insatiable pursuit of fresh pleasures that elude and endanger him. Moreover, his influence is evident in Ratty, the idle poet amusing himself composing his mediocre but self-pleasing ditties.

which “measures the sadness” that accompanies the awareness of fleeting mortality and affects “a rush of homesickness” that reminds one at the moments of most exquisite aesthetic experience they “would remain on earth forever” if only it were possible (Pater 99). Grahame’s Pan is a god of discontent, and his is a paganism, that like Pater’s, is an “anodyne for the incurable” (99), for the forlorn secularity of restless middle-class men who yearn for Pan’s possession.

While the homoeroticism and queerness of Panolepsy is subtextual in Grahame, in Forster’s story, it is blatant. “The Story of a Panic” follows a group of bourgeois English holidaymakers in Italy who encounter Pan. This encounter instigates the thinly veiled coming-out of a fourteen-year-old boy, Eustice, an effeminate idler who is failing the expectations of middle-class masculinity. The boy’s encounter with Pan and subsequent mystical and sexual awakening is compelled by the group’s passive-aggressive bullying of the boy and their cynical acceptance of bourgeois capitalist values. For instance, one of their party invokes the name of Pan following a discussion of the commercial value of the scenic landscape, lamenting that “[i]t is through us, and to our shame . . . that the woods no longer give shelter to Pan” (5-6). Shortly thereafter, they are overcome by a “brutal overmastering physical fear” that compels the narrator to admit “I had been afraid, not as a man, but as a beast” (7-8). When the group regathers after the panic lifts, they find Eustice lounging on the hill with a “peculiar” and “disquieting” smile (10). They also find goat hoof prints upon which Eustice “lay down and rolled on . . . as a dog rolls in dirt” (11). Following this experience, Eustice becomes infatuated with Gennaro, a servant “fisher-lad” (12). The boy’s indiscriminate display of homoeroticism is coupled with his mystical awakening, which finds the boy “saluting, praising, and

blessing, the great forces and manifestations of Nature” (21). Eustace and Gennaro seemingly share both an erotic connection and forbidden knowledge of Pan that seems dangerous. The story ends with Eustace’s flight “towards the sea,” and the “shouts and laughter of the escaping boy” were the last his family ever heard of him (29). In all this, Forster, like Grahame, reworks the “flight from domesticity” and the discontent with bourgeois patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity into an embrace of the pagan sensual apocalypticism in Eustace’s ecstatic and liberating Panolepsy.

Critics have noted the intersection between gender, eroticism, and nature mysticism in what I am calling Panoleptic paganism, and have often debated its relation to late Victorian secularization and modernization. Robert Dingley ultimately dismisses it as a way for urban, middle-to-upper class writers to enjoy “nature” while bemoaning its imminent death. For him, “the city had become the ‘natural’ environment,” and thus “the countryside represented a holiday” from “the dominant reality of the city” (51). Dingley concludes that the frustration with urban modernity and consumerism is, in the end, swallowed up in Pan’s all-encompassing vagueness as a symbol: as he puts it, “meaning everything, ultimately, proves to be the same as meaning nothing” and therefore any pretense towards a legitimate critique of modernity, capitalism, or the dominant gender norms and ideologies is neutralized (57). Others have noted the subversive potential of Pan iconography. Dennis Denisoff has argued that late Victorian paganism is an ecologically inclined queer aesthetic that counters traditional humanism with a vision of nature “as a beautiful, threatening, organic force; as one or more actual goddesses or gods; and as an organic environment that can exist, has existed, or does exist (at least in part) outside the Anthropocene” (“Posthuman Spirit” 353). Denisoff’s idea of paganism

as a queer response to the Anthropocene was previously foregrounded by William Greenslade. Greenslade finds in this “cult of Pan” a form of “critical paganism” that grew out of the “mythologizing of nature,” which is motivated by a need for “imaginative resources for resisting the modernizing of Britain,” and was “sometimes furtively, sometimes openly contemptuous and disruptive” (145). Thus, for both Denisoff and Greenslade, paganism is invested in challenging anthropocentric secularity.

I want to bring these insights in line with Talal Asad’s critique of secularism’s insatiable appeal to “calculative reason.” Asad argues that secularism has adapted a “language of quantification, abstraction, and calculation” which is vigorously “applied to human activity as well as to the ‘natural world’ in which it takes place” with the optimistic faith that this secular reason will “resolve the major uncertainties of collective life” (104). This language of calculative reason echoes the over-confident positivism of figures like Lubbock and Tylor, whose anthropologies require that a culture which is properly civilized must necessarily be one which has technologically mastered nature as opposed to one which lives in subjection to it. Added to this technocratic supremacism is the gendered secularization of history by cultural evolutionists like McLennan and bourgeois masculinity’s sense of public and national destiny which internally conflicted with its sense of private sexual libertinism. Taken together, I want to suggest that this Victorian *saecular discourse* and its attendant masculinity is that against which Panoleptic masculinity develops in contrast, emerging as a kind of enchanted discontent with the internal pressures and contradictions of and disillusionment with this anthropocentric secular patriarchy.

Although the iconography and sentimentality of many revivalist writings express an intense longing for a premodern, enchanted counter-secularity, the precise object of such nostalgic longing is ambiguous. In relation to Pan, there is something less of a straightforward “recognition” of nature as an unambiguous entity. Rather, Pan, often appearing as a kind of monstrous and erotically charged synecdoche for all things, is figured as the forlorn or perhaps frustrated realization of the absence of a clearly perceptible and knowable—and thus attainable or masterable—domain called “nature” against which and over which the “civilized” human can affirm its ascendancy. Pan’s attractiveness is in what he represents and what one can express through his iconography. For, as De Cicco demonstrates, “Pan’s ability to encompass difference,” not only “pleasure and pain, queer and heteronormative desires of all kinds” (59), but also his “incomprehensibility and his irrationality,” added to the sense of “inescapability—the inability to break one’s thrall” to the god are features which make him an appealing representation of all things. That sense of inescapability also makes him kin to other famous Victorian “gothic monsters like Dracula, Mr. Hyde, [and] Dorian Gray,” for, like them, Pan requires complete submission to his monstrous Otherness (De Cicco 59). In this sense, Panoleptic masculinity suggests a transvaluation of what secular bourgeois masculinity rejects in femininity and what it suppresses of itself. In this regard, Panoleptic paganism adopts Paterian passivity as resistance to gender and sexual normativity. The passivity and submissiveness as well as the prone body that is in thrall to fits and ecstasies become ritually prostrate to Pan’s possession, the likes of which are celebrated by Grahame and Forster.



The submissiveness and passivity of Panoleptic masculinity is an inversion of another element of the Pan mythos from ancient Greece. According to Borgeaud, ancient poets “like to call Pan . . . ‘unlucky in love’” due to the nature of “Panoleptic desire” which “pursues an unobtainable object” (77-79). In Panoleptic paganism, this unattainable object has become an appeal to estranged, unknowable nature rendered as Pan himself, the object of a longing for something which one can only be nostalgically desirous of because it no longer seems familiar. Yet, this longing is also, like Pater’s pagan sentiment, a longing to belong “at home on earth” (99). Pan, even in ancient myth, was a god not of alienated, human-excluding nature, but of the spaces that the human could traverse through but could not call home (the mountains, the wild wastes, the snowy frontiers, woodland hunting grounds, lonely spaces, and dangerous places). He was not simply a monster that scared men away from such places (although he did and could do this at will), but a hybrid-deity through which humans negotiated those spaces. In many Pan-centred works of the pagan revival, such as those of Grahame and Forster, Pan is a paradoxical manifestation and representative of “nature” as a powerful and present object of affection, but he is also, and more importantly, a retreating figure that is searched for or stumbled upon. Pan or his music calls from some distant place beyond the familiar experience of nature, but his is not a readily accessible presence. Panoleptic masculinity, in flight from the domestic sphere and secularity as domesticated earthliness, seeks these spaces as an act of transgressing secularity, that is, as a way of re-recognizing earthliness as defamiliarized, powerful, unsettlingly erotic, inescapable, and incomprehensible.

In his inescapable yet incomprehensible absent presence, the Pan of Panoleptic male pagan revivalists is perhaps best defined in relation to what Jesse Oak Taylor calls the “abnatural” (*The Sky of Our Manufacture* 5). Taylor introduces the term to capture the Victorian sense that what has been traditionally called “nature” is no longer familiar or recognizable. Rather, Victorian indications of the “abnatural” occur as a hint of “nature’s absence and its uncanny persistence” (5). According to Taylor for late Victorians grappling with the effects of climate change brought on by industrialization and urban sprawl, “nature” is no longer recognizable or immediately felt, yet it is also enduring, albeit as a defamiliarized presence. Taylor explains that the “‘abnatural’ reminds us that what we call nature is replete with exception, always eluding definition. ‘Abnatural’ characterizes those moments in which nature appears other to itself, beside or outside itself” (5). Panoleptic paganism, then, is a site of abnatural desire, and Pan is an icon of the abnatural. This is brought to the surface in the conflation of insatiable Panoleptic male eroticism, ecological relationality, and the mystification of the allness of things as inescapable and incomprehensible.

Panoleptic masculinity thus encompasses a critique of secular bourgeois manliness and its mastery of nature via secularity’s calculative reason. The male poetic or aesthetic subject desires possession by Pan, who is “abnatural” in his simultaneous elusiveness and inescapability, in his capacity to attract and repulse. Panic possession as the end towards which the Panolept yearns is always incomplete and thus occasions a kind of insatiable discontentment—a need to remain the restless subject of an evasive and erratic god. Reflecting on the effects of Panolepsy, Borgeaud writes that “Repulsion and attraction,” characteristic of Pan and the condition in which the Panolept finds

themselves, “have this in common: their object escapes them . . . Pan's victim begins to generate images; delirious dreams and visions come to fill the empty space and thus correspond to the god's music, to the syrinx filled with the sighs of despised love” (121). Repulsed by the things that attract and attracted to the repulsive, Panoleptic desire, as Borgeaud suggests, ends, as Pan’s own erotic escapades often do, in a sublimation of “despised love”—the bitter-sweet transformation of that unsatiated lust into an aesthetic creation. Pan, then, becomes an icon of the “abnatural,” the elusive object of middle-class, secular masculine discontent.

### ***Panoleptic Masculinity and Late-Victorian Pagan Revivalism***

So far, I have argued that Panoleptic masculinity develops in response to internal tensions within Victorian secularized constructions of gender. From the 1860s to the early 1900s, Panoleptic masculinity emerged as a reaction to male disaffection with the rewards of patriarchy, the constrictions of male sexuality towards secular ends, and to secularity’s pretense of disenchanting dominion over nature redolent of what Talal Asad calls secular “calculative reason.” Against these attributes of secularity, Panoleptic masculinity embraces a form of queered masculine desire and re-enchants secularized “nature” as a Panic mystification of all-things rendered “abnatural.”

For the remainder of this chapter, I want to back up chronologically and look at the ways this Panoleptic masculinity was negotiated in the period with which my project is centrally concerned. Where as Panoleptic pagans like Grahame and the early Forster appropriate Panic iconography as positively transgressive, which by their time had

become the more common trend—and therefore perhaps had lost some of its iconoclastic edge (Merivale 134), from the 1860s to the 1890s, Pan was still an embattled territory. Panoleptic masculinity developed specifically in response to Victorian critiques of pagan revivalist poetics, the earliest and sharpest of which is devised by Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her famous poems “The Dead Pan” (1844) and “A Musical Instrument” (1860). The former is a diatribe against German and English Romanticism and their investments in ancient paganism as a model poetics (“Let no Schiller from the portals/Of that Hades, call you back” (220-21)).<sup>43</sup> EBB imagines the pantheon of classical gods jettisoned in Hades since the ascendancy of Christ and derides her contemporaries for turning to the outmoded pagan religion, while failing to attend to the more appropriately modern Christianity for spiritual, aesthetic, and moral guidance.<sup>44</sup> However, despite her triumphalist pretense, there is something of a very urgent threat that must be motivating these 273 lines. There is a glaring omission from this litany of vanquished gods: Jove’s “right hand is unloaded” (64), Bacchus is “bound with his own vines” (93), and Hermes no longer has a “new message for us” (124). Even the Naiads, Dryads, and Oreads are evoked for dismissal. But no Pan. So where might he be found?

<sup>43</sup> Here we see an underscoring of what Corrine Davis calls EBB’s early “Christian realist agenda” (654). Though from a thoroughly religious Christian perspective, EBB expresses anxieties over the threat that paganism poses to later Victorian secular sensibilities. Like the Tylorian anxiety over the primitive survival, EBB’s polemic decries the urgency of the threat that the appeal of paganism presents. The poem, written nearly 40 years before the Victorian revival of romance, anticipates the contestations over the function and purpose of fiction and the degree to which realism should succeed romance as a mature, civilized, and morally edifying literary form:

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies  
Sung beside her in her youth  
And those debonair romances  
Sound but dull beside the truth (XXXIV)

<sup>44</sup> “The Dead Pan” is based on the early Church historian Eusebius’ reinterpretation of a rumor Plutarch shares about the sailor from Samothrace who reported hearing a voice crying out across the sea “The Great God Pan is Dead” (Hutton 44).

“A Musical Instrument” (1860) finds Pan above ground, lurking in the reeds by the river. In this poem, the threat that paganism previously posed is given more unsettling and sharper expression. In anticipation of what I will argue is Stevenson’s response to EBB’s version of Pan, I read “A Musical Instrument” as presenting Pan as a false idol for modern poetics in a similar way as “The Dead Pan.” Here, however, EBB shifts her focus from the supposedly “dead” goat-god and the paganism he represents, to what is at stake in his and its revival.<sup>45</sup> EBB takes the event of the creation Pan’s pipes, the syrinx, as an occasion to evaluate pagan revivalist poetics, which she sees as expressive of unjust gender and sexual politics. Her use of Pan as a figure is perhaps not a straightforward attack on the god himself or even Greek paganism. Rather it seems she is interested in critiquing those who fashion themselves as Panoleptic pagans. The poem can be thought to ask of such poets “which image of Pan do you Panolepts identify with?” She offers one such image which has some disturbing implications.

“A Musical Instrument” implicitly contrasts Pan’s “way” not with that of the one God of Christianity as she had before, but with that of the “true gods” (40):

‘This is the way,’ laughed the great god Pan,  
 (Laughed while he sate by the river,)  
 ‘The only way, since gods began  
 To make sweet music, they could succeed’ (25-28)

The “true gods” observe and lament Pan’s mode of poetic creation, they “sigh at the cost and the pain,—For the reed which grows nevermore again/ As a reed with the reeds in the river” (40-42). The “reed” in question here is that from which Pan has constructed his

<sup>45</sup> My reading here follows Corrine Davies who argues that EBB’s Pan embodies “the self-absorbed Romantic ego” (565). Likewise, as Margret Morlier, suggests, she evokes the Pan mythos as a means to “criticize . . . the masculinist bias that represented [Pan] as the figure of the artist” (139).

Pipe. The “syrinx” is named after the river-nymph Syrinx, who in Book One of *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells us was an ardent devotee of Diana or Artemis, who was among other things a goddess of female protection and an Olympian, sister of Apollo, daughter of Zeus, born of the “true gods” of Olympus unlike Pan who is, outside Arcadia, often considered a minor demigod worshiped in local cults. Followers of Diana devote themselves body and soul to her. In Ovid, this is rendered tragically ironic in that while fleeing from Pan’s rape Syrinx begs her sister nymphs for help and they change her into the reeds amidst which she has hidden herself, the very reeds Pan mows down to make his pipe.

The Ovidian pretext clarifies the atmosphere of tragedy in “A Musical Instrument.” The poem is set in the immediate wake of Syrinx’s thwarted efforts to escape Pan’s rape. Pan rends Syrinx’s soul from her body and forces *his* breath through the “poor dry empty thing” (23), an act of individual violation but also the incursion of a divinely sanctioned order. EBB does not identify Syrinx by name and indeed she acknowledges no female presence at all in the poem. In fact, she exclusively emphasizes the masculinity of poetic creation, for Pan, she claims, fashions “a poet out of a man” (39). However, what EBB amplifies in excluding the feminine is the manner by which it is effaced in Pan’s creation of a masculine poetics. Pan’s “way” of making music renders Syrinx, a figure of feminine devotion to a female divinity and an order of sacrosanct independence, protection, and empowerment that stands beyond the jurisdiction of male sexual, aesthetic, and political dominion, voiceless. Thus, EBB’s stifling of the feminine by the masculine gender of poets and poetry underscores the predetermined status of poetics as masculine, a status granted via the violation and erasure of female agency and

voice. Pan's act of creation is put in the terms of male labour and feeling: "[H]e drew the pith, like the heart of a man" (21), an ironic simile that compares the reed's interior *to* the "the heart of a man" while also suggesting that this action, the reduction of a body to a used thing, is representative of the heartless sexual exploitation associated with Pan and, by extension, poets who fashion themselves under his influence."<sup>46</sup>

In her representation of Pan's rape Syrinx, EBB also adds a layer of further tragic irony by extending the metaphor of Syrinx-as-reed back to the ecological context in which the scene is set. The poem rereads the myth of Pan's creation of his trademark pipes as a metaphor for an aesthetics of gendered violence and violation of the artistic muse which reflects the traditional conflation of woman and nature. There is a strong sense of hypocrisy and betrayal in the way Pan's attempted rape and destruction of the nymph Syrinx is recorded in the pastoral landscape. Indeed, this is how EBB sets the scene. Pan is in the river "splashing and paddling with hooves of a goat, / And breaking the golden lilies afloat" (4-5), when we first glimpse him. Pan's exploits in the poem may specifically represent a masculine poetics, but EBB also implicitly suggests that Panoleptic paganism shares with secular bourgeois manhood a callous and ultimately self-gratifying instrumentalization of women and nature. This reflects doubly against pagan revivalism which affects a sensitivity to "the *sacredness* of this life, of sexuality, and the life force" (Louis 2, italics added). As well, pagans are supposed to revere nature in a way that defies both Christian fallenness and secularity's calculative reason. Yet Pan's resource-extraction instrumentalizes both the ecosystem over which he presides

<sup>46</sup> Here I am indebted to insights from Dorothy Mermin, who has called the poem a "deliberate articulation of sexual assault" which reveals the "Romantic wind of inspiration" as having one of its sources in "sexual pain" (243).

and his besought Syrinx, converting her and his own sexual energies into a commodity—the titular musical instrument. Here then, EBB launches a devastating critique of male pagan revivalist aesthetics, charging them with the betrayal of the very things they claimed to embrace: a worship of pleasure (which is one-sided and at the expense of female vitality), aesthetic sensitivity, and a reverence for nature and natural beings. In both of her Pan poems, then, EBB expresses a deep concern with the nature of paganism that aligns her with Arnold and Ruskin. For all three, paganism fosters dangerous affects. In its unrelenting pursuit of pleasure, it violates; in its worship of Nature, it destroys. In each case, the supposed amorality of pagan revivalism is shown to be a deeply disturbing immorality, and, by extension, the masculine poetics inspired by Pan and paganism carries with it these disturbing and hypocritical tendencies.

Eighteen years after EBB's "A Musical Instrument" appeared, Robert Louis Stevenson offered a revision of Pan's relation to art and eros, and therefore of conceptions of the Panoleptic male poet. The essay "Pan's Pipes" (1878) according to biographer Willian Gray, "practically provides a manifesto for the neo-paganism of the 1890s" (94). In it, Stevenson attempts to redefine male pagan aesthetics by returning to the same central motif as EBB: Pan's instrument. Stevenson expands the scope of what Pan signifies, using the music of Pan's pipes to represent the inassimilable nature of "the world," which secularity attempts to disenchant through calculative reason, as "an order of contrasts which no repetition can assimilate," at once "fruitful an austere . . . sunshiny, lewd, and cruel" (205-06). In direct rebuff to EBB's "The Dead Pan," Stevenson declares that "Pan is not dead, but of all the classic hierarchy alone survives in triumph" (204). Stevenson presents the goat-god not as a Tylorian survival of anachronistic and illiberal



thought, but as an idol of counter-secular pagan affectation. For ours is a “rustic” and “shaggy world,” and Pan is “the type of the shaggy world” that best captures the “palpitating image of our estate” (209) and offers a “ruddier presentation of the sum of man’s experience” (208). Thus, Stevenson is concerned with theorizing a subjective mode of aesthetic mediation, a pagan earthliness, which Pan iconography best captures, that appears as an alternative to secular worldliness.

One may be tempted to read Stevenson, as Robert Dingley does, as suggesting that through Pan he can “articulate his sense of Nature’s ambivalence” (56), in order to accommodate both theological and secular scientific debate. Indeed, Stevenson begins his essay on precisely this issue:

The world in which we live has been variously said and sung by the most ingenious poets and philosophers: these reducing it to formulae and chemical ingredients, those striking the lyre in high-sounding measures for the handiwork of God. What experience supplies is of a mingled tissue, and the choosing mind has much to reject before it can get together the materials of a theory. (204)

Here we can see Stevenson equating creationist celebrations of the world and secular calculative reason, both of which he finds reductive domestications of some thing much more resistant and unfamiliar. Either of these competing notions of models of worldliness, however, are unreliable. The “world” is, like Pan himself, “of a mingled tissue.” Although Stevenson explicitly states a wavering cognitive satisfaction with science and evolutionary theory in biology, he also is using a “primitive” mythic image to speak back to both Christian bombast and secular scientific over-confidence.

However, he lingers on secularity, wondering about the “moments when the mind refuses to be satisfied with evolution” (205). “Science,” Stevenson goes on, “writes of the world as if with the cold finger of a star fish; it is all true, but what is it when compared to the reality of which it discourses?” (209). In this, he is affecting a counter-secular pagan sense of disquieting enchantment. Stevenson suggests that scientific truth may give an accurate account of reality, but this account in and of itself does not satisfy because the “mingled tissue” of earthly experience is one of nearly constant dissonance. Pan is evoked because experience of the world exceeds the mode of secularity offered by either the Arnoldian and Lubbockian brand of secular-religious conciliation or the purely secular positivism of Tylor. Pan can thus “represent the troubled and uncertain element in which we dwell, and satisfy reason by the means of art” (209). Here we can see Stevenson’s authorial self-promotion: evocative of Ruskin and his use of Athena, Stevenson affects a Pan-inspired pagan sentiment that can revive old myths and make them compensate for the shortcomings of modern Christianity and secularism.

If the essay serves, as Gray suggests, as a manifesto for pagan revivalism, it is a stylistic one. Stevenson’s stylistic indulgences—the circumambulatory diction, arcane words and phrases, literary allusions, and the modulations of mood and tone—evinced a Panoleptic aesthetic, as though the poet were inspired by Pan and became the god’s musical instrument. For instance,

Things are not congruous and wear strange disguises: the consummate flower is fostered out of dung, and after nourishing itself awhile with heaven’s delicate distillations, decays again into indistinguishable soil; and with Caesar’s ashes, Hamlet tells us, the urchins make dirt pies and filthily besmear their countenance.

Nay, the kindly shine of summer, when tracked home with the scientific spyglass, is found to issue from the most portentous nightmare of the universe – the great, conflagrant sun: a world of hell’s squibs, tumultuary, roaring aloud, inimical to life. The sun itself is enough to disgust a human being of the scene which he inhabits; and you would not fancy there was a green or habitable spot in a universe thus awfully lighted up. And yet it is by the blaze of such a conflagration, to which the fire of Rome was but a spark, that we do all our fiddling, and hold domestic tea-parties at the arbour door. (204-05)

Stevenson’s style here embodies the erratically melodic quality of syrinx wind-music. Pan’s music, which Ruskin thought was “brutal, meaningless music,” is impulsive rather than structured by tightly formulated measures and movements, suggestive of the impassioned ecstatic fits and flights of fancy associated with Pan’s wind music rather than the “chastened, calm, and capable . . . majesty of ordered, beautiful, and worded sound” of the Apollonian lyric poet inspired by Athena (Ruskin 60). This is reflected in Stevenson’s style in the fluctuations between an ambling pace that can chat leisurely about science and religion, then erupt into a series of evocative descriptions of irreconcilable experiences, then move to an impassioned cadence where winding sentences terminate in summative declarations and exclamations, and then mellow down again with a humorous reflection on bourgeois domesticity.

The stylistic excesses and indulgences rhetorically demonstrate Stevenson’s central conceit, that Pan-centric paganism can revitalize modern experience if adopted as a means of subjective mediation, which he sums up in the ironic claim that with Pan, the Greeks “uttered that last word on human experience” (205). That the Greek word “pan,”

long held to mean “all,” could be the “last word” or summation of human experience speaks to the irreducibility of human experience to religious or secular formulations, and therefore the impossibility of their being a “last word” on human experience. Think like a Pan-inspired Greek pagan, Stevenson seems to say, and no last word can be said about earthly experience because all experience is enchanted by Pan's mediations.

Stevenson may be alluding to a moment in Plato's *Cratylus*, where Socrates claims that “speech signifies all things . . . and is always turning them round and round, and has two forms, true and false” (197). According to Socrates, this is how Pan got his name; in his double-form: the divine upper-half is nearer to truth, while the profane lower-half is “falsehood” and “dwells among men below, and is rough like the goat of tragedy” (197). On Earth, Pan appears as “goat-herd”: “the declarer” and “perpetual mover” of “all things” (198). Socrates' association between Pan and Greek theatre seems to express the nature of language also demonstrated in Stevenson's essay in that both take the shifting quality of earthly experience to be an ultimately unreliable guide to truth. Earthliness can be experienced as a flock of playful falsehoods goaded-on by the double-natured goat-god.

“Experience” for Stevenson is theatrical, an encounter with mask-wearing phenomena: “Things are not congruous and wear strange disguises” (205). The flippancy with which Stevenson treats “truth” (science is “all true” yet cannot do justice to “the reality of which it discourses”) speaks to the nature of his use of Pan. He insinuates that truth cannot compare to the fluctuating panic of experience. What is “truth,” he asks, when compared to phenomenological entanglement in an irreducibly complex world of experiences wherein “hearts beat high in April, and death strikes, and hills totter in the

earthquake, and there is a glamour over all the objects of sight and a thrill in all noises for the ear, and Romance herself has made her dwelling among men” (209). The evocation of “Romance” perhaps has the most significance here. Whereas for Socrates, Pan is associated with tragedy, for Stevenson, he is associated with “Romance.” The implication in both cases is similar: the glamour, thrill, terror, and confusion of experience has compromised perception and the ability to gain a finally reliable comprehension of the world.

What Stevenson intends with his use of Pan, then, is not an accurate or faithful representation of nature, nor a mystical suggestion about the numinous in nature. Pan is an icon of the “abnatural,” the attractive and repulsive, the incomprehensible yet inescapable charm and terror that compels the impulse to romanticise. For Stevenson, Pan specifically lends himself to the romancing of “nature” because he is an embodiment of all its contradictions and evasions from our understanding. Stevenson’s pagan “manifesto” is a self-conscious affectation of a Panoleptic pagan “abnatural” romance of nature. This is clearest in the closing sentence of the piece:

So we come back to the old myth, and hear the goat-footed piper making the music which is itself the charm and terror of things; and when a glen invites our visiting footsteps, *fancy* that Pan leads us thither with a gracious tremolo; or when our hearts quail at the thunder of the cataract, *tell* ourselves that he has stamped his hoof in the nigh thicket. (209, italics added)

I have emphasised “fancy” and “tell” to underscore the role of deliberate self-duplicity in pagan revivalist subjective mediation. What end does such intentional self-deceit serve? It reads as though it is in the service of the satisfaction of “reason by means of art” (209).

Paganism is self-deception: a willing embrace of the false, goatish world of ever-changeable speech that romances “the mingled tissue” of the world. It is a self-conscious submission to what Taylor calls the “abnatural,” which “arises in those moments when we are forced to acknowledge that the world does not comply with our ideas of nature” (5). Stevenson is thus using Pan to undermine secularity by capturing the irreducibility of earthly experience, of “the shaggy world” as elusive, terrifying, and charming, as well as irreconcilably attractive and repulsive. In this, he implicitly responds to one aspect of EBB’s condemnation of pagan revivalism, namely, that it is irreverent towards nature. For, in prostration to the greater power and mystery of the “abnatural” embodied in Pan, the Stevensonian Panolept willingly takes the position of Syrinx, offering himself as a musical instrument, as one of Pan’s pipes.

Panoleptic desire is also a channeling of the whims of romance: the desire to be enthusiastically enchanted by the childish, rustic, superstitious, and “primitive” habits of mind rejected by Christian and secular realists alike. In this capacity, Stevenson’s Panoleptic masculinity departs from the norms of mid-and-late Victorian manhood in his advocacy of fancy and idle play that produces nothing more than more play and more fancy.<sup>47</sup> For instance, Stevenson cautions “let him feign never so carefully, there is not a man but has his pulses shaken when Pan trolls out a stave of ecstasy and sets the world a-singing” (207). It is significant that for Stevenson it is the male “pulse” which is

<sup>47</sup> On this point, Jean Perrot argues that Pan becomes associated in Stevenson’s other works, with child psychological energy, and “the child” personifies “the complexities of human experience” and the “extreme moods” which “govern” human behavior: fear and pleasure (156). Hence, Stevenson states that “youth and all ductile and congenial minds” are the true subjects of his pagan aesthetics (“Pan’s Pipes” 205). Perrot argues that “the child as Pan (as double) is . . . a means of challenging the established prevailing use of language” (162). For, that which “most adults call ‘lying’ is to be found at the core of Stevenson’s art . . . linked to the peculiar workings of the Child’s imagination, the source of a new form of wonder that necessarily affects the creation of fiction” (162).

invigorated. The Panoleptic pagan aesthete is further contrasted with the majority of men who “flee from life’s pleasures” and live “upon the midway of custom” (207). Indeed, the figure who bears the most scorn in the essay is neither the cleric nor the scientist, but the bourgeois male professional: “Shrilly sound Pan’s pipes; and behold the banker instantly concealed in the bank parlour” (208).<sup>48</sup> This is Stevenson’s object of pagan scorn, one who “distrust[s] [his] impulses” and is therefore “recreant to Pan” for taking refuge in an aesthetically deadened secularity (208).

The subjects of Pan’s appeal are “youth and ductile minds” who would disdain to refuse the ecstasy of Panoleptic possession out of fear of the agony of Panic terror (207). To seek Pan is to desire not mastery over the objects of one’s affections, but the god in all his terror and his ecstasies. This entails a rejection of the kind of domestic gendered harmony described by Ruskin and an embrace of the overstimulation of pagan sensuality which Arnold distrusted. As Borgeaud notes, Pan expressed a similar form of subversive erotic condition in the ancient world. He was “a solitary vagabond, a wanderer through snowy wastes, in frontier territories off the beaten track (mountains, gullies, rocks),” who was “gripped by a constant and eccentric restlessness,” erotic encounters which were “often unnatural and altogether extramarital” (83). As such, Pan is embraced in this capacity as an icon for a form of masculine sexuality and erotic energies that refuse certain aspects of bourgeois secular manliness, such as restrained, heteronormative, productive, and domestically oriented sexual energies. However, in this, Stevenson also implicitly celebrates the tacit sexual privilege and freedom enjoyed and privately

<sup>48</sup> Denisoff has recently also noted the role of paganism in Stevenson’s expressions of an “anti-bourgeois investment in living a full and adventurous life as free as possible from the constrictions of consumerism and conservative tradition” (*Decadent Ecology* 104).

condoned by Victorian patriarchy. These features, coupled with Pan's capacity to serve as an icon of the attractive and repulsive "abnatural," reveal Stevensonian Panoleptic masculinity as anticipatory of that which we have seen in Grahame and Forster.

Stevenson's Panolepsy is expressed in his pagan "manifesto" and formulates stylistically an "abnatural" romance aesthetic premised upon the desire to submit to the abnatural, which is ultimately a desire for possession by a sense of aesthetic restlessness—an insatiable appetite for a mystifying, ecstatic, un-buffering of the male self.

Although Stevenson re-appropriates Panoleptic masculinity and revises it as a means of critique of Victorian secularity and bourgeois secular manhood, his treatment of it also harbours disturbing implications that do not finally resolve the gendered tensions exemplified by EBB's earlier critique. There is something monomaniacal about Stevenson's Pan. The all-encompassing grasp of Pan and the power and reach of his influence is, as De Cicco observes, "inescapable" (59). Moreover, in its celebration of the passivity and self-dissipating ecstasy of submission to Pan-as-abnatural, this Panoleptic masculinity indulges in the longing to give up a sense of sexual agency and freedom granted almost exclusively to men in the first place. Thus, the bourgeois secularized man's flight from both the domestic and the public spheres into the shaggy embrace of Pan ultimately suggests a preference for an onanistic revelry in male sexual and social privilege that underscores the inequity of Victorian gender relations. I will return to this aspect of Panolepsy when I discuss Egerton's use of it below. There was a further heteronormative moral paranoia directed at Pan and pagan revivalism. It is not a coincidence that the rise of Panoleptic paganism corresponds with what Tosh described as the "flight from domesticity," the increase in bachelorhood-by-choice, and the overall



crisis in masculinity in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Men who deviated from secular bourgeois masculinity were cast as not only selfish and unmanly, but also as socially, and nationally, morally suspect.

This air of suspicion is exploited by Arthur Machen in his novella *The Great God Pan* (1894), which I interpret as a response to Stevensonian Panolepsy and pagan revivalism more generally. Machen interrogates the Panoleptic pagan masculinity for which Stevenson advocated as embracing perversion and courting the dissolution of civilized society. His novella weaves together a number of the threads I have been following so far. The story dramatizes the Arnoldian notion of a decadent pagan cultural self-destruction, while also incorporating EBB's ecological, gendered, and ethical critique, albeit in a way that at once plays up homosexual panic and takes an equally suspicious stance against women's sexual power. Also, as Aaron Worth observes, Machen's story draws on then-contemporary views of prehistory and prehistoric culture which are integral to the Victorian *saecular discourse*. *The Great God Pan*, according to Worth plays upon anxieties about the reckoning with of geological and archaeological deep history, wherein contact with Pan is contact with something from the depths of a "bottomless history" (219), and Pan's return heralds "the return of the precultural" (217). In this, Machen echoes a number of the suspicions against pagan revivalism we have seen in Arnold, Lubbock, and Tylor. His novella presents Pan as a corrupting influence that leads to suicide, cultural degeneration into "primitivism," and an overall threat to secular bourgeois masculinity.

Moreover, Machen elsewhere directly associates paganism with Tylorian "primitive" survivalism. In a piece published after the novella, Machen makes the

connection between paganism and “barbarism” explicit, while also deflating some of what he saw as the dandyish pretensions of “the neo-pagan” movement. Machen reminds his readers that (contrary to what some writers may pretend) actual ancient paganism was not a time of “universal libertinism”; on the contrary, “Greek Mythology and Ritual are barbarous Mythology and Ritual as developed and beautified by a people of high aesthetic gifts” (207). Greek paganism is only a few degrees removed from “savagery.” For, he surmises, the “rude origins of classic religion still surviv(e) amongst Australian Blackfellows and such like people” (207). Machen, then, makes a similar connection between pre-Christian religious forms as Tylor but makes a stronger suggestion: Greek paganism is barbarism beautified. However, contrary to the paganism of Pater or Stevenson, this is not something to be celebrated or tolerated by modern civilized society without dire consequences.

Like Stevenson, Machen uses the trope of “seeing Pan” as a kind of quest for what Taylor calls the “abnatural.” “Pan,” as the accepted etymology of the time reinforced, could represent “all” of “nature,” but the allness of nature he comes to embody is abnatural, not “nature” as the object of secular calculative reason, but the elusive and inescapable, attractive and repulsive “order of contrasts” which cannot be “assimilate[ed]” as Stevenson put it (205). However, what was for Stevenson a desire for the romancing of the mysteries, enchantments, and terrors of abnatural allness, this time, is the desire of the scientist Dr. Raymond to expose the truth behind the mystery of nature and physical reality. He stages an experiment that will expose his ward Mary to unmediated reality, which is hidden behind human perception “as beyond a veil” the lifting of which was an act “the ancients” referred to as “seeing the god Pan” (2).

Raymond's experiment churns up a kind of buried pagan mode of perception that seems oddly contagious. During this experiment, Clarke, an acquaintance of Raymond's enters a dream-like state and encounters "a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form" (7). An important part of the horror in this is the threat of the abnatural, a horror at nature slipping its familiar forms and becoming unknown to secular calculative reason. Machen borrows from the Ruskinian treatment of the Pan mythos a suspicion of "primitive" and erratic Pan-flute music, turning the Socratic pairing of Pan and the flux of language also into a violation of artificial, but structurally integral partitions that order what Stevenson referred to as the "mingled tissue" or "order of contrasts" that confronts human perception. Machen's allusion to this sense of intellectual panic incorporates Victorian anthropologic notions of primitive perception, as well as the Arnold, Ruskin, and Barrett-Browning suspicions of pagan affect. However, unlike Tylorian religious anthropology, Machen's story avoids regarding this perception as mystified and mistaken. Instead, the story imagines a situation where primitive perception is vindicated, albeit not as enchanted mystical perception, but rather as an animistic primordial condition of abnatural chaos. In this, Machen formulates a scenario where the experimental deconstruction of that supposed barrier leads to horrendous dissolution of not merely conventions and customs, but of moral and aesthetic boundaries between pleasure and pain, sensualism and sadism, where the queer and the abnatural are evil.

Machen's novella, then, models a scenario where the consequences of the Ruskinian contest between Pan and Apollo, as it was in Stevenson, is won by Pan, and what is revealed by the end of the story is that Dr. Raymond's experiment has indeed

created a monster, which, like Pan, is both attractive and repulsive and can cause panic and disrupt the natural and moral order. The monster in the story is not Pan himself, but Pan's progeny. This monster is the product of Panic rape, for we learn that when Mary encountered Pan during Raymond's experiment, she was impregnated. The product of that rape, Helen Vaughn, (whose name blends beautiful and war-inspiring Helen of Troy with *Faunus*, the Latinate version of Pan) becomes the central antagonist of the story and spreads her corrupting and deadly influence throughout bourgeois London like a transmittable infection. Yet, it is the fragile, secular bourgeois community of men who become the victim of pagan corruption. For, the supposedly natural weakness of the male sex makes them more susceptible to degeneration which ultimately, like Arnold's picture of paganism wiped out by volcanic disaster, drives them to self-destruction. Vaughn is a kind of queer monster in that she subverts the role of sexual aggressor and defiler from the male to the female, and in so doing, effeminizes her male victims, before driving them to suicide. Like Syrinx from whom Pan "drew the pith" from in EBB's poem, the bourgeois man is rendered effete, socially unproductive and sexually inverted, a victim of Panolepsy driven to dissipation. In this we can see Machen's rendering of Stevenson's erotic gender and sex reversal in terms of Panic seduction and possession. For Stevenson, the young male aesthete pursues Pan, longing to be possessed by the god, and thus become nearer to the romance of the abnatural. Machen's story exploits bourgeois secular masculine insecurity, reversing the implications of Panolepsy from a mode of feeling which invigorates and enriches male aesthetic experience to one which dissipates and stifles male power and virility.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Other critics have noted Machen's use of Pan in this capacity. For instance, Morse notes that by the

The story ends with Vaughn being forced to commit suicide. As her body dissolves into a vitalistic soup, first morphing from one sex to the other, then shifting into vague animal shapes, until finally becoming a sludge that for an instant literally turns into the face of Pan, she reveals the horror that the quest for Pan has wrought on those who sought him. According to Worth, the image of bodily dissolution reflects cultural fears of the “horrific depth of history” and “a graphic, and disconcertingly reversible, narrative of evolutionary recapitulation” (216). This “recapitulation” not only undoes biological evolution of the human form, but also the progress of Tylorian cultural evolution in the microcosm of a small section of bourgeois London society. In Pan’s wake, cultural progress is reversed, and through Helen’s Panic influence, London bears the traces of many of the late-Victorian anthropological assumptions about primitive cultures: the cruelty, the debased sexuality, and the over-ruling of masculine rationality by a feminine and irrational disposition. Pan’s face appears as if to mock them for their own corruption, not only for summoning him to start with, but for the manner of death they inflicted on Vaughn.

Here we can see Machen taking up Stevenson on a related point from *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Whereas Stevenson literalizes the hypocrisies latent in heteronormative Victorian masculinity in the double figure of the hedonistic and troglodytic Mr. Hyde and the seemingly upright and respectable Dr. Jekyll, Machen suggests “savagery” is the inheritance of “civilization,” and the temptations of the pagan sentiment is in fact a temptation to return to our bestial origins. The latent “savagery” of close of the novella, “the most powerful subject in history, the upper-class man” is morally and physically dissipated “and consents to die” (498).

the civilized suggests that “civilization” is not the product of cultural evolution as suggested by the archeologists and anthropologists but is an artificial creation of the modern moral conscience, and to flirt with paganism, is just a prick away from civil dissolution.

Machen’s text exploits this fear of deep psychological history and similarly blends various textual forms that effect a collation of documents. In addition to Dr. Raymond’s archaeology of deep psychological prehistory, a protagonist of the story, Clarke, stands in as a kind of arm-chair occultist, the analogue of the gentleman armchair archeologist, anthropologist, or folklorist. Clarke’s manuscript “Memoirs to prove the Existence of the Devil” is a collection of documents that records occult experiences and investigations into the nature of evil. It is in service to this secret project that he accepts Raymond’s invitation to witness the experiment. “Clarke,” a near homophone for “clerk,” is perhaps meant to stand in for the bourgeois consumer of Stevensonian paganism. As mentioned above, Machen thought actual pagan belief is closer to “savage” religion than what the aesthetes and decadents get up to, which he, like Chesterton, dismissed as an escape to a “Rosy Lubberland” (“Paganism” 207). There is therefore a strong, if morose, note of parody in Machen’s text, which we can recognize in how the work is parodying pagan revivalism as both attractive and repulsive. Machen’s is a double parody, however, in its simultaneous pastiche of the threatening implications of reviving paganism, but also in the way it exaggerates the cultural panic that responds to that pagan revival. Thus, in terms of genre, *The Great God Pan* is itself a form of Stevensonian Panoleptic romancing of the abnatural, but one which indulges in some of Stevenson’s stylistic and textual

strategies while playfully parodying his pagan revivalist pretensions by amplifying Panolepsy's threat to bourgeois secular manhood.

George Egerton (Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright), who Elaine Showalter has described as “one of the most sexually-charged of the New Women writers” (xii), forges a critique of Panoleptic masculinity that returns to the gendered critique we saw in EBB in response to Stevenson and Machen. Her story “Pan,” published in *Symphonies* (1897), is set in a Basque community in southern Europe. Like Machen before her, Egerton engages anthropological discourse in that “Pan” evokes what has been called “the Basque question” in Victorian philology, archaeology, and anthropology (Hopkin 4). The Basque peoples of southern France and Spain were (and still are) of interest to archaeologists, anthropologists, and linguists because of a shared a belief that “the Basques were a remnant of the pre-Aryan population of Europe, and that their language and culture could reveal something about the history of this pre-Aryan population” (Hopkin 7). Egerton's “Pan” seems to have drawn on the leading expert of the time who was at the forefront of the debate, Wentworth Webster. Webster's *Basque Folktales* (1877) purported to collect ancient folklore and stories of the Basques which “represent, in a more or less mixed state, some older stratum of European ethnology” (viii). Whereas Webster's aim was to establish the folkloric uniqueness of the Basques, Egerton, writing twenty years later, equates the legend of the “Basa Juana,” (who Webster records as a vampire-like wild-man figure) with Pan.<sup>50</sup> However, there is nearly no resemblance to the plot or characters

<sup>50</sup> The connection is nearly made by Webster himself. When introducing the legend of the Basa Juana he notes that “Basa-Jauna is usually described by Basque writers as a kind of satyr, or faun, a wood-sprite; and Basques, in speaking of him to us, have frequently used the French term, ‘Homme de Bouc,’ ‘He-goat-man,’ to describe him” (47).

of Egerton's "Pan" to Webster's recorded legend of Basa Juana. Whereas the Basa Juana in Webster's tale is a minor, almost comic figure, undone by children, Egerton makes him a panentheistic force animating all of the natural and human world.

Like Machen's, Egerton's tale is a kind of dark parody, for the gender and sex dynamics depicted in the story are revealed to be governed by an oppressive Panoleptic form of patriarchy. Egerton, then, is modelling an instance of a Tylorian pagan survival into modern times that is at once familiar and strange in its dual potential for alternative subjectivity (in Egerton's construction of the pagan animist worldview of the Basque people) and the way in which the hegemonic naturalized social/sexual order of the "primitive" Basques reflects that of the modern British. The Basques, taken by anthropologists and archaeologists to be the "primitive" lower strata of the English cultural landscape, serve Egerton as an example of the way the deep stratified past is still visible upon the surface of and influential over the supposedly progressed "civilized" present. Egerton thus at once critiques the pretenses of secularized "civilization" *and* the Panoleptic paganism of Stevenson, which, as I have suggested, prided itself as an alternative to secular bourgeois manhood, in that both look similar from the perspective of women who are subject to patriarchal order, be it of a Panoleptic pagan or a bourgeois secular variety. In equating secular patriarchy and Stevensonian Panoleptic masculinity, she circles back around to EBB, but this time from a "New Woman" feminist perspective, to challenge male sexual privilege and its destructive influence on women.

"Pan" tells of the seduction, rape, undesired marriage, and apparent death of Tienette, a Basque maiden bewitched by "the goat-man's 'call'" (256) which resonates within the fiddle playing of a "lame musician" (224). This "lame musician" bears a



striking resemblance to many of the late-Victorian and decadent Panolepts from Stevenson himself (a chronically ill, slender, and effeminate young man) to Forster's Eustace. Furthermore, as Denisoff observes, the fiddler's song grants Tienette "a pagan sense of herself as part of the ecological network, along with all sentient and animist beings" ("Queer Ecology" 217). Egerton therefore depicts a similar kind of erotic/ecological and mystical awakening that Pan instigates in the works of Stevenson, Forster, and Grahame. However, for Egerton, this is double-edged. Panic eros not only surges through the musician, the wind, the forest, and the animals; it is also the motivating force that compels Sebastian ("the Toro Negro" or Black Bull), a local peasant farmer who stands in as the representative for hegemonic and toxic masculinity, who forces himself upon Tienette against her will. She is rendered passive to Sebastian, and by extension Pan. The rape leaves her pregnant and demoralised and she is driven to suicide. On their wedding night, Tienette flees to a near-by cliff over-looking the ocean where she is met by the "lame musician." She kisses him, at last exercising her own erotic agency, and asks him to play her "the goat-man's call." When the musician finishes his song and opens his eyes, Tienette has disappeared, but, Egerton writes, "Pan still lives" (256).

According to Denisoff, Egerton's Pan represents a queered "ecological network beyond full comprehension" (216) wherein pain and desire blur together. Yet, Pan represents both the queer and the hegemonic masculine economy that abuses the very things with which it is interrelated. Pan, as Denisoff notes, operates through both Sebastian and the lame musician. It is Pan who drives Sebastian to rape Tienette. In this then, Pan represents the inescapable hegemonic masculine order and therefore retains

dominion over the animistic pagan ecology that Denisoff identifies. Pan's influence works through both the lame musician (the non-normative alternative to hegemonic masculine aesthetics) as well as through Sebastian. Denisoff reads the final three words of Egerton's story ("Pan still lives") as a reply to EBB's early "The Dead Pan," (whose refrain reiterated that "The Great God Pan is Dead"). He argues that Egerton's closing phrase asserts the force of pagan survivals and the eco-queer potential of Basque animism. However, the phrase "Pan still lives," coming as it does after Tienette's self-destruction, implicates Pan in the gendered critique EBB launched in "A Musical Instrument." For, as we have seen, EBB's later Pan is a critical metaphor for masculinist pagan aesthetics. Egerton's story thus presents Pan-centric paganism as a tragic form of pagan naturalism. This checks Stevensonian Panoleptic romance and its gender and sexual indifference as perpetuating the bourgeois secular manhood, which I have suggested Stevenson used Pan to challenge.

For instance, the ecological matrices of desire made visible in Egerton's rendition of Basque paganism are depicted as dominated by a Panic dynamic that is both attractive and repulsive, generative, and inherently destructive. In this, Egerton ultimately figures Panoleptic paganism as co-opting what might otherwise be the queer potentiality of the abnatural for hegemonic masculinist insurance of the dominant sexual and gender order. For instance, "the distant call of a driver to his oxen" (242) is synchronised with the moments when Sebastian considers whether he should marry Tienette, whom he has impregnated. As well, the birds that Sebastian and the village men trap and kill as part of their livelihood are said to be "driven by some unseen power, drawn by some irresistible force . . . driving as one compact body straight to their doom" (245). The implication is

that Pan is working his attractive and repulsive influence through all of the instances of generation and destruction with a naturalistic indifference. Tienette, too, is caught in this ecological network. Pan's influence over her equates her tragic struggle with her own desires with the deterministic fate of the animals who are a resource for the village economy. However, a further irony may be that Egerton has reversed the victory of the hegemonic masculine influence in Machen's story, where Helen is forced to commit suicide for disrupting the homosocial order. In Egerton's "Pan," suicide can be viewed as a final desperate act of agency against the hegemony of Pan. This is perhaps not meant as a victory of the victim over her abuser, but a tragic irony that revises EBB's gendered criticism from the pagan perspective. Freed of Pan's influence, the animistic Basque pagan would perhaps enjoy sovereignty over her body; under the reign of Pan, her final desire was total release from the Panic-animistic ecology. Yet, Egerton does not entirely fault Basque paganism as such.

As Denisoff suggests, Egerton's story is a development of "late Victorian queer ecology" ("Queer Ecology" 204) that presents a challenge to anthropocentrism and Victorian gender norms in its "sensitivity regarding the networks of desire that short-circuit the binarism that has so often worked to legitimise the abuse of the female, the non-human animal, the wild, and the queer" (208). There is, then, a potentiality left unrealized in the narrative itself, in the suggestions of an animistic understanding of nature that would be preferable if it were not for the dominion of Pan. However, her depiction of Basque paganism is tragically ironic in that, despite this potential, sexual dominion is still granted to men; all beings are subject to a hegemonic masculine force that suppresses the female and the feminine, as well as other non-hegemonic masculinities,

under the erotic tyranny of Pan. In other words, Panoleptic paganism, for Egerton, upholds gender binaries and masculinist hegemony and thereby limits the queer possibilities of pagan revivalist visions of animistic aesthetics and epistemology. It is significant that Tienette not only commits suicide to avoid marriage, but also as an act of abortion. She refuses to allow the progeny of Panic possession to be born into the world. What was for Machen a queer feminine monstrosity because it subverted male power and order, is for Egerton a self-sacrificing, queer pagan animist heroine. For, by denying Panic recapitulation of hegemonic, heteronormative sexual reproduction in her refusal to live as Sebastian's bride or carry his child to term, Tienette affirms the latent, unrealized potential of queer non-Pantheistic animism, which for Egerton, would exalt abnatural earthliness in a more radically pagan, counter-secular and anti-hegemonic fashion.

Ultimately, then, Egerton imagines Panoleptic paganism itself as tragically governed by an indifferent, even sadistic Pan, who, in his dualistic nature maintains gender and sexual "binarism" at a deeper structural level: the binarism of the dominant and the submissive subject positions. In this, Egerton is at once intimating the potential of the pagan sentiment, but also critiquing its inherent masculine biases in its Panoleptic form. Thus, whereas Stevenson's paganism celebrates the duality of Pan as the model for a counter-secular art and romance to which the male pagan aesthete renders himself submissive, Egerton speaks back to Panoleptic masculinity, showing it to be an aesthetics modeled on unjust and all-pervasive gender and sex dynamics. In this sense, Egerton goes further in her critique than EBB. Her darkened parody of Panoleptic paganism grants that it may switch the position of the male subject from one of dominance to submission, but her story suggests this only reaffirms the status quo, for male submission

to Pan, in the end, equates with male indulgence of male sexual privilege, since Pan represents an ultimately masculine order of eros and power. Egerton thus reveals something tragically fatalistic in the contest between Apollo and Pan, between secular calculative reason and Panoleptic abnaturalism: either victory is yet another claim staked upon female sexual and aesthetic autonomy.

In this chapter, I have shown how what I have defined as “Panoleptic masculinity” works as a pagan revivalist challenge to secular bourgeois manliness. However, both internalize an essentially dichotomous construction of gender that maintains and even reinforces the sexual status-quo. Although the pagan variety attempts to embody forms of queered gender and sexuality, it turns out, as Egerton’s story suggests, that this is weighted in favour of male sexual privilege. Gender ideologies, then, prove to be sites of internal tension for pagan revivalist struggles to articulate counter-secular visions of earthliness. Looking ahead, my next two chapters will analyse similar struggles to articulate visions of animistic ecologies that counteract secularity and its internalized stadial history and calculative reason in Richard Jefferies, and racial essentialism in the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson which deploy a form of pagan primitivism in his revisions of Celticity.

## Chapter 4

### **Richard Jefferies' Pagan Affectations and the Reckonings of Prehistoric Wiltshire**

“Jefferies did not end where he began”

-Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 194.

From this point forward, my study of Victorian pagan revivalism narrows in on two of its most influential contributors, Richard Jefferies and Robert Louis Stevenson. Whereas last chapter I looked at the ways in which the Greek goat-god Pan served as a muse for male pagan revivalists, in these next chapters I will show how Jefferies and Stevenson, respectively, develop “pagan affectations”—writerly personae and modes of subjectivity which appeal to paganism as a counter-secular way of being earthly. However, both men increasingly pursue a nativist British paganism that mingles some of the familiar features of classical Mediterranean polytheism with the newer Victorian notions of prehistoric animism being substantiated by Victorian anthropology and archaeology.

Perhaps the single most influential figure in this area of the late Victorian pagan revivalism is Richard Jefferies. This may seem a bold claim, given that he is probably now among the least read of his contemporaries. Nonetheless, other figures of the pagan revival such as Kenneth Grahame, Arthur Machen, Mona Caird, and Algernon Blackwood all either directly or indirectly acknowledge his influence. Jefferies' work has been influential to “green” writers such as William Morris, Edward Thomas, and Edward Carpenter as well as twentieth century environmentalists such as Rachel Carson (who

claimed to keep two copies of *The Story of My Heart* on her bedstand [Williams & Williams 6]). Revivals of paganism and “folk” culture, especially those that extend to the deep history of the land and people and express environmentalist, green, or ecological sympathies, owe a great debt to Jefferies. He was once best known as a quintessential chronicler of the peoples, places, and environs of rural England. His earliest successes were essays and books such as *The Game Keeper at Home* (1878), *The Amateur Poacher* (1879), and *Hodge and his Master's* (1880), works of non-fiction that showcase the author's ability to bring rustic life to urban upper and middle-class readers. Reception of Jefferies' country books and nature writings was largely favorable, especially among a conservative country elite threatened on one side by an agricultural depression and on the other by labour strikes and bad press. Although he grew critical of aspects of rural social structure, the land-owning class, and agrarian and industrial capitalists, early on he appears to have sought to cajole and appease them (Williams 194). Raymond Williams locates Jefferies in what he calls “The Shadowed Country,” among the rural working class, whose plight had at one time been less perceptible to scholars and historians than that of their urban counterparts, and as a writer who emerged from “a shadowed culture”—a minority of artists from rural labouring class backgrounds who were mostly self-taught practitioners of their crafts (191). Since his death in 1887 at the age of thirty-eight, Jefferies became identified with the Wiltshire landscape; his native Swindon has been referred to among local historians as “Jefferies' Land,” and over the years, local ecologists and Jefferies enthusiasts have appealed to his legacy for conservationist support.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup>The Jefferies Land Conservationist Trust was active from 2005-2013: <http://jefferiesland.blogspot.com/>

The identification of Jefferies with Wiltshire itself affiliates him with the culture of modern British paganism. As the region wherein prehistoric monuments and sites are most densely concentrated in all of England, Wiltshire is synonymous with ancient pagan Britain. Modern pagans, Druids, and Neo-Pagans gather upon “Jefferies’ Land” several times a year to honor and celebrate seasonal festivals such as the Midsummer sunrise at Stonehenge. Within the county, some of the most famous, archaeologically significant sites have stood for thousands of years: the Uffington White Horse, Weyland’s Smithy, Liddington Castle, the massive Avebury stone circle complex, and, of course, Stonehenge. In a double way, this literary and archaeological landscape is, in great part, a fictional landscape. Certainly, in the case of Jefferies, who, as Williams notes despite coming down to us as one of the English countryside’s most influential historians and observers, crafted this history and landscape “avowedly and unavowedly” as “a work of art” (192).<sup>52</sup> And, of course, since the ancient peoples who actually settled the area and built up its prehistoric landscape left no written accounts of themselves and are still shrouded in mystery, their image and character is also in part a literary construction, ancient and modern. Biased Roman sources like Caesar and Tacitus present the tribes they encountered as barbarians or noble “primitives.” Likewise, Victorians like Lubbock and Tylor projected these ancient peoples further back in prehistory and constructed their culture and beliefs by faulty analogy with modern Indigenous peoples.

<sup>52</sup> Reflecting on his son’s embellished depictions of their modest farmland property called “Coate,” which the elder Jefferies was eventually forced to sell off in plots until finally moving altogether, Jefferies’ father considers, “How he (Richard) could think of describing Coate as such a pleasant place and deceive so I could not imagine” (quoted in Williams 191).



The relationship between the literary creation of prehistory, place, and Jefferies' authorial persona will be the central theme around which I analyse his affiliations with and affectations of paganism. This chapter will tell a story of a storyteller affecting to be possessed by the spirit of an ancient pagan place. I suggest Jefferies crafted a literary persona, the affective character of which we can perhaps best understand as the converse of the revival of "folk horror" in British cinema of the late 1960s and 70s (which is enjoying a re-revival once again in the wake of Brexit). That is, whereas in film, "folk horror crystallizes the vertiginousness of the past into a dormant threat to the present" (Chambers 20), in Jefferies, that darkened pagan wildness is refracted through a glass lightly. Even when it returns as a threat, that threat is to an antagonistic secularized modernity. Whereas folk horror in cinema performs an "abjection of the rural communal Other," characterized by a "perceived homogeneity of supposedly bounded communities" in which "folk" customs, lore, and landscapes are rendered "sinister, uncanny, and unnatural" (Chambers 22), Jefferies recuperates the repudiated rural folk, the landscapes within which they dwell, and the supposed endurance of their pagan ways in response to the insufficiencies of secular, industrial modernity. However, perhaps not unlike the protagonist common to the genre, Jefferies increasingly struggles to articulate himself apart from the pagan landscape and spirit of Wiltshire.

Jefferies endeavours throughout his works to identify with the English "folk" and their worlds. Yet it is a conflicted identity for him. A somewhat rare instance of a nineteenth century writer from a working-class background who gained a good deal of fame (although not fortunate enough to live comfortably by his pen), Jefferies was born

in 1848 to an unsuccessful farmer-turned-gardener.<sup>53</sup> His adolescent and teen years found him alienated from kin and community. He seems to have shared similar qualities with Forster's Eustice from "The Story of a Panic." For, as Brian Morris notes, Jefferies was held in ill repute, perceived as being "shiftless and irresponsible, with a distaste for serious work" (36). Henry S. Salt, in his biography of Jefferies, recalls one of his fellow Wiltshire villagers' impressions of him as a teenager: "a lazy lout on the land" who spent his time "'moonin' about" on the downs (Salt 10). Even John Lubbock could not resist a crack at Jefferies' notorious local reputation as a loner. At the unveiling of a statue in Jefferies' honour before the North Wiltshire Fields and Camera Club in 1902, Lubbock jokes that "it has even been said that his first and only friendship was with the man in the tumulus!" (*Essays and Addresses* 69). Although meant as an affectionate jest, there is some truth in Lubbock's tease. Jefferies evidently found prehistoric times more friendly to him than his contemporary moment. A deep sense of resentment against his community may indeed have played a part in his letters to *The Times* which betrayed some among them who were attempting to unionize.<sup>54</sup> Turning to a deeper sense of community and place within the landscape perhaps supplemented the lack of affection he met with from his peers and elders. This feeling of belonging to a timeless time represented by mysterious monuments and impressive earthworks indeed seems to offer Jefferies a palpable sense of solace and consolation. Becoming a pagan enabled him to

<sup>53</sup> Biographers have attributed Jefferies' two then-popular boy's romances, *Wood Magic* (1881) and *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* (1882), to his boyhood at Coate, and the large water reserve nearby plays a formative role in *Bevis*, as well. John Fowles also suggests in his introduction to the 1977 Oxford Classics edition of *After London* (1885) that the Coate water reserve is the imaginative model for the massive Lake that has formed over south-central England (*After London* xiv).

<sup>54</sup> As Raymond Williams notes, later in his career Jefferies reconsidered his earlier condemnation of the Wiltshire labourers who were attempting to unionize, writing that he felt "bound to resent" his letters to the *Times* "on behalf of the farmers of this country" (193).

belong to a community he imagined more authentically of the “country” than his own contemporary people.

Critics and reviewers often applied “pagan” to his writing and character either as a quality being praised or condemned. For instance, Salt announces that Jefferies was “a pagan, a pantheist, a worshipper of earth and sea” (101). As well, Elizabeth Jennings in her introduction to a 1968 edition of *The Story of My Heart*, claims that in the book “Jefferies shows himself to be rather a pagan” (ix). John Fowles, in his introduction to *After London* writes of Jefferies’ “pagan greenness” (xviii). While these all have positive connotations, in his review of *The Story of My Heart*, Harold J. Massingham, disdainfully but insightfully wrote of “the pathological neo-Paganism of Richard Jefferies” as a dangerous and decadent feature of his writing (qtd. in Morris 276-77). I will show how Jefferies’ affectations of paganism recall Pater’s “pagan sentiment” and its expressions of an acute sense of the intimacy between the human body, spirit, and the land, as well as his entwinement of aesthetic consciousness and ecological and archaeological relationality.

This chapter considers the ways that Jefferies contemplates the prehistoric British past as a Williamsian “structure of feeling,” a means of affiliating with a pagan sense of earthliness that cultivates feelings disqualified by the terms of the *saecular discourse*, which he leverages against the forms of secularization and Victorian secularity I defined in my second chapter. However, Jefferies internalizes certain aspects of the secularity he opposes, and his paganism is fraught with a tension which pulls in opposite directions between a yearning for Paterian animistic dissipation and a struggle for mystical individuation and distinction from the ecological networks in which he sees himself

interwoven. I will identify how paganism informs narrative, thematic, and stylistic strategies that Jefferies adopts. These strategies are defined by an affected sensitivity to and retransmission of counter-secular feelings that co-opt elements of secularization's recreation of prehistoric animism in order to reorient earthliness as feeling of archaeological and ecological nestedness. Jefferies' paganism affects to be *unaffected* by secularized, unidirectional temporality. This is observable in the way he engages archaeologically with the landscape to re-establish the felt sense of belonging to abiding rural communities and their sense of relationality with local ecologies wherein the archaic endures alongside the contemporary.

My consideration of Jefferies' participation in Victorian pagan revivalism also contributes to Jefferies scholarship of the last fifteen years or so. Recent prominent voices in critical treatments of Jefferies' work, such as Roger Ebbatson (2005, 2010), John Plotz (2015), Rebecca Welshman (2012, 2013), Heidi C. M. Scott (2014, 2018), Mark Frost (2017), Pascale Manning (2020), and Kate Neilsen (2020) have in common a focus on Jefferies and ecology, and, relatedly, literature of "the Anthropocene."<sup>55</sup> This trend, which sees Jefferies move from "naturalist" to "ecologist," is perhaps inaugurated by Brian Morris' *Richard Jefferies and the Ecological Vision* (2006) and follows more

<sup>55</sup> Prior to the early 2000s, Jefferies criticism was largely focused on his legacy among "naturalist" writers, frequently situating him in relation to figures like Thomas Hardy and W. H. Hudson. Twentieth century Jefferies scholarship began with a focus on his talents and limitations as a realist, drawing attention to the place of natural phenomena and the pleasures and hardships of rural life in his work (for example, William J. Hyde's "Richard Jefferies and the Naturalistic Peasant"). This trend was initiated by Edward Thomas' early twentieth century biography and critical appraisal of Jefferies. Thomas grants Jefferies a firm place in the history of Victorian literature in his role as prose poet of rural England in decline. This trend in criticism is briefly but representatively captured in Williams' consideration of Jefferies in *The Country and the City* (1973), which I have drawn on here. Jefferies' place in the history of environmentalist thought is briefly but insightfully considered in Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots* (1983). Beer draws attention to the place of Jefferies' *After London* in relation to the wider Victorian discourse around evolution and the changing notions of nature and the natural.

generally from the mid-twentieth century “rediscovery” of Jefferies as a proto-environmentalist. However, the re-imagining of Jefferies as ecologist often downplays his deliberate attempts to cast himself as embodying a pagan sensibility. Morris discusses this feature of Jefferies’ thought but argues that it is a more secular form of expressing what is really the intuitively ecological perceptions of a sensitive naturalist. Ebbatson, likewise, frames Jefferies’ mystical inclinations with reference to American transcendentalism and Heideggerian phenomenology. Plotz and Manning, in contrast, position Jefferies as a kind of social-Darwinian secular-humanist, the latter reading against the established grain to locate anti-ecological and Anthropocene denialist tendencies in Jefferies’ thought. In Jefferies scholarship, then, we notice a divide that locates either a “green” mysticism or a more pessimistic form of naturalistic humanism. As this chapter will show, this stark interpretive division rises from an inherent tension in Jefferies’ work between secularity and paganism.

This tension is a consequence of pagan revivalism’s reliance on secularizing archaeology and its reconstructions of the ancient past and peoples. For Jefferies, what it means to be pagan is informed by Victorian archaeologists’ speculations about prehistoric European pagan rituals, customs, and beliefs. In what follows, I bring attention to Jefferies’ later works like *Wood Magic* (1881), *The Story of my Heart* (1883), *After London; Or Wild England* (1885), and *Amaryllis at the Fair* (1887) to show how he develops a cluster of *pagan affectations*: self-conscious affiliations with and expressions of a Paterian pagan sentiment, informed by notions such as Lubbock’s prehistoric “fetichism” and Tylor’s animism, an affected aesthetic sensibility developed in dialogue with, but leveraged against, currents of thought within the Victorian *saecular discourse*.

These pagan affectations are centrally concerned with feelings of time and of places in terms of interactive relationality within the landscape of Wiltshire.

In light of this regionalism, I will consider Jefferies' pagan affectations in relation to what I will refer to as "archaeologies," the networks of regionally specific archaeological and ecological agencies amidst which Jefferies finds himself interwoven. I examine how Jefferies affects archaic modes of feeling by emphasizing the affective resonances of the ecological and archaeological agencies of things. In this regard, we can see how Jefferies' puts his own spin on the Paterian "pagan sentiment," amplifying what Denisoff called paganism's appreciation of the "mutating imbrications" of animistic ecological agencies ("Post-Human Spirit" 354), which I show Jefferies as extending to the archaeological.<sup>56</sup>

My chapter is organized in two sections. In the first, I will look at Jefferies' engagement with these "archaeologies" through narrative and thematic devices I will call *archaeo-logoi*: archaic things which intimate a pagan reckoning within secular modernity. The *archaeo-logoi* are tropes Jefferies deploys in both his fiction and non-fiction. They are sites of textual ruminations upon the ways in which very old things speak out of time in revolt against Victorian secularity. Jefferies uses *archaeo-logoi* in a manner which recalls Pater's dualistic pagan sentiment, in that the stories Jefferies has his archaic things tell sometimes appear as blessings of the providential bounty of nature and sometimes as threatening "natural forces that are ranged against man" (Pater 99). That is,

<sup>56</sup> In this, I also follow Welshman's "archaeo-agricultural" approach to Jefferies' work ("Riddle" 22). Welshman identifies the ways Jefferies synthesizes local ecologies and their archaeological significance in his attention to the idiosyncrasies of landscapes.

an archaeo-logos can either be a source of pagan revitalizing consolation to or disruption of secularity.

Understanding the significance of this trope within Jefferies' corpus, as I will demonstrate, offers insight into a fundamental feature of his thought and style, which the second part of the chapter will elaborate upon. There, I turn to his autobiography *The Story of My Heart* to show how the duality of the archaeo-logoi in his fiction extends to the affected paganism characteristic of his authorial persona. Jefferies' endeavours to craft such a persona are bewildered by a dualistic urge that seeks to simultaneously identify with and distinguish himself from the timeless landscape of Wiltshire. There is an unresolvable tension in Jefferies' struggles to articulate a sense of self-distinction and individuation apart from the archaeologies within which he contemplates his "soul" and its relation to the material world. I will show how this tension derives from his attempt to use secularizing archaeology and its reconstructions of the pagan past against the Victorian *saecular discourse* as defined in chapters one and two. As a result of this internally conflicted relationship with archaeology, Jefferies' affectations of paganism vacillate between animistic dissipation and mystical individuation, a conflicted feature of his style which serves his efforts to fashion his own voice and persona as part of the deep history and rich ecological diversity of Wiltshire.

### ***The Archaeo-logoi of Places and Things***

Jefferies' pagan affectations are unique in the way his works feature places and things that endure and resist the model of unidirectional temporality upon which

secularization and secularity relies. One distinctive stylistic feature of Jefferies' pagan affectations is a manner of temporal affectivity, a feeling for the "a-chronicity" of places and things, and for being with-out of time with them (González-Ruibal 147). Daniel Shea suggests that the negative reception of Jefferies' fiction which dogged his career was prompted by "an unfamiliar temporal register" sometimes "devoid of narrative linkage or progression" inherent to his style (33-34). Shea argues that Jefferies' preference for "static sketches or scenes rather than smooth-flowing narratives" evinces a critique of capitalism and its "market driven rhythms" that is derivative of his sympathetic inclinations towards rural English life which he envisioned as both spatially and temporally resistant to modernization (35). However, these insights into Jefferies' narrative temporality are also indicative of the way he affects paganism as a structure of feeling earthly "repudiated into being" (Ni 4) via the insufficiencies inherent to secular worldliness. For instance, Jefferies' preference for static sketches sits in contrast with the archaeological *saecular discourse* conveyed by Lubbock's promise to translate fragmented prehistoric "vignettes" into pages of history (*Pre-Historic Times* 1). Against such a temporally homogenizing view, Jefferies writes of affects inhering in seemingly timeless things that resist and disrupt secularizing stadial historiography and the unidirectional temporality which structures that way of writing history. Archaic things, Jefferies suggests, are sources of aesthetic and spiritual consolation, the likes of which Arnold denied and Pater located within the pagan sentiment. As well as being consolatory, the affects associated with archaic things can also have disruptive influences within the modern secular present. I will look at both the consolatory affectivity of archaic things as well as their disruptive capacity in that order.



The affects of old things, for Jefferies, follows from his attentiveness to their *archaeo-logoi*, or the stories and the “reckoning[s]” of archaic things (λογος 201).<sup>57</sup> In using this phrase, I want to highlight Jefferies’ pagan affectations as a unique contribution to Victorian archaeological thought. He affects a special sensitivity to the power of the archaic to assert its presence in the present, a presence which falsifies secular temporality in an appeal to feeling. His fascination with *archaeo-logoi* can be thought of as a Victorian anticipation of what twenty-first century archaeologist Alfredo González-Ruibal calls for in current archaeological praxis, namely, an attentiveness to “the time of things” (145). González-Ruibal insists that within mainstream Western archaeology there is a “tendency to narrate synchronous stories” which, in turn, “produces an homogeneous historicity in which historical phases are well-bounded and self-contained” (146)—in other words, to secularize in the special sense I postulated in my first chapter. We have seen this “homogeneous historicity” in Victorian archaeology’s contributions to the *saecular discourse* which Lubbock popularized in England from the 1860s onwards. Noting the continuing influence of Victorian archaeological and anthropological ideas, González-Ruibal observes that since the nineteenth century archaeologists have attempted to synchronize “the times we study” by focusing on things that become “representative of a certain period.” Things which do not adhere to the classificatory period, though, are “considered ‘residual,’” a way of thinking about time

<sup>57</sup> I evoke the oft-cited complexity of “logos” (in its plural form) in contrast with “archaeology” to bring attention to the multifaceted way Jefferies appeals to the “logos” of things over and against the static view that Victorian archaeologists like Lubbock had of prehistoric artifacts. Victorian archaeologists, as González-Ruibal points out, interpreted objects in a way which restricted an object’s affectivity and temporality to fit within the unilinear cultural evolutionist timeline. Jefferies, as I will show, imagines the logos of archaic things in a way that recalls the nuance of *logos* as “account,” “end,” and especially “reckoning” as revaluating, conjecturing, and as an attention to the looming revisitations of the past. I break up the word with the hyphen in an attempt to make the two root words play off each other.

and endurance which still appeals to the Victorian “idea of ‘survival’” (146). However, archaeological “artifacts are not so obedient” (146). In Jefferies’ attention to the archaeo-logoi of old things, both in terms of the affectivity of objects and sites which intrude upon secularized time, we can see something of an anticipation of the kind of archaeological thinking González-Ruibal advocates for in his own time.<sup>58</sup>

Jefferies’ uses of the archaeo-logoi of places and things can be considered as part of the Victorian trend for the literary adaptation of rural folklore. He suggests as much in *Red Deer* (1883), one of his “country books” in which he performs a kind of ecological, archaeological, and ethnographic study of Exmoor. He finds in Exmoor folkways the persistence and the deliberate protection of prehistoric pagan belief. Reflecting upon the inhabitants of Exmoor, Jefferies reports,

there is a prevalent dislike to opening a barrow. The feeling is very strong, and those who own property do not care to go against it. It is believed that certain misfortune will fall on the household of anyone digging into a tumulus, and that generally a death follows the intrusion upon the ancient tomb. Possibly this idea

<sup>58</sup> What I am calling “archaeo-logoi” is a trope Jefferies develops in a distinct way throughout his works, but this trope is not unique to him. Thomas Hardy, Grant Allen, and M. R. James also deploy a similar trope. Hardy’s “Ancient Earthworks and what Two Enthusiastic Scientists Found There,” Grant Allen’s “Pallinghurst Barrow,” and Edith Nesbit’s “Mansized in Marble” are also potential examples of what I am calling “archaeo-logoi.” Tolkien’s “Barrow Wights” from the chapter “Fog on the Barrow Downs” in *The Fellowship of the Ring* may also use this trope. This trope has a long history that is common still in works that deploy the generic strategies of what has come to be called “folk horror,” especially in Britain. For example, Alan Garner’s *The Owl Service* (1967) and films such Piers Haggard’s *The Blood on Satan’s Claw* (1971) use the trope, although not in the same ways.

may be an unconscious memory of prehistoric times, when sacrifices to ancestors and heroes were made in the precincts of tumuli. (197)<sup>59</sup>

These rural superstitions around ancient burial mounds, which especially seem a threat to the landed gentry, indicate to Jefferies the special attentiveness given to archaeo-logoi by rustic peoples. He emphasizes the way folk-beliefs which concern the proximity of the people to the enduring remainders of “prehistoric times” affects their understanding of the interdependency of the living and the dead, the ancient past and the present.

Reckoning with the archaeo-logoi of ancient monuments has, in an importance sense, become a strategic feature of their temporal and historical autonomy.

Jefferies depicts rustic villagers as not only maintaining their folk beliefs and superstitions, but protecting them, and intentionally attempting to keep them from being assimilated by secular modernity. “Over Red Deer Land,” he writes, “modern civilisation has passed like a breath of wind, stirring the leaves of the trees but leaving them as they were” (201). However, this is not because of an unconscious compulsion to repeat traditions and unthinkingly adhere to obsolete modes of being in the world, but rather because the Exmoor rustics live in two worlds. They are fluent in the beliefs and language of the times, but “[j]ust as material forces have been baffled in the attempt to cultivate the wilderness of Exmoor, so the mental forces of the present era have only superficially touched the people. They read the newspaper, and talk the current topics of the day, but their views and ideas remain unchanged” (201-02). Jefferies is fascinated by

<sup>59</sup> Note that, although he entertains the idea that these superstitious relations with prehistoric sites and things may a Tylorian survival or “unconscious memory” it is with emphasized, double stressed hesitation: “possibly” it “may be” an “unconscious memory.”

the adaptability and endurance of ancient ways into modern times. He notes that “[a]mong the labouring class some considerable polish of language now exists,” for, although “[t]hey converse in good terms, especially the young people,” it is a deceit which Jefferies views as a form of self-preservation (202). Jefferies claims that there is a deliberate strategy at work within these country people. They play a role expected of them, but do not keep faith with the secular “civilized.” In fact, Jefferies claims, they conceal their true adherence to anachronistic beliefs, traditions, and ways of speaking. Just as they are suspicious of the archaeological penetrations into the tumuli, so too they resist attempts to pry into their own beliefs:

Not one word of superstition, or ancient tradition, or curious folk-lore, can a stranger extract. The past seems dead, and they are not to be distinguished from the people of other districts close to the populous centres of industry. But the fact is that this silence is not change: it is a reticence purposely adhered to. By mutual consent they steadfastly refrain from speaking in their own tongue and of their own views to strangers or others not of the country-side. They speak to strangers in the voice of the nineteenth century, the voice of newspaper, book, and current ideas. They reserve for themselves their own ancient tongue and ancient ideas, their traditions, and belief in the occult. (202-3)

For Jefferies, the rustics of Exmoor embody the way in which secularization and secularity are strategically resisted. Their obscured paganism is surviving, not in the Tylorian sense of being reduced to an anachronism, but in contempt of the Victorian *saecular discourse*. They affect modernization in order to preserve their pagan ways.

Jefferies affects a similar kind of pagan mode of subjective mediation, enacting the kind of resistance against secular modernity which he finds at play in the Exmoor folkways.

From this look at Jefferies' reflections on Exmoor, I want to highlight the ways in which he locates a sensitivity to archaeo-logoi amidst the English "folk," how this sensitivity is symptomatic of a pagan survival, and how that survival is deliberately protected and cultivated in rustic performance of modernity. In all of this, Jefferies affiliates himself with the paganism of the rural folk in that he performs as empathetic insider and knowing ethnographer. This affiliation with the survivals of English paganism also gives us an insight into an important element of his style, what I'm calling "pagan affectations." His adoption of the folk "superstition" surrounding the archaeo-logoi of prehistoric sites and things is part of an affected sense of privileged insight into the countryside, its people, and its archaeological networks which foster the survival of paganism. I will return to the way this affected paganism informs the relationship between style, rhetoric, and the ideological contestation of secularity in part two. For the rest of this section, I will look at how archaeo-logoi function as narrative tropes signifying archaic places and things as sites of pagan reckonings in secular modernity across Jefferies' fiction.

For example, throughout *Amaryllis at the Fair*, the unnamed narrator—with whom Jefferies identifies—frequently pauses to contemplate "archaeologically interesting" (50) sites and things throughout the village. These things themselves are arresting in the narrative, occasions which the narrative halts and the author reflects on the material conditions and inner lives of the people who have touched or been affected by them. But more frequently, they are arresting as loci of accumulated affects, objects

which have aesthetic and historical value as records of feeling that connect the sensitive observer to the timelessness of rural life. For instance, early in the novel, Jefferies digresses to attend to the archaeo-logoi of a depression in the panel behind Amaryllis' father, farmer Iden's, chair, a hollow worn into the wall by "[s]o many nods—the attrition of thirty years and more of nodding" (20). Though not a prehistoric or particularly pagan site, Jefferies invests his attention to the materiality of rural life with an affected pagan sensitivity towards the resonating affects of things. The impression in the wainscotting is compared to the stone steps of a religious temple, which bears the impressions of devotees: "This human mark reminded one of the grooves worn by the knees of generations of worshippers in the sacred steps of the temple which they ascended on all-fours" (20). The human marks upon these sites, Jefferies suggests, charges them with archaeological affectivity, making them part of an ecology of human and non-human affects.

Furthermore, Jefferies' attentiveness to archaeo-logoi is central to his self-definition as a "pagan." The "panel of wainscot" is "as worthy of preservation" as any religious artifact, for it has been "[w]orn in slow time by a human head within which a great mind was working under the most unhappy conditions," and is therefore invested with "the deep value attaching to inanimate things which have witnessed intolerable suffering." This reflection moves him to declare:

I am not a Roman Catholic, but I must confess that if I could be assured any particular piece of wood had really formed a part of the Cross I should think it the most valuable thing in the world, to which Koh-i-noors would be mud.

I am a pagan, and think the heart and soul above crowns. (20-21)

Jefferies here puts forward a notion of paganism defined by the ability to appreciate the way feelings shape objects and how those objects themselves record and convey feelings. It also suggests a reversal of value in things. Being a pagan, Jefferies suggests, means finding spiritual and affective value in common things, things that he values higher than money or exotic treasures. Such moments reflect Shea's observations concerning Jefferies' interest in troubling time. Being a pagan, for Jefferies, then, means being, like the rustics of Exmoor, attentive to the affective force of old things in their capacity to reveal discontinuities of time and feeling. Such moments appear as dynamic vignettes, scenes that are not static but are more like eddies disrupting the flow of narrational time within the novel and the characters' (and readers') sense of secular worldliness and its forward flow of secularized, unidirectional temporality.

Similar seemingly digressive episodes abound in *Wood Magic*, where the timeless animistic personifications of the wind and the brook impart their archaeo-logoi to the child-hero Bevis. In doing so, these animistic agents disrupt the narrative by distracting the hero from the main war-of-birds-and-beasts plot while also disrupting readers' interest to ruminate upon the nature of time, place, feeling, and ecological relationality. In attending to these timeless entities, Bevis *un*learns certain tenets of Victorian *saecular discourse*, namely cultural-evolutionist assertions about the past, history, and time, but also about how individuals relate to the land. For instance, earlier in the book, the brook tries to dissuade a skeptical Bevis from assenting to modern conceits about nature, time, and the cultural past:

that which has gone by, whether it happened a second since, or a thousand thousand years since, is just the same; there is no real division betwixt you and the

past. You people who live now have made up all sorts of stupid, very stupid, stories, dear; I hope you will not believe them; they tell you about time and all that. Now there is no such thing as time, Bevis my love; there never was any time, and there never will be; the sun laughs at it, even when he marks it on the sundial. Yesterday was just a second ago, and so was ten thousand years since, and there is nothing between you and then; there is no wall between you and then—nothing at all, dear . . . . *we* are all here just the same, my love, and all things are as bright and beautiful as ten thousand times ten thousand years ago, which is no longer since than a second.

But your people have gone away from us—that is their own fault. I cannot think why they should do so; they have gone away from us, and they are no longer happy, Bevis; they cannot understand our songs—they sing stupid songs they have made up themselves, and which they did not learn of us, and then because they are not happy, they say: “The world is growing old.” But it is not true, Bevis, the world is not old, it is as young as ever it was. (1:211-13)

I quote such a lengthy passage here to demonstrate the way Jefferies gives expression to the tangled nature of temporality, ecology, and culture. The brook stresses the fallaciousness of the division of human from habitat, a key tenet of the *saecular discourse*, recall, evident in Lubbock’s utopian archaeology and Tylor’s theory of stadial development of “civilization” up and away from “savagery.” Both require a division between subjectivity and objectivity, which Jefferies wants to resist with the brook’s pagan-animist didacticism.



Furthermore, the archaeo-logos of the brook implicates secularity's false sense of time in something of an affective crisis that has befallen modernity: in "going away from us," or allowing secularized linear time to put distance between modern "civilized" humans and their ancestors and habitat, they find themselves "no longer happy." Jefferies' brook recalls and qualifies Arnold's diagnosis that "depression and *ennui*" are inherent features of literature in the process of becoming modern, or self-reflective, self-critical, and disinterested ("The Modern Element in Literature" 71). The brook alleges that depression is symptomatic when culture is severed from habitat and promises an elevated appreciation for aesthetic experiences born in direct consort with archaeologically intertwined agencies.

In the brook's archaeo-logos, then, we see the ways Jefferies' pagan affectations rely on notions of a prehistoric animistic consolatory antidote to modern secularizing disenchantment and *ennui*. This is demonstrated further near the end of the book when Bevis encounters the wind upon the summit of a prehistoric hillfort. The wind echoes some of the sentiments relayed by the brook, but with direct reference to the ancient pagans of Wiltshire:

[T]he people who were buried in these little mounds used to drink me, and oh!  
 how they raced along the turf, dear; there is nobody can run so fast now; and they  
 leaped and danced, and sang and shouted. I loved them as I love you, my darling;  
 there, sit down and rest on the thyme, dear, and I will stroke your hair and sing to  
 you. (2:260)

The wind asserts the vitality of prehistoric life over and against that of "the stuff and rubbish they tell you down there in the houses where they will not let me come," advising

Bevis, “[i]f they say the earth is not beautiful, tell them they do not speak the truth” (2:256-57). Here, prehistoric paganism is a kind of tonic, in so far as Bevis, in emulating the pagan’s reverence for nature, will be the beneficiary of animistic revitalization. If, Bevis, like his prehistoric forebears, will “drink” the wind, he too will share in the vitality of the land. Jefferies’ extolling of prehistoric vitality, though drawn from archaeological reconstructions of archaic life, butts against the convictions of archaeologists like Lubbock who depreciate the lifeways, health, and moral condition of “primitive” prehistoric peoples.

The wind in *Wood Magic* personifies the consolatory nature of archaeo-logoi, which elsewhere Jefferies represents as a more literalized *tonic*. For instance, in *Amaryllis at the Fair*, the Fleet Street dwelling writer Alere Flamma must convalesce regularly at the Iden farmhouse in order that his health, leeched away by the urban atmosphere he normally calls home, be restored. The primary curative is the Iden family “Goliath Ale,” a traditional brew which has been a rural staple “for generations” (149). The ale does not tell a literal story, like the wind, but rather restores a similarly consolatory intimacy with the archaic elements of the land. The “Goliath Ale” contains an “alchemic force” (149), a “spirit drawn from the joyous barley . . . a cordial grown on the sunny hill-side,” that mixes “dew and sweet rain, coloured by the light, a liquor of sunshine, potable sunbeam” (148). But the potency of the ale is contingent upon the alleged purity of timeless places: for the “alchemic force” to be distilled, the ale “must be genuine, and it must be old” (149). Moreover, Jefferies champions the efficaciousness of folk-remedy against modern medicine. He contrasts the timelessness of the rain, sunlight, and soil that is tapped by this brewing tradition with modern chemistry and medicine,

which fails to have curative effects on Alere, for the Iden family brew “contains the volatile principle, which the prescriptions have not got” (149). There is a suspicion of modern knowledge production in Jefferies’ contrast between old folk-remedies and modern medical *prescriptions*.

Drawing attention to corporeal intimacies between persons, places, and things, Jefferies emphasises consumption: ingestion and inhalation—the wind advising Bevis to “drink” him for his health and the “Goliath Ale” a “cordial” of light, air, rain-water, dew, and earth. The emphasis on consumption of rural archaeo-logoi appears as a textual reflection of Jefferies’ affected paganism, which I am suggesting is also a self-promotional affiliation and performative recreation of a timeless intimacy with the land imagined as enduring within rural inhabitants and their ways. The affected sense of timeless, archaeological intimacy that Jefferies assigns to rural folk is also an identity with which he shares. He fashions himself country-side chronicler and leverages that intimacy with rural lands and peoples as part of his pagan iconoclastic rebuff to Victorian secularity.

However, archaeo-logoi are not always revitalising. They can also appear as destructive disruptions of secular temporality, as is the case of “the story about a flint” told to Bevis by the Squirrel in *Wood Magic*. The Squirrel recounts a story of a young man who sent a cart into the hills to gather flint. We learn later this man is farmer George (from whose orchard the antagonist King Kapchack the magpie reigns over the local woodlands). Young farmer George needed fill to build up a level path for his secret lover to rendezvous with him more comfortably in the orchard. The flints, “which had been lying quite motionless in the ground for so many thousand years that nobody could count

them” were loaded into a rickety waggon, and “one flint, which was smaller than the rest . . . squeezed out of a hole in the bottom of the waggon, and fell on the dust in the road, and was left there” (1:148-51). This “very small flint” proves to be a catalyst not only for local tragedy, but also plays a minor part in the central plot of the novel itself. The Squirrel relates how the flint lay in the road undisturbed until the horse of a “very old and very wealthy gentleman” who was riding along in a carriage, “chanced to slip on the flint, which, being sharp and jagged, hurt its hoof” (1:150). The horse went down, the gentleman and his groom were thrown out of the carriage, and the old man broke his arm. The horse was lamed (and presumably shot), the gentleman, enraged, sacked his groom and refused him good reference for subsequent employment (1:150). The groom, unable to work, “soon began to starve” and was “obliged to steal, and after a while he became a burglar” (1:151). The burglar, caught off guard breaking a house in London, shoots the homeowner, who turns out to be his former employer, the same old gentleman who dismissed him. The burglar flees and is now on the run from the law. Although the Squirrel’s story ends here, we find out later that the flint’s mischief was not over. For the son of the old gentleman who was murdered by his groom-turned-thief inherited the old man’s estate nearby Bevis’ and George’s farms. The groundskeeper of the deceased gentleman’s estate, upon learning that a new owner is due, sets out to check the grounds, injures his ankle, and is left helpless and near death (2:89-102).

By featuring a flint so dangerously agentic, Jefferies evokes one of the oldest forms of resource extraction from Mesolithic flint mining down to the nineteenth-century flint collecting for large scale arms manufacturing, road building, and more private endeavours like that of George the farmer. This episode also reflects very old rural

superstitions throughout Britain which long held flint arrowheads and tools to be of a supernatural origin and charged with malign affectivity. Various regional folkloric expressions throughout Britain retained a belief that these implements “fell from the sky as ‘Elf-Bolts’” that were “used and made by witches and fairies” (Piggott 92). Part of the titular “Wood Magic,” then, is in the way Jefferies charges things and places with a sense of the malevolence of prehistory and the haunted landscape.

Furthermore, Jefferies inherently opposes temporalities, in this case the interruption of prehistoric times upon both narrative time in the story and secularized temporality broadly speaking. The flint is animistically conceived, but in a manner which depicts it as malevolently inspirited, laying in wait “so many years that nobody could count them” (1:151), intending to do harm. It intercedes into the narrative causing a chain of events which further disrupts the already fragmented narrative time of the novel. In either example of the archaeo-logoi, whether in the consolatory and revitalizing affects imparted by the wind, the brook, or the Goliath Ale, or the more nefarious agency of the ancient flint, Jefferies draws out the implications of how archaic things enact a reckoning, counteracting and disrupting the Victorian *saecular discourse*.

Perhaps the clearest example of the dual consolatory/ disruptive nature of Jefferies’ archaeo-logoi is to be found in his post-apocalyptic romance *After London; Or Wild England*. *After London* dramatizes a simultaneous destruction and regeneration of England that puts into play Arnoldian and Tylorian apocalyptic anxieties about pagan revivalism, and the hopeful futurity of a Paterian regenerative renaissance of the pagan sentiment. Jefferies does this by writing a future England that has returned to a state of prehistory. His rewilded English have, until recently, had no recorded history, save for

the leftover scraps that predate the catastrophe which has ruined modern civilization. England is also rendered prehistoric in its resemblance to the ancient post-glacial environment geologists had recently uncovered and were debating. The “Wild England” of roughly 2280 (Jefferies’ story opens four-hundred years after the global cataclysm, which seems to have occurred in his own near-future), also finds its inhabitants in a kind of mixed stage of technological and socio-cultural development that blends prehistory, medievalism, and post-apocalyptic dystopianism. However, the setting does not simply evoke Victorian nightmares of degeneration, but rather figures the future as a cyclical repetition of the deep past. In this, Jefferies, a self-defined student of uniformitarianism,<sup>60</sup> echoes Lyell’s description of geomorphology as the “theatre of reiterated change” (24). The archaeo-logoi gets reversed and revised in *After London* as the archaeology of a wrecked modernity, in that ruined, buried, and/or repurposed Victorian industrial infrastructures exert an ambiguous agency. In this, Jefferies recycles modernity as a kind of prehistory for a future which he ultimately leaves suspended in indeterminacy.

*After London* makes a romance out of Lyell’s “theatre of reiterated changes” at the geological, geopolitical, and ecological scales. Jefferies thereby amplifies the scale of the archaeological affectivity which I have been discussing in the way he incorporates the mood and thematic concerns of his pagan affectations in two archaeologically significant locations which are central to *After London*’s plot: the great Lake, which is

<sup>60</sup> Critics have noted the influence of Lyell upon Jefferies. For instance, John Plotz observes how *After London* and other of Jefferies’ works distill a kind of post-Darwinian uniformitarian naturalism that is fixated on “stasis in flux”—though Plotz weighs more heavily Jefferies’ interest in the static than the fluctuating (40). Jefferies held Lyellian uniformitarianism in the highest esteem, writing in “Nature and Human Nature” that Lyellian uniformitarianism “may be seen at work in any pond” (12). Jefferies, however, seems to be more attached to Lyell’s pre-Darwinian anti-evolutionism, and “Nature and Human Nature” is in part a diatribe against the kind of secularizing historiography exemplified by Lubbock and Tylor.

formed of flood waters and covers Wiltshire and most of southern England, and the Swamp that has grown from the waste of London. These two archaeologies are sites of reckoning with the archaic which embody rival archaeo-logoi. The Lake represents the resurgent animistic agencies which can overwhelm and decentre anthropocentrism, while also serving as a reservoir of hope for new aesthetic, political, and ecological forms. The Swamp is a site of toxic affectivity charged with the miserable memories of industrial modernity. These two archaeologies also harbour rival temporalities and historicities, which oppose secularity and paganism. The Swamp cradles the stagnated homogeneous time of secularity, coagulating its unilinear progression into a festering pit wherein the stone, bronze, iron, dark, medieval, and industrial ages bog down into each other.

The Lake harbours an opposing temporality and historicity. The waters that have burst the dams and canals of industrial modernity reshaped the entire landscape in a geographical revolution that undermines Victorian *saecular discourse's* unidirectional tempo-historical progression. The pooled flood waters of the Lake, like those of the Swamp, are part of the process which has churned up the stratified, secularized ages of England, and resulted in a future forged from the blending of prehistoric and modern archaeo-logoi. However, whereas the Swamp is pestilential and antagonistic to life and growth, the Lake appears as a new horizon of indeterminacy and possibility. The narrator describes its formation as though it were an act of animistic agencies working intentionally to bring industrialism to its end: "After a time . . . shallows and banks became well matted together by the growth of weeds, of willows, and flags, while the tide, ebbing lower at each drawing back, left still more mud and sand," which caused "the waters of the river. . . to overflow up into the deserted streets, and especially to fill the

underground passages and drains” (26). The rubble of infrastructure even ironically structures a new landscape: “[V]ast quantities of timber, the wreckage of towns and bridges which was carried down by the various rivers . . . added to the accumulation, which increased the faster because the foundations of the ancient bridges held it like piles driven in for the purpose” (36). Gradually the Lake settles into the formation it retains in the book’s present, sparing the inhabitants and encouraging their continued occupation.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, the Swamp and the Lake represent two opposing archaeo-logoi. Due to its emissions of toxic gas and poisonous slime, the Swamp is antithetical to all life: “There exhales from this oozy mass so fatal a vapour that no animal can endure it. . . . There are no fishes, neither can eels exist in the mud, nor even newts. It is dead” (*After London* 37). Even the marshes floating upon the swampy waters are archaeologies harbouring a negated vitality, caused by perpetually recycled pollution radiating from the sunken ruins. Thus, the Swamp’s archaeo-logoi takes the form of ancestral vengeance, a more dire kind of reckoning than what I have been looking at in Jefferies’ fiction thus far: a poisonous breath wafting up from the ruined world of the modern dead, an indefinitely perpetuated plague upon a re-prehistoricized future landscape.

The Swamp also appears as a scaled up fictive rendering of Jefferies’ disgust at Victorian London. With its putrid exhalations and oozing expirations, the Swamp prefigures Jefferies’ reflections in *Amaryllis at the Fair* on the suffering of the urban poor who line the gutters of Fleet Street, where “[t]he pavements are covered with expectoration, indicating the chest diseases and misery that thousands are enduring” (146). In this book, Jefferies juxtaposes the image of the homeless’ suffering from

<sup>61</sup> See *After London* (42).



respiratory infections and coating the streets with a layer of phlegmatic discharge against the sunny hillsides where Iden gathers the ingredients for the Goliath Ale. *After London*'s Swamp collapses Victorian London into its own deep history to form one dismal pit. The disgust which Jefferies projects onto the future Swamp of London is also a haunting and haunted version of the "Royal Exchange" in *The Story of My Heart*. Jefferies describes the scene before the Exchange as a congestion of life: "streams of human life" that "flow into this agitated pool" (120). Furthermore, this "agitated pool" takes on a will and power of its own, apart from the individuals who comprise it: "[T]he agitated pool of life is stonily indifferent to all but itself" and has become a "dynamic force apart from reason or will" (122). Arguing counter to cultural-evolutionist narratives of civilization, Jefferies states, "[t]he piling up of fortunes, the building of cities, the establishment of immense commerce, ends in a cipher" (145).

In *After London*, this "cipher"<sup>62</sup> is figured as an archaeo-logos of a toxic swamp whose reckoning arrives in the form of the legacy of modernity and the accumulation of wasted labour that brings London full circle back to its prehistoric origins. As Jesse Oak Taylor also observes, Jefferies' future London "has become a place of timeless desolation, not simply beyond human history but outside the cycles of natural regeneration" making it "immortal" (205), investing it with a kind of acrid a-chronicity, the opposite to that of the wind, the brook, or the hills and vales where Iden gathers ingredients for his restorative ale. But its a-chronicity also suggests something of an archaeologically cyclical return. *After London*'s Swamp returns the great city to a vision of it as the inhospitable swampy region the Romans settled as Londinium. For instance,

<sup>62</sup> The OED defines this term as "non-entity" (definitions 2 a and b).

in Walter Thornbury's *London Old and New* (1878), pre-Roman London is described as "amid a vast and dismal region of fen, swamp, and forest" ("*London*"). Furthermore, in *The History of England*, Macaulay recalls how all of England was thought to be a land inhabited by "objects of mysterious horror" where "the air was such that no man could inhale it and live" (16-17). Jefferies' future Swamp is a similarly haunted place, which legends of "demons," "serpents," and "white spectres" have grown around (*After London* 39). *After London* thus condenses ages of history into one murky pool, a process at once ecological and archaeological in its reabsorption of corruption from the decay, an image of the unacknowledged inevitable end, Jefferies seems to suggest, towards which secular modernity tends.

In stark opposition to the archaeo-logoi of the Swamp, the fertility of the Lake sees a proliferation of resilient and thriving ecosystems and species. Kate Neilsen argues that Jefferies does not depict nature as re-establishing a "state of equilibrium or harmony," but rather as a "destructive homogeneousness" (204). While *After London* may not imagine a harmonious rewilding of England, the archaeologies that form around the Lake suggest not homogeneity but new conditions for indeterminate forms of life and aesthetic experiences. With these, there arises new horizons and even a cautious sense of hope. The vastness of the Lake sharply contrasts the Swamp's toxic congestion. "A beautiful sea it is," the narrator claims, "clear as crystal, exquisite to drink, abounding with fishes of every kind, and adorned with green islands. There is nothing more lovely in the world than when, upon a calm evening, the sun goes down across the level and gleaming water," and one "cannot distinguish any ending to the expanse. Sometimes it is blue, reflecting the noonday sky; sometimes white from the clouds; again green and dark

as the wind rises and the waves roll” (42). The Lake thus represents ecological abundance and aesthetic splendor, but also a new horizon at dusk anticipating a new dawn. The Lake’s surface reflects the steady rhythms of the solar system and the transformations of the inconstant clouds, representative of the dual sense of stilled presence and fluctuation which is also inherent to the consolatory *archaeo-logoi* that counters secularization’s unidirectional progressions with cyclical movement.<sup>63</sup>

The Lake covers much of the prehistoric English landscape. In this, it also pools the affective potential of the deep past into a reservoir of indeterminant futurity. Several regionally specific archaeologically significant sites have been spared and are re-incorporated into the landscape. Jefferies’ favorite pagan spots—the tumuli on the downs, The Uffington White Horse, and even Stonehenge— have all not only survived but are still prominent features of the book’s geography. Some even play important thematic and plot-serving roles. The Uffington White Horse, as Welshman notes, plays an important role in the plot. Now known as “The Straights of the White Horse,” it is a boundary marker at the limit of Felix’s community. It is from atop “White Horse hill” that Felix sits

<sup>63</sup> Critics are divided over the question of what shape Jefferies ultimately suggests the post-apocalyptic future will take. Kramp, Manning, Plotz, and Sumpter argue that the future is on course to repeat the historical conditions that lead to modern industrial capitalism and the Anthropocene. Neilsen, Scott, and Taylor argue that the book offers a vision of counter-deterministic possibility. Taylor, for instance notes that although the re-emergent Britain resembles epochs of early British history, and therefore seems to be on a similar trajectory, this “does not mean that the subsequent history leading to industrial modernity will unfold in the same way a second time. Indeed, the radical contingency of natural history suggests that it most certainly would not” (“Novel” 128). I position myself more with this latter interpretive stance. However, Frost also insightfully suggests that the novel offers the grounds for both readings and seeks a sort of compromise. Highlighting “Jefferies’s refusal to provide a clear ending,” Frost concludes that “much rests on whether readers can conceive the possibility of a new way of living life after London that is neither an idealised realm of effortless pastoral plenty . . . nor simply a replication of the hateful disorder of courtly society.” Rather, Frost suggests, the novel presents “a pragmatic synthesis of two worlds, a nascent realm of social experimentation” that can be read for its “utopian possibilities,” and perhaps “even offer a model community capable of finally ending the country’s long relapse into barbarism while learning how to thrive in Wild England” (xlvi). The book’s ending supports this reading in that the hero Felix is set to establish a new and better society, but still has a perilous journey to make. We are left with him returning to where he started, his fate, and that of “Wild England” left undecided.

and begins to chart his own course across the expansive waters of the Lake (135).<sup>64</sup> As Welshman also points out, at the book's climax, Felix gains a tactical advantage by ascending the summit of a tumulus.<sup>65</sup> Here Jefferies imagines Felix triumphant atop the prehistoric warrior he has come to resemble, and suggests that the archaeo-logoi of the these sites and things fold the future into prehistory. Therefore, on a grander scale, the Lake models prehistoric futurity as a counter-image of the "cipher" of secular modernity, reminiscent of the wind's and the brook's revitalizing ministrations, as well as Iden's restorative "Goliath Ale."

However, the territories surrounding the Lake are also sites of reiterated anthropogenic violence, trauma, and oppression. The geopolitical and cultural formations that re-emerge are recurrences of Britain's deep "racial" history (as it was imagined by Jefferies' contemporaries), for the book finds Anglo-Saxons still at war with Irish and Welsh Celts and Scottish Gaels and Picts. The book's idea of future Britain does not therefore predict a decided fate, but rather evokes a continual sense of anxiety fostered by embattled peoples and nations set against a beautiful island scenery and tinged with tragic irony in that it is foregrounded by the reshaped horizons and potentiality of a new age. In this, the book's recycled geographic and geologic formations function as a rhetorical expression of revolutionary possibilities inherent to the freaks of cosmic indeterminacy. Calling into question Victorian pretensions of cultural evolutionist ascendancy, Jefferies envisions the flooding of England as a chaotic reversal of fortunes, demonstrating the precarity of human dominion—though, as is evinced by the immortal corruption of the

<sup>64</sup> See *After London* (135). So too, the tradition of "scouring" the geoglyph has not been forgotten.

<sup>65</sup> See Welshman's "Imagining Archaeology Part Two" (27), and Jefferies' *After London* (225).

Swamp, not erasing the legacy of that dominion. The Lake represents the indefiniteness of chance. It has reshaped the landscape, but without determining the destiny of its inhabitants, a landscape that forms the stage upon which the theatre of reiterated change unfolds.

In *After London*, then, we see the dual nature of Jefferies' adaptation of the pagan sentiment, in its revitalizing and disruptive valances, bifurcated into two opposing archaeo-logoi in the Lake and the Swamp. Jefferies invests these two sites with his challenge to the Victorian *saecular discourse*. Modern secularity, for Jefferies, fails because its false conception of unidirectional time both fosters an oblivious presentism while also staking its confidence in an inevitably progressivist course of history, both over-assured by what Asad calls secularism's faith in "calculative reason" (*Secular Translations* 104). *After London* imagines an earth and a temporality that undermines the confidence of secular calculations.

In this section, I have looked at the ways Jefferies' fiction affects a form of paganism that is attentive to and re-communicates the archaeo-logoi of the ancient landscape. In reckoning the stories of the ancient sites and things of Wiltshire, Jefferies presents himself as both its storyteller and its medium. In the next section, I will explore the implications of this feature of his authorial persona as it pertains to his more overtly autobiographical writing.

### ***“A Wider Horizon of Feeling”***

So far, I have shown the ways in which the archaeo-logoi of various features of the Wiltshire landscape inform Jefferies’ fiction and affectations of paganism. In this section, I will turn to *The Story of My Heart* to show how he incorporates the archaeologies of Wiltshire into his pagan persona, and how these facilitate his attempts to write “a new book of the soul” that will express his “most serious convictions” (213). *The Story of My Heart* finds Jefferies phasing in and out of self-distinction as he affects a pagan animist urge for an ecstatic dissipation of selfhood on the one hand, and a struggle for individuation and auto-articulation on the other. In other words, Jefferies seems caught between his desire to develop a distinct authorial *persona* that participates in the deep pagan past of Wiltshire and yet he seems unable to resist becoming something of a *personification* of the archaeologies of that place which has made such a spell-binding claim upon his identity.

There is nothing quite like *The Story of My Heart* in the familiar canon of Victorian literature. Its frank intensity yet deliberate evasiveness sets it apart and makes it difficult to categorize. It is at once cynically naturalist and optimistically visionary, both mystically aloof and passionately engaged in its criticism of industrial capitalism and the *saecular discourse*, reverent of the past and the rural landscape without being nostalgic. It is recognizably late-Victorian in its anxieties about change and yet modernist in its search for alternative modes of experience and new forms of expression. It registers the change of heart that Williams observes in Jefferies’ social and political conscience, in that his earlier pandering sympathies regarding the landed aristocracy have given way to a kind

of enlightened mystical pagan humaneness. In this respect, the book can best be read, as its title suggests, as a kind of *Künstlerroman*, but one in which the development of the artist is non-linear. Rather, the book reflects Shea's observations about Jefferies' rejection of linear narrative temporality and development in its shuttling back and forth between Jefferies' world-weary maturation and his contemplative youthful loafing upon the Wiltshire downs. As a "story," it goes nowhere in particular. If there is any "development" it is in the act of continually recalling the experiences of deep archaeocological entanglement with the Wiltshire landscape. In those moments, Jefferies penetrates the depths of his own heart. That act of immersion into the self is presented as an archaeological quest in which interrogation of the landscape is grounds for an encounter with a deeper sense of self. The story-teller's task in this book is revealed not as a telling of the story of a heart that has a definitive character. This storyteller commits to the unceasing effort to articulate a "heart," "soul," or a sense of self that is in the process of distinguishing itself as a part of and yet apart from the places and things that have nurtured it. In this sense, Jefferies becomes to himself as the archaeo-logoi of his fiction: a gathering of enchanting affects, sometimes consolatory and revitalizing, sometimes unsettling and disruptive, circulating within and about an ancient geologically and anthropogenically shaped landscape.

As we have seen throughout his later fiction, for Jefferies the enduring presence of prehistoric Wiltshire is a reservoir of pagan feeling for archaeocologically entwined places and things which he imagines as inexhaustible sites of aesthetic and existential significance. This trope is put to use in *The Story of My Heart* in a manner which implicates Jefferies himself in the affectivity of the land and emphasises the sense of

temporal displacement from secular modernity. The book reads, in this sense, as an urge to uncover a new way of being earthly in counter-distinction from secularity. Jefferies circles back over and over again to two specific kinds of prehistoric sites which feature prominently in the Wiltshire landscape and which also feature prominently in his fiction: Liddington Castle<sup>66</sup> and the tumuli spread throughout the countryside. Throughout this section, I will show how these become conduits for Jefferies' reflections upon the process of self articulation as a constituent of the archaeologies of Wiltshire. In these moments at these sites, Jefferies' meditations convey a sense of conflict in the modes of self distinction he pursues. He struggles with a sense of self torn between mystical, transcendental individuation and an urge towards animistic, dissipative deindividuation. I will also argue that the tension between these two models of authorial articulation is a consequence of Jefferies' adaptations of Lubbockian fetishistic animism on the one hand, and the Paterian pagan sentiment on the other.

The dual nature of Jefferies' encounters with the "Man in the Tumulus" (to which Lubbock referred in his commemorative speech honoring Jefferies which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter) and his recurrent visits to Liddington Castle exemplify his conflicted sense of relationality to place, which he claims informed his development as a thinker and writer. For instance, Jefferies presents the specific contours of the ancient topography as foundational to his aesthetics and personal spirituality. Within the first few paragraphs of *The Story*, he recounts an experience of affective expansion which

<sup>66</sup> Liddington Castle is a massive late bronze-early iron age hillfort that it is thought allowed the ancient Britons to gain an elevated vantage and prepare for and protect themselves from invaders.



occurred during his ascent of Liddington Castle,<sup>67</sup> which was to be a formative moment in his “story”:

Moving up the sweet short turf, at every step my heart seemed to obtain *a wider horizon of feeling*; with every inhalation of rich pure air, a deeper desire. The very light of the sun was whiter and more brilliant here. By the time I had reached the summit I had entirely forgotten the petty circumstances and the annoyances of existence. I felt myself, myself. There was an intrenchment on the summit, and going down into the fosse I walked round it slowly to recover breath. On the south-western side there was a spot where the outer bank had partially slipped, leaving a gap. There the view was over a broad plain, beautiful with wheat, and inclosed by a perfect amphitheatre of green hills. Through these hills there was one narrow groove, or pass, southwards, where the white clouds seemed to close in the horizon. Woods hid the scattered hamlets and farmhouses, so that I was quite alone. (30-31, italics added)

Here he recounts the gaining of privileged vantage and perspective. His ascension is also an immersion: as he climbs the hill, he achieves a “wider horizon of feeling” and a feeling of “deeper desire.” Moreover, reaching the summit of this hill delivers him into a carved trench or “fosse” that nonetheless does not obscure his view, but sharpens his focus by channeling it through various grooves within his line of sight. The prehistoric hillfort, then, serves Jefferies as a fortified, defensive refuge within which he can perform a kind of aesthetic and spiritual reconnaissance. This ascension and absorption brings him

<sup>67</sup> Both Brian Taylor (127) and Welshman (“Imagining” Part One 37) have identified Jefferies as referencing Liddington Castle in this passage.

deeper into himself (“I felt myself, myself”), an act of ritual entrenchment in the prehistoric earthwork that encourages self-authentication through the gaining of a better vantage of his expanding horizons of feeling. We must envision Jefferies here as a lonely, impoverished, intense, and slightly embittered young man, feeling out of place among his community and out of synch with his times. A youth finding himself by losing himself to the enchantments of the ecological and archaeological distinctiveness of Wiltshire.

This archaeocological immersion attempts a form of counter-secularity in that Jefferies translates the terms of his experience of subjectivity from the secular to the spiritual. “Myself” becomes “my soul”: “Lying down on the grass, I spoke in my soul to the earth, the sun, the air, and the distant sea far beyond sight” (31). Soul *becomes* distinguishable to itself in a process of articulating its own presence by nesting in an ancient fortification and communing with the archaeocological collective. In performing this act of spiritual self-encounter through ancient archaeocological agencies, Jefferies seems only capable of reaching and communicating with his self—his soul—when he is revisiting a refuge for the ancient Britons and communing with the Wiltshire landscape’s archaeo-logoi. In all this, then, Jefferies’ pagan affectation authorizes his literary persona as a form of archaeo-logos itself, in that, he must speak with the land to speak his “soul” (I will return to Jefferies’ special notion of “soul” later in the chapter). This is an example of his affectations of a pagan persona in that his textual voice, as that of the wind or the brook in *Wood Magic*, is offered to his readers in a manner reminiscent of the Goliath Ale administered to Alere Flamma as a curative. Jefferies gives voice to a reparative counter-secular incantation inspired by the archaeologies of the Wiltshire landscape.

A central feature of Jefferies' pagan affectations, then, is this performance of interpersonal communion with the networks of archaeological and ecological agencies that dwell within and give distinct character to the Wiltshire landscape. Jefferies imagines himself partaking in the a-chronicity of the site and capable of sharing in the deep memory of the land and its inhabitants. This assumption of a-chronicity and entanglement into place does not always connote animistic dissipation, however. His experiences around a specific tumulus frequently find him striving for a form of buffered self-individuation, often expressed in terms of his own sense of possessing an a-chronic, discrete sense of self, which he especially seems to desire when in proximity to what he perceives as the immortal spirit of the man in the tumulus:

There were grass-grown tumuli on the hills to which of old I used to walk, sit down at the foot of one of them, and think. Some warrior had been interred there in the antehistoric times. The sun of the summer morning shone on the dome of sward, and the air came softly up from the wheat below, the tips of the grasses swayed as it passed sighing faintly, it ceased, and the bees hummed by to the thyme and the heath bells. I became absorbed in the glory of the day, the sunshine, the sweet air, the yellowing corn turning from its sappy green to summer's noon of gold, the lark's song like a waterfall in the sky. I felt at that moment that I was like the spirit of the man whose body was interred in the tumulus; I could understand and feel his existence the same as my own. . . . As my thought could slip back the twenty centuries in a moment to the forest days when he hurled the spear, or shot with the bow, hunting the deer, and could return

again as swiftly to this moment, so his spirit could endure from then till now, and the time was nothing. (63)

Here, in a similar manner to his experience at Liddington Castle, Jefferies' meditations near the tumulus shows a similarly conflicted sense of self-in-relation to place. He is "absorbed" in the presence of ecological abundance and vitality and that presence overwhelms his sense of temporality. However, the a-chronicity is an affectation, and his articulation of temporal displacement—his pretense to being able to jet back and forth between "antehistoric times" and his own present—underscores this. Moreover, he appeals to a fantastical logic: if he can imagine being in what was the warrior's "antehistoric" living present, so his spirit must eternally endure—as if Jefferies can merge into the a-chronic Wiltshire landscape by communing with the prehistoric dead.<sup>68</sup>

So far, this process of self-articulation via communion with and amidst archaeocological agencies demonstrates Jefferies' engagement, directly or indirectly, with Pater's "pagan sentiment." His experiences amidst earthworks and tumuli of Wiltshire recall what Linda Dowling referred to as Pater's turn to archaeology for aesthetic and sensual "reconciliation with the earth" (210) and what Denisoff observed as Pater's dissipative pagan de-individuation ("Dissipating" 432). However, whereas Pater's geo-aesthetic reconciliation entails a liberating de-individuation of the self, Jefferies dwells with the tension between his sense of dissipation amidst the archaeologies of Wiltshire

<sup>68</sup> My reading benefits from the insights of Rebecca Welshman here. She notes that Wiltshire's rich archaeologically significant topography profoundly affected Jefferies because it "offered a means of experiences of the landscape in ways similar to ancient communities who inhabited and farmed the same area" and could suggest "a grander sequence of life that has remained essentially unchanged since prehistoric times" ("The Riddle"34).

and his experience of individuation as a part of and apart from its landscape. Moreover, while his pagan affectations tend towards immanence, geological timelessness, and ecological relationality, throughout *The Story of My Heart* Jefferies also frequently imagines ecological relationality as dualistic. Therefore, Jefferies' manner of relating to the land finds him internally conflicted, and a narrative tension emerges in his "story." This tension, which I noted above, arises from Jefferies' tendency towards animistic dissipation on the one hand and mystical individuation on the other. The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with interrogating that tension and showing how it is left unresolved by Jefferies as part of a narrative strategy and distinctive literary style that resists closure, comprehensiveness, full comprehension, or conventional satisfaction. This strategy underscores the book's central objective: to show the story of a heart that endeavours to obtain "a wider horizon of feeling," a mode of subjectivity which allows the self to perpetually encounter itself anew, to continue to desire deeper and more expansive experiences, to resist fulfilment, to become, be undone, and become again in a sprawling, spiraling quest rather than a linear account that has a clear beginning and a definite ending.

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the tension I am suggesting is central to *The Story of My Heart* has been recorded in the two opposing interpretive directions scholars have taken. Jefferies has been characterized by scholars such as Roger Ebbatson, Simon Coleman, and Brian Morris as a kind of "ecomystic." Jefferies, for such critics, assumes an air of ecological sensitivity that nonetheless also expresses a desire for mystical transcendent ascension, a movement of thought which is inspired by his intimate sense of ecological inter-relationality that elevates his consciousness, but does not move him out

of and away from the world.<sup>69</sup> However, as Pascale Manning points out, Jefferies also frequently “incorporates strict boundary lines” between the human and non-human and actually stands in opposition to an “ecological ethos” (475). Jefferies’ individuation from the domain of nature, Manning argues, reveals a kind of abnegation of ecology “in which both human and biotic systems are ultimately fantasized to be discrete and inviolable” (478). Thus, two opposing interpretive possibilities are legitimated if we do not attend to the tension I am presenting as central to Jefferies’ thought. By overlooking that tension, a clearer philosophical position may be asserted, but this supposes a clarity of thought and position Jefferies seems at pains to resist.

To get a fuller appreciation of the tension between paganism and secularity in Jefferies, we must step back and recall the nature of “primitive” animism presented by archaeologists and anthropologists, some aspects of which I am arguing Jefferies affects and with which he affiliates. Jefferies’ pagan affectations are informed by the *saecular discourse* as it was substantiated in archaeology via Lubbock and anthropology via Tylor, especially in relation to what the former called “fetichism” and the latter defined as “animism.” I will use Lubbock as a case-in-point, since he established the popular account of prehistory, and since he and Jefferies share a personal and professional connection to the Wiltshire landscape.<sup>70</sup> Lubbock’s picture of prehistoric paganism is

<sup>69</sup> For instance, Ebbatson has characterized Jefferies as articulating a “pantheistic mysticism” (“Great Earth” 129). Furthermore, aligning Jefferies with an inclination to ecological priorities, Ebbatson alludes to the etymological roots of *ecology* as capturing an essential aspect of Jefferies’ thought, claiming that for the Wiltshire author “the earth becomes . . . not a resource for agricultural or industrial exploitation” but rather a “dwelling-place” (133). A similar interpretation is suggested by Simon Coleman, who finds that “[i]n his nature worship Jefferies is not merely seeking participation, but actual identity, absorption and assimilation” (27).

<sup>70</sup> As we have seen, Lubbock clearly read Jefferies and was familiar with his work, and it is likely, given Jefferies’ interest in archaeology, that he read Lubbock.

significant because Jefferies reevaluates some of its characteristics which Lubbock disparages, namely, animism's quasi-vitalistic attribution of life and spirit to all things indiscriminately, its alleged misapprehension of both earthly life and the afterlife, and its unhealthy fixation upon the body and sexuality. All these features for Lubbock make animism both a false secularity and a false religion, features which Jefferies endorses as central to his persona.

Lubbock's "fetichism," as I have suggested in chapter two, anticipates Tylorian animism in its attribution of life and spirit to all things: "the savage," prehistoric or modern, "accounts for all action and movement by life; inanimate objects, therefore have spirits as well as men" (624 [1872]). Lubbock here conflates the attribution of "life" or an animating potentiality or principle with the Western religious idea of "spirits." However, recall that for Lubbock "Fetichism" is "almost the opposite of religion; it stands towards religion in the same relation as Alchemy to Chemistry, or Astrology to Astronomy" (624 [1872]). "Fetichism" is a pseudo-religion, in other words, a naïve and false form of being spiritual. Furthermore, he casts the animistically charged world in traditionally Western terms as an act of worship: "Everything," Lubbock says, "is worshipped indiscriminately—animals, plants, and even inanimate objects" (624 [1872]). What he defines as "fetichism," is thus an improper, excessive veneration of earthly things, a "primitive" mode of idolatry which is both a form of bad religion and bad secularity—at once a fallacious other worldliness and a fallacious this-worldliness.

Lubbock's fetichistic animism is suggestive of a feeling for the contiguity of life and death, a sense of the nearness of the living and the dead rather than the divide. On this front, Lubbock discusses the importance of Stonehenge and other sacred sites as

evocative of the close tie between the landscape of the living, the spiritual landscape, the cyclical nature of time, and the agricultural socio-economic structure of prehistoric life. Moreover, Lubbock's prehistoric animists were ritually fixated upon the human body, as he believes is suggested by phallic and vulvic patterns and designs carved into stones and monuments that appear across prehistoric Europe and India (172-74 [1872]). Yet, this animism is not in and of itself conducive to the kind of dissipation model of pagan affectivity we saw in Pater. For, while Lubbock's animism entails a correspondence between seasonal, agricultural, ecological, and human sexual cycles of generation and decay, it also suggests a radically individuated, discrete, and substantial interior "spirit" or "soul," which the fetishist allegedly attributes to things and which resembles their own interior "spirit."

Jefferies explicitly adopts and affiliates with "primitive" spirituality as Lubbockian archaeology has presented it, announcing in one essay: "I fetish nature" (qtd. in Ebbatson 133). As we saw above in his declaration in *Amaryllis at the Fair* that he "is a pagan" and values "heart and soul above crowns," this affectation to be a fetishist seeks a deliberate affiliation with an improper, un-modern, counter-secular way of being earthly. In *The Story of My Heart*, he more fully embraces this, affecting an animistic sense that "[t]he air, the sunlight, the night, all that surrounds me seems crowded with inexpressible powers, with the influence of Souls, or existences, so that I walk in the midst of immortal things" (*The Story* 70). Here, there is a notable difference between Jefferies and Pater. Whereas Pater seeks aesthetic and sensual liberation in animistic dissipation, for Jefferies, animism remains in tension with an urge toward mystical individuation of his own "soul."



Returning to his experiences atop Liddington Castle, Jefferies affects an even more deliberately animistic sense of relationality with the land. Near the beginning of the book, he recounts an intense spiritual experience which occurred when he was seventeen, and which he claims was a formative turning point in his aesthetic thought. Jefferies depicts a process of intercommunication between his “soul” and the four classical elements long believed to be the basic components of the cosmos: earth, fire (the sun), air, and water (the sea). The following passage indicates the kind of animistic thought Jefferies is recreating in his own mystical experiences:

I was utterly alone with the sun and the earth. Lying down on the grass, I spoke in my soul to the earth, the sun, the air, and the distant sea far beyond sight. I thought of the earth's firmness—I felt it bear me up: through the grassy couch there came an influence as if I could feel the great earth speaking to me. I thought of the wandering air—its pureness, which is its beauty; the air touched me and gave me something of itself. I spoke to the sea: though so far, in my mind I saw it, green at the rim of the earth and blue in deeper ocean; I desired to have its strength, its mystery and glory. Then I addressed the sun, desiring the soul equivalent of his light and brilliance, his endurance and unwearied race. I turned to the blue heaven over, gazing into its depth, inhaling its exquisite colour and sweetness. The rich blue of the unattainable flower of the sky drew my soul towards it, and there it rested, for pure colour is rest of heart. By all these I prayed; I felt an emotion of the soul beyond all definition; prayer is a puny thing to it, and the word is a rude sign to the feeling, but I know no other. (31)

Ebbatson finds in such moments as this “traces of that crucial connection between man and the spatial world permeated with the desire for *transcendence*” (138, italics added). However, it is notable in the final sentence of the passage that Jefferies keeps the language of this experience as embodied. Jefferies emphasizes the intercommunicative transmission between the sensual, bodily process and the spiritually invigorating metaphysical properties of each of the elements. He “spoke” and “prayed” to each element, and each communicates something back. What is communicated back, however, is described only as “an emotion of the soul beyond all definition,” suggesting an occult and ineffable experience. Such experience is *mystical* in the etymological sense: Jefferies presents himself as an initiate into a mystery cult of one. In this, however, Jefferies’ pluralistic immanentist spirituality aligns more with the animism Lubbock ascribed to the prehistoric Europeans than traditional Western mysticism.

His affected sense of animistic awareness also evokes an eco-eroticism, which recalls Lubbock’s overly sexualized “primitives” and more generally the supposed ritualistic and orgiastic rapture typically attributed to pagans and “primitives” throughout history. Jefferies presents a nested relationality between the human and the ecological suggestive of intercourse between animistic agencies inseminating the soul at midsummer:

One midsummer I went out of the road into the fields, and sat down on the grass between the yellowing wheat and the green hawthorn bushes. The sun burned in the sky, the wheat was full of a luxuriant sense of growth, the grass high, the earth giving its vigour to tree and leaf, the heaven blue. The vigour and growth, the warmth and light, the beauty and richness of it entered into me; an ecstasy of soul

accompanied the delicate excitement of the senses: the soul rose with the body.

Rapt in the fulness of the moment, I prayed there with all that expansion of mind and frame; no words, no definition, inexpressible desire of physical life, of soul-life, equal to and beyond the highest imagining of my heart. (129)

Qualities of natural objects, the “luxuriant sense of growth” that yellows the corn, greens the hawthorn, and erects the grass are rendered as arousing animistic powers that engorge body and soul, in the language of a sexual encounter: “the delicate excitement of the senses” which culminates in bodily tumescence and spiritual rapture. It is telling that the precise nature of that animistic agency is not made explicit—it is not clear if these essences “enter in” to Jefferies of their own accord, if he draws them in, or if the process is automatic. This indefiniteness speaks to the impressionistic importance of the occurrence rather than its value as elaborating a mystical path to transcendence. It is an experience that emphasizes the interdependence of bodily aesthetics upon an intermingled animist ecology. Jefferies describes here the spiritual process of invigoration and the human soul’s vital reliance upon the ecological context for aesthetic and spiritual cultivation.

The immersive animistic eco-erotic intimacy Jefferies describes is evocative also of Pater’s “pagan sentiment.” The “ecstasy of soul” follows the “excitement of the senses,” thus grounding the mystical in the bodily. Recall that for Pater, moreover, the “pagan sentiment” is twofold: “It is beset by notions of irresistible natural powers, for the most part ranged against man, but the secret also of his luck, making the earth golden and the grape fiery for him” (Pater 99). Jefferies’ affected paganism also has this same double valence. Jefferies imagines a providential sense of animistic invigoration. As quoted

above, the earth, air, water, and fire all *give* something to his soul. The earth gives “firmness,” the air gives its “purity,” the water of the Ocean gives “strength, mystery and glory,” the sun gives its “light,” “brilliance,” and “endurance”; the earth gives its vitality to the plants, which in turn give the same to the soul (129).

However, Jefferies’ affected paganism also attends to the “irresistible forces” Pater says seem to the pagan to be “ranged against man” and which characterize earthy habitation as belonging with in a domain of repellent and hostile forces (Pater 99). Jefferies’ affected animism is likewise shown to be a site of the hostility of “nature,” a realm of forces both intimately familiar and radically estranged. For, in distinction from the human soul, Jefferies at other times conceives nature, and by extension the animistic ecology of co-habiting supernatural “Souls,” as “outré-human”:

[A] great part, perhaps the whole, of nature and of the universe is distinctly anti-human. The term inhuman does not express my meaning, anti-human is better; outré-human, in the sense of beyond, outside, almost grotesque in its attitude towards, would nearly convey it. Everything is anti-human. (85)

“Nature” is a complicated, almost internally contradictory topic for Jefferies: “The supernatural miscalled, the natural in truth, is the real. To me everything is supernatural” (68). Thus, he often seems to see the designation “natural” as simplifying an entangled and inherently mystifying domain that is at once the source of human spiritual and aesthetic fulfilment and, at the same time, indifferent and often directly hostile to humans. In Jefferies, then, the urge towards immersion in the ecological meets its limits at the point where the erotic and aesthetic in nature are exhausted in the process of self-realization. At that point, Jefferies suggests, the “outré” or hostile aspect of “nature”

convulses the soul, and individuation is an aesthetic response, a recoil into the personal soul, a kind of “buffered” self (though not the kind Charles Taylor had in mind with that term).

For instance, in the closing paragraph of *The Story* Jefferies writes:

Beautiful it is, in summer days, to see the wheat wave, and the long grass foam—flecked of flower yield and return to the wind. My soul of itself always desires; these are to it as fresh food. I have found in the hills another valley grooved in prehistoric times, where, climbing to the top of the hollow, I can see the sea. Down in the hollow I look up; the sky stretches over, the sun burns as it seems but just above the hill, and the wind sweeps onward. As the sky extends beyond the valley, so I know that there are ideas beyond the valley of my thought; I know that there is something infinitely higher than deity. (218)

The passage shows the give-and-take in Jefferies’ writing between the animistically dissipated and the individuated self. On the one hand, he presents himself as an animated body immersed in an animated world. On the other, he seems to desire mystical self-realization over and against that animated world, something that transcends even the transcendent “deity.” This latter mystically individuated self has inherited something of Victorian secularity in its insistence on buffered distinction from ecological agency. It is a secularized way of being earthly in that it is mediated by a model of subjectivity that cleaves subjective and objective experience and desires ontological elevation above the non-human. However, these tendencies in Jefferies, as the passage above demonstrates, stages a struggle between the pagan animistic sense of self-immersion into archaeologies and secular individuation over and against them. Here again, he

articulates his soul in the desire for expanded horizons of thought and feeling. The ascension of the elevated prehistoric landscape once again enables a deeper experience of the soul, and again ascension of the hill precedes descent into a hollow. And yet it is from this immersed perspective, his contemplations incline toward mystic individuation, which itself cannot ultimately be separated from the earthly context that grounds his meditations in the local landscape. Jefferies, therefore, seems only capable of expansion through immersion, only able to contemplate what may be “higher than deity” while nestling within the earth.

However, attaining that “higher” possibility ultimately proves to be of less interest to Jefferies than something he calls “soul-life.” This seems a strained compulsion toward individuation which is both an act of recognizing the unattainability of that desire and a perpetual deferral of self-realization:

The great sun burning in the sky, the sea, the firm earth, all the stars of night are feeble—all, all the cosmos is feeble; it is not strong enough to utter my prayer-desire. My soul cannot reach to its full desire of prayer. I need no earth, or sea, or sun to think my thought. If my thought-part—the psyche—were entirely separated from the body, and from the earth, I should of myself desire the same. In itself my soul desires; my existence, my soul-existence is in itself my prayer, and so long as it exists so long will it pray that I may have the fullest soul-life. (218-19)

Here, Jefferies struggles to articulate himself apart from the Earth. Individuation, in the form of a longing for experience of the self-contained and independent “soul,” is expressible only as an insatiable urge. Emphatic insistence upon complete independence can only be expressed in self-effacing desire. Although he is attempting to distinguish

that soul from a world he deems too feeble to contain him, he has attained only a “desire of prayer,” as if he cannot even really pray, but can only desire prayer.

In all this, then, we can see how Jefferies vacillates between pagan animistic immersion and mystical individuation. Mystic individuation in Jefferies seems to be an implication of his affected desire for immersion of the soul into the animist ecology. Recall how Jefferies explicitly expresses a conflicted notion of the soul, especially inspired by the spirit dwelling in the tumulus. Reflecting upon the entombed ancient Briton, Jefferies conjectures that “[i]n dissolution there was no bridgeless chasm, no unfathomable gulf of separation; the spirit did not immediately become inaccessible, leaping at a bound to an immeasurable distance” (64). In this, Jefferies is redolent of Lubbock’s “primitive” fetichistic animist whose spirit, upon death, seems to continue to dwell within the immanent frame of earthly experience:

Resting by the tumulus, the spirit of the man who had been interred there was to me really alive, and very close. This was quite natural, as natural and simple as the grass waving in the wind, the bees humming, and the larks' songs. Only by the strongest effort of the mind could I understand the idea of extinction [of the human soul]; that was supernatural, requiring a miracle; the immortality of the soul natural, like earth. (64)

That the man in the tumulus can be felt “very close” simply by virtue of the proximity to his burial mound also implies that embodied living is a co-habitation with the ancient dead. By virtue of proximity to and affection for these archaeologically significant sites, Jefferies attempts an unearthing of his own soul always seems to re-ground him in the earth, and more specifically in the Wiltshire landscape.

However, it is a desire that cannot be satisfied. A refrain echoing throughout the book expresses a desire for ever-penetrable depths of an unfathomable soul: Jefferies wants to access “the deepest of soul life, the deepest of all . . . utterly beyond my own conception” (38). The penetration of greater psychological depth is figured as ascent. The archaeological descent into deeper origins is inverted as ascent to recover figuratively “higher” knowledge, an aspiration so great that it strains the very spiritualistic language Jefferies has deployed: “[T]here is an existence, a something higher than soul—higher, better, and more perfect than deity. . . . Give me to live the deepest soul-life now and always with this Soul,” though it is only the limitations of expression that forces him to use “soul”: “For want of words I write soul, but I think that it is something beyond soul” (91). It is perhaps the pursuit of “soul-life” that brings out such ecstatically conflicting expression. The reiterated urge for something deeper, deeper and beyond, higher, higher, and better pulls Jefferies in the two ways I have been charting: animistic archaeological immersion and mystically individuated elevation.

Jefferies, at times, indeed expresses such delineations between the human soul and the animist ecology of nature which Manning points out (478), and, in this, he seems in agreement with a hierarchy of being, not unlike the traditional hierarchy found in much of Western metaphysics. For instance, in chapter two, during one of his accounts of a mystical experience and the prayer that follows, he writes, “Give me still more, for the interminable universe, past and present, is but earth; give me the unknown soul, wholly apart from it, the soul of which I know only that when I touch the ground, when the sunlight touches my hand, it is not there” (46). However, Jefferies’ ambiguity here resonates with the expressed desire throughout *The Story of My Heart*. “Soul” is an



elusive, intractable essence that defies complete comprehension; it is seemingly an intuited inner presence, but one which is fathomed as an absence. This “unknown soul” is not in the ground or in the sunshine, and yet the ambiguity of locational reference throws “it is not there” into question. The soul seems neither “there” in the earth when he touches it, nor “there” in his hand when the sunlight touches him.

It is not the case, then, that Jefferies disavows the ecological to partition the human. Rather, the boundaries are so porous as to make individuation finally unattainable as an end, and more like a process or quest for self-articulation rather than its achievement. The process is sometimes intimate and erotic and sometimes undertaken in mutual hostility between the “soul” and its ecological context. The “unknown soul” is inapprehensible, and the constant tension between animistic dissipation and mystical individuation is palpable, as we have seen, in that the frequent desire to individuate is preceded by an appeal to ecological agencies, an attempt to distinguish the human soul as separate, and followed by the deferral to the elusiveness of the soul. Tellingly, Jefferies also defines the soul as “psyche, the soul that longed to be loose” (30), as if the soul is defined by its retreat not only from the earthly, but also from the individual whom it animates. This pursuit of the retreating soul is reflected as well at the stylistic level, where we find Jefferies trying to get carried away from himself. The excesses in description, sentiment, and periphrastic expression attempt to draw the reader into Jefferies’ insatiable urges for ever-increasing depths of affectivity and heights of thought. The actualization of desire seems a simultaneous urge to surpass the limitations of desire, an urge not for satiation but to exceed the limits of desire itself, and yet the desire always returns to the place where it began.

Ultimately, for Jefferies the soul serves an explicitly aesthetic function as a concept. He confesses not only to a lack of true conviction in the belief in the soul, but also to its being an aesthetically functional element whose main importance is its value to him while he is alive: “I do not hope or fear. At least while I am living I have enjoyed the idea of immortality, and the idea of my own soul. If then, after death, I am resolved without exception into earth, air, and water, and the spirit goes out like a flame, still I shall have had the glory of that thought” (65). As a model of selfhood, “the soul’s” real value is aesthetic because it serves to accentuate the sensual experience of being alive. In this, Jefferies’ quest for his soul echoes that other aspect of Pater’s definition of the pagan sentiment: that it is born from a kind of anticipatory nostalgia that arises with the recognition of mortality, a desire, as Pater puts it “to remain on earth forever” despite the flights of fancy that imagine death as opening into another, transcendent world (Pater 99). Thus, for all of Jefferies’ insistence on the mystically individuated immortal soul, it turns out to have been valuable in how it amplifies the experience of the mortal, living body. Whereas in *After London* the terrain being negotiated is the history and future of England, in *The Story of My Heart*, that terrain is Jefferies’ authorial sense of self and persona. As with his futuristic romance, *The Story* also reaches its finish with no sense of finality or closure, and Jefferies’ negotiations of his identity and convictions are open-ended. He opts for continually renegotiated horizons and possibilities, rejecting both stagnation and unidirectional advancement, but embracing the potentiality of change and expansion.

Throughout this chapter I have interrogated the ways Jefferies finds life and community in the feelings of the dead. This affected sense of contemporaneity with the pagans of British prehistory is counter-secular in its refusal of coevalness with modern

civilization and secularity. Thus, affecting a paganism inspired by the kind of animism projected upon prehistoric consciousness by Lubbock ultimately encloses Jefferies in an archaeology from which he cannot articulately separate himself, and within which desire and prayer endlessly defers the attainment of that desire for a mystically individuated “fullest soul-life” he so incessantly seeks.

The quote from Raymond Williams at the head of the chapter was meant by him to indicate that over the course of his brief but prolific career, Jefferies became more socially conscious and empathetic towards his own class. I agree with Williams on that point, but I have co-opted this quote with a mind to underscore a related but different kind of process. I want to switch the emphasis—Jefferies did not end where he began because he sought to expand himself by embracing paganism as a mode of subjectivity which could widen his “horizons of feeling” and push him beyond his own affective limitations. However, his change of heart has also been revealed as a kind of de-conversion: the unlearning of one way of being earthly and the embracing of another, allegedly older, pagan feeling for earthly embodiment and belonging, fostered in his communion with the Wiltshire landscape. So, perhaps, in another sense, Jefferies did end where he began; although in his merger with place, he blurred the borders of his own beginnings and endings, becoming part of the pagan landscape which absorbed him. In this sense, Jefferies’ “story” emerges, to return to a conceit I forwarded at the beginning of the chapter, as a kind of counter-image to the fear of rural people and places we find in the folk horror revivals of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Whereas “folk horror films frequently feature communities acting with an eerie singularity of mind” (Chambers 22) which poses a threat to “urban individualism” and the liberal secular “fear of being

pulled backwards” into indistinction within a community and place (23), we have seen how in Jefferies the temptation to embrace indistinction and belonging both to the folk and to the land suggests something of a reconciliation with his troubled origins.

In this light, his “story” could perhaps best be read in conjunction with Alan Clarke’s *Penda’s Fen* (1974), a film which is often counted as folk horror, but which subverts many of its tropes in the way it positively reevaluates and “queers” England’s rural “folk” and its pagan past. The film’s protagonist, a figure who in many ways resembles Jefferies and other male protagonists common to pagan revivalist literature (such as Forster’s Eustace, Grahame’s Mr. Mole, and Jefferies’ own Felix Aquilla from *After London*) charts a similar development from social naiveté and complicity with the status quo to rejecting the toxic culture of his peer group to embrace his queer “liminal state of becoming” that is also a form of belonging (Chambers 34). As *The Story of My Heart* demonstrates, it is from within a similar perpetual process of becoming that Jefferies articulates himself as contentedly restless in the struggle between animistic immersion and mystical individuation, set against the backdrop of the sunshine, humming bees, blooming flowers, ancient tombs, and standing stones of the Wiltshire landscape. We may conclude, then, that in telling the story of his heart, Jefferies could not finally tell himself apart from “Jefferies’ Land.”

## Chapter 5

### Familiars and Strangers: Stevenson, Arnold, and the Racialized Embodiments of Secularity

“He is a little pagan,” said the landlady. “For that matter, they are all the same, these mountebanks, tumblers, artists, and what not. They have no interior.”

But the Doctor was still scrutinizing the little pagan, his eyebrows knotted and uplifted.

“What is your name?” he asked.

“Jean-Marie,” said the lad.

Desprez leaped upon him with one of his sudden flashes of excitement, and felt his head all over from an ethnological point of view.

“Celtic! Celtic!” he said.

“Celtic!” cried Madame Tentaillon, who had perhaps confounded the word with hydrocephalous. “Poor lad! is it dangerous?”

“That depends,” returned the Doctor grimly.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, “The Treasure of Franchard,” from *The Merry Men and Other Tales* (460-461).

The scene above demonstrates a consistent preoccupation of Robert Louis

Stevenson’s work that this section of my dissertation will address: the place of Celticity<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> The question of what “Celtic” refers to and what it means to be “Celtic” is a matter of controversy that has endured since at least the period under question in these chapters. In Stevenson’s time, as we shall see, it was debated as matter of the racial blood lineage of the modern-day populations who dwelt in the “Celtic” fringes of Europe, spoke Celtic languages (Scots and Irish Gaelic, Welsh, Manx, Cornish, and Breton), and were thought by some to have anatomical and psychological “Celtic” traits. Until the late twentieth century, “Celtic,” though no longer racialized in the Victorian manner, referred to a distinct ethnic group and was often used to connect modern and ancient Celts. However, as Ronald Hutton summarizes, “Celtic” is now not accepted by mainstream classicists and historians of European antiquity to refer to the ancient tribal peoples it once had, and instead refers to “a group of languages, and so by extension to the ethnic and cultural identities developed around those languages since the Middle Ages” (*The Witch* 291). Michael Dietler observes three forms of modern Celtic identity construction in circulation since the nineteenth century: “Celticism”: self-consciously Celtic “political projects and ideologies;” Celtitude: “visions of diasporic transnational Celtic identity;” and “Celticity:” “a global spiritual connection to the idea of Celtic identity” and a “spiritual quality” within those who identify in this fashion (239-40). The distinctions Dietler makes are more relevant to twentieth century and post-modern

in his contributions to the pagan revival. Whereas in chapter three, I detailed Stevenson's early interest in the god Pan, in his later works the goat god became less of a directly referenced presence. As we will see in the following three chapters, Anglo-Celtic relations begin to play a more formative role in Stevenson's pagan aesthetics. However, the nature of Stevenson's turn to Celticity is ambiguous. I will attend to Stevenson's treatment of Anglo-Celtic tensions and the implications of the confrontations with Celticity upon the thematic concerns in his works, his style, and his theories of romance composition and consumption. However, before I do so, I explore the contextual background from which Stevenson's works emerge to show how his interest in questions of Celticity, particularly as these pertain to Scottishness, relate to what I have called the Victorian *saecular discourse* and how that Celticity marks his post-Panoleptic contributions to pagan revivalism.

I have cited the scene from "The Treasure of Franchard" as a representative instance of Stevenson's querying of constructions of Celticity. The exchange between Doctor Desprez, madame Tentaillon, and the "Celtic" pagan boy Jean-Marie represents a sort of thematic knot (I am resisting calling it a "Celtic knot," though Richard Dury has suggested that Stevenson's style, especially in his essays, resembles "plaited and interwoven Celtic 'knots'" [78]), within which we can see a tangle of anthropological, political, and aesthetic threads that tie into Stevenson's explorations of Scottish national identity and historical legacy. The scene ironically poses a question: is Celticity in the racialized subject being scrutinized or is it only in the head of the skull-palpitating

appropriations of Celtic traditions and histories, but I chose "Celticity" when discussing Stevenson's engagement with the debates around Celtic identity both to avoid conflating his work with "Celticism" or Celtic revivalism and because "Celticity" seems to me to be more encompassing and closer to the Victorian racial pathologizing of Celtic culture, biology, and psychology that Arnold performs.

ethnologist?<sup>72</sup> That question, the historical conditions within which it came to be asked, and its implications for Stevenson's broader aesthetics will be the concern of the next three chapters. However, before I lay out the course these chapters will take, I will briefly use this scene as introductory to the issues that will be unraveled.

There are three "threads" that I want to trace out, and they correspond, broadly, with three related themes Stevenson's works take up and which I will return to throughout the next three chapters: how language, lore, and relationality within the landscape<sup>73</sup> makes and unmakes Scottish (and by analogy British) identity. These three themes relate to questions of Celticity in that they twine together within the *saecular discourse's* reconstruction of ethnological, political, and aesthetic domains of experience and activity as racially embodied. The first "thread" to delineate from "The Treasure of Franchard" is that of the influence of anthropological thought over aesthetics and politics, represented by Doctor Desprez, who reveals himself to be an ironic mix of aesthete intellectual, positivist ethnologist, as well as something of a decadent dandy.<sup>74</sup> As such

<sup>72</sup> Desprez confirms Jean-Marie's Celticity by craniological measurement, which was the leading archaeological method of determining the racial anatomy of excavated skeletons. Cranial evaluation is cited by Scottish archaeologist Daniel Wilson (1851) as a key means by which to identify the Celtic inhabitants past and present in Scotland. By determining the anatomical contours of the cranium, archaeologists believed they had discovered the "intermediate" status of the Celt between Stone Age "primitives" and more advanced races. Wilson rehearses the received wisdom of his day: "The type of the old Celtic cranium is . . . intermediate to the lengthened and shortened oval, or the true dolicho-kephalic and brachy-kephalic forms" which is still "very markedly observable between the different races of the British Isles" (163-65).

<sup>73</sup> I will at times simply use "landscape" as a shorthand for the sense of relationality within the landscape that Stevenson is interested in. Also, "landscape," in the sense I am thinking about it, sometimes means the worked land, sometimes the general sense of worked and unworked, inhabited and uninhabited terrain, for which simply "land" may be better, but I want to convey the complicated sense of relationality in Stevenson's works that often finds the human interior being shaped and deformed by uncultivated and/or cultivated lands.

<sup>74</sup> Desprez humorously professes his affiliation with positivism: "[H]ad I lived in the Middle Ages . . . I should have been an eremite myself—if I had not been a professed buffoon, that is. These were the only

Desprez appears as a parody of Matthew Arnold and French theorist Ernest Renan, who exerted a great influence over Arnold. Though Renan celebrates many traits of the Celts (Renan was a native Breton), he nonetheless pathologizes Celtic peoples in “The Poetry of the Celtic Race” (1854). Likewise, Matthew Arnold, who cites and draws heavily on Renan in his own *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), presents a similar cautiously celebratory yet suspicious account of “the Celtic genius.” I will present Arnold as Stevenson’s main interlocutor, because, as we will see, Arnold’s treatment of “race” appears as something of a compromise between the two dominant poles of the Victorian debate about the significance of blood-based hereditary traits and to what extent they determine an individual’s and a people’s political, spiritual, moral, and aesthetic character. This was an especially embattled topic within Victorian Britain because of England’s troubles with Ireland, but also because of the stirrings of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic nationalism and cultural revivalism. When Desprez responds to the landlady’s question about whether the little pagan’s Celticity is “dangerous” that it “depends,” Stevenson is alluding to a broad spectrum of racial theories within which commentators positioned themselves. Whether or not “Celtic” is “dangerous” “depends” on which theory is consulted.

Next, and relatedly, Jean-Marie represents the “thread” of Victorian Celtophilia/phobia. The attraction and repulsion of Celticity is palpable in the dual reactions of the landlady and the doctor. The orphan is described by the landlady as a soulless “pagan” who exerts a potentially corrupting influence upon others (as a

philosophical lives yet open: laughter or prayers; sneers, we might say, and tears. Until the sun of the Positive arose, the wise man had to make his choice between these two” (481).



performing artist). The doctor's diagnosis of and response to Jean-Marie's Celticity reflects prevalent English and Lowland Scottish attitudes towards people thought to be of Celtic descent. What both responses have in common is that scrutiny of the boy's exterior, whether of his "pagan" manner or his Celtic skull, determines the boy's "interior" as madame puts it. To either the Christian landlady or the secular doctor, Jean-Marie ought to be converted, both as a pagan and as a Celt. Under Desprez's tutelage, that conversion is a secular one, not only in the sense that the doctor is a self-professed positivist, but also in the sense that his own this-worldly temptations are central to the plot and force the boy to act against his master's orders for the good of both.

There is also an intranational geopolitical "thread" tied up in Stevenson's story. Though "The Treasure of Franchard" is set in rural northern France, the story dramatizes something that troubled British identity. The relationship between the doctor and the boy reflects a similar centre-periphery contrast recapitulated in the Franco-Breton, Anglo-Celtic, and Lowland Scots-Highland Gaelic divides, often referred to as "the Celtic Fringe." Within the Victorian *saecular discourse*, national, cultural, and ethnic boundaries codified progressive civilizational advancement which, so the story goes, drove the ancient Celts to the far fringes of France and Britain where they have remained, in various states of barbarity, ever since. In making his doctor French rather than British and thematizing Franco-Breton Celticity, Stevenson invites a recognition of parallels in Britain. Stevenson, then, offers Desprez's initial reaction to Jean-Marie as demonstrating the Victorian tendency to fetishize and fear, to desire and discipline the paradoxically exotic yet native, strange yet familiar Celt.

The three “threads” I have been trying to disentangle turn out to be three loops formed of that one very sticky thread of “race” which became coiled around so much of Victorian thought. I will posit that Victorian racial discourse is inherent to the Victorian *saecular discourse*, and I offer this brief reading of the story as a picture in miniature of the intertwined issues the following three chapters will query as they relate to Stevenson’s turn to Celticity. “The Treasure of Franchard” dramatizes this intertwining of race, secularity, and pagan revivalism. Desprez’s adoption of the “pagan” and allegedly Celtic boy as a disciplinary subject parodies Renan’s assertion that the Celts as a race are “too much inclined to look upon themselves as minors and in tutelage” (7). Jean-Marie, it turns out, proves to be something of a good luck charm for the doctor, as the boy stumbles upon the fabled treasure of the title. He also winds up having to save the doctor, who begins to squander his newfound wealth, from his own immoderate tendencies, eventually even saving Desprez and his wife from literal ruin as their house is being wrecked during a storm. In a sense, this reflects Arnold’s complementarian dialect of Celts and Teutons, wherein the two “races” balance out each other’s deficiencies. Yet, Stevenson also complicates this evaluation of Celticity, reversing Celtic and Teutonic tendencies (Jean-Marie turns out to have the better sense of morality and Desprez is revealed as a corrupted and corrupting influence). In this reversal, Stevenson captures the prevailing attitude towards Celticity: the fascination, romanticization, fetishism, fear, eroticization, and disciplinarian condescension, while also problematizing Renanian-Arnoldian Celticity. However, the question about the boy’s Celticity is left undetermined. Jean Marie does not confirm Celticity as a racial essence, he is rather something of a *tabula rasa*, an open minded and open-hearted boy whose greatest danger, Stevenson

ultimately suggests, is being badly educated, perhaps even secularized. For Desprez would convert him to a new way of being earthly that, as the doctor demonstrates himself, is self-destructive in its opportunistic materialism, condescending in its racial typologizing, aesthetically reductive in its disenchanting positivism, and generally self-deluding.

Stevenson, therefore, parodies the attempt to substantiate racial signifiers ascribed to the Celticized body. Doctor Desprez is an ironic figure who, in his position of authority and influence rendered in the adult-child/pedagogue-pupil relationship, reflects English and Lowland Scottish efforts to maintain political and cultural hegemony by appealing to models of identity construction and mediation that are, Stevenson suggests, insecure and reveal more about a drama unfolding inside the head than that which might be discovered in the fondling of its cranial contours.

Across these next three chapters, I show how Stevenson takes the questions of “Celticity”—the questions about who is and is not “Celtic” and what that means for individual and national identity—as an occasion to think about how difference is made and unmade, how identities are mediated, and how individuals and nations self-compose and self dis-integrate in relation to language, lore (by which I mean both folklore and more broadly stories, accounts, and discourse that structure sensibilities, feelings of earthly embodiment, and social and interpersonal relations), and landscapes. In all this, I argue, Stevenson presents “race” as a new way of seeing and ordering the human that is part of a grander historical pattern that finds Scottish and English centers of political power attempting to maintain dominion over the territories and peoples at the “fringes” of but still within the boundaries of their nations. His querying of racialized identity is

central to the development of a nativist British paganism because he thinks through the questions of Celticity to locate a paganism that, like Pater, he fancies as a “universal,” transancestral category. Stevenson’s adaptation of the “primaeval pagan sentiment” (Pater 99) imagines an ancient sense of embodied earthliness positioned in opposition to secularity.

This first of three chapters on Stevenson and Celticity will lay out some important historical context and consider Stevenson’s place within it. I will discuss the background of the establishment of scientific racialization that developed from the 1850s to the 1890s and show how “race” as an idea develops within the *saecular discourse*. I will end this chapter by showing how Celticity and racial thinking inform two of Stevenson’s most famous works, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *Kidnapped* (1886). The historical contextualization and analysis of the broader treatment of Celticity in Stevenson’s works will allow me to turn my focus to two of the more nuanced ways Celticity factors into Stevenson’s pagan revivalism in chapters six and seven. In those chapters, we will see how Stevenson figures pagan incursions upon secularity in his two preferred genres: romance and what he called “crawlers” (qtd. in Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* 7), or horror fiction. With regards to romance, he uses the revival of paganism as a jubilant sense of dissipation that, redolent of Jefferies, expands the “self” beyond the borders of secularized, “buffered” identity. In his folk horror, affects associated with paganism instigate a process of tragic self-disintegration that finds characters ironically doomed to become what they feared and despised in others. These two modes of pagan incursion upon secularity will be the topic of inquiry in chapters six and seven, respectively.

## ***Race and the Saecular Discourse: Victorian Anatomies of Earthly Embodiment***

“[T]he march of the Saxon onwards to democracy; self-government; self-rule; with him, self is everything”

–Robert Knox (qtd. in Young *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, 86)

I want to begin by laying out a very general sense of Victorian scientific racialization and how it emerges within the *saecular discourse*. As a number of recent scholarly studies<sup>75</sup> have demonstrated, the mid-Victorians “reinvented” the idea of race (Beasley 1). However, “race” throughout the Victorian period was not fully distinct from what we would now think of as “ethnicity,” until near the end of the century when it was more firmly related to biology (Young 43). Yet, despite the varying ways the Victorians thought about race, all appealed to “some idea of physical ancestral descent” which “implied a bodily relation that was typically invoked by the word ‘blood’” (Young, *The Idea* 50). From the 1850s onwards, what was being debated was the degree to which blood was or was not a medium for the “heritability of overarching racial essences,” and what this implied for members of distinct “races” (Beasley 2).

Recent scholarship on nineteenth-century theories of race demonstrates that debates about racial inheritance form two poles of a spectrum, although the concept was

<sup>75</sup> I refer to Robert J. C. Young’s *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (2007), Edward Beasley’s *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (2010), Chris Manias’ *Race, Science and the Nation: Reconstructing the Ancient Past in Britain, France and Germany* (2013), and Richard McMahon’s *The Races of Europe: Construction of National Identities in the Social Sciences, 1839–1939* (2016).

fluid and even within the thought of any one commentator, “race” carried several, not always consistent connotations. On the one hand, there were rigid racial essentialists, frequently conservative thinkers (McMahon 35; Tucker 336) who constructed “races” as fixed, static, original, and deterministic essences. “Race,” in this sense, was imagined as “a point of derivation never to be moved past” (Tucker 339). For these thinkers, blood not only determined the inherited racial essence, but was also a medium for the embodiment of an earthly historicity of a racial lineage. Race in this sense makes an entire people or “nation” a kind of super-organism of which individuals are embodied expressions (McMahon 94). Robert Knox<sup>76</sup> represents a radical, but extremely influential example of this kind of racial determinist. For him and his followers (such as James Hunt), history and the future of the race is written in and into the blood—history is driven by racial antagonisms which determine present-day political allies and adversaries. In contrast, there was the evolutionist idea of “race” as a non-essential, non-deterministic, and mutable “genealogy in which present relations of causation, not original points of departure, are paramount” (Tucker 339), best represented by Darwin and his followers, which was predominately the liberal position (McMahon 37).<sup>77</sup> However, as Young

<sup>76</sup> Stevenson was evidently very fascinated with Knox. “Dr. K” in Stevenson’s “The Body Snatchers” (1884) is a morally compromised anatomist who, in real life, was implicated in the Burke and Hare “resurrection men” scandal in Edinburgh 1828. Knox, allegedly unwittingly, accepted the bodies of the duo’s murder victims which they sold to him under the pretense that the bodies were cadavers robbed from local cemeteries. For More on Stevenson, Knox, and “The Body Snatchers,” see Ray X. Yan’s “Robert Louis Stevenson as Philosophical Anatomist: The Body Snatcher” (2019).

<sup>77</sup> Huxley demonstrates this position well when he writes that “I believe in the immense influence of that fixed hereditary transmission which constitutes a race. I believe it just as I believe in the influence of ancestors upon children. But the character of a man depends in part upon the tendencies he brought with him into the world, and in part upon the circumstances to which he is subjected—sometimes one group of influence predominates, sometimes the other. And there is this further truth which lies within every one’s observation—that by diligent and careful education you may help a child to be good and wise and keep it out of evil and folly” (5). In Huxley’s position, we can see the kind of attitude Stevenson captures in Doctor Desprez: “race” is “hereditary transmission” that nonetheless does not determine “character.” Character, in

points out, “whether they believed races were fixed or evolving,” conservatives and liberals often held common assumptions, namely about the relationship between “human behavior” and “natural law” which finds “race” in some degree “a determining factor in the development of civilization,” and they also typically agree that “Caucasians” were “superior” (48). It is this broad spectrum of the racial discourse that I argue Stevenson is engaging, especially as it is embodied in Arnold’s racialized secular aesthetics.

Irene Tucker traces Victorian reconstructions of race as a shift away from eighteenth century accounts of human difference which appealed to externally localizable factors such as climate and geography (332). Such older models of human variation, Tucker argues, can be viewed as extensions of a wholistic conception of “natural history,” in great part sanctioned by and made to fit the Biblical account of the diasporas of human families. This model, according to Tucker, gradually became less appealing as the analysis of natural and human phenomena splintered into different domains of scientific inquiry. Racial science, she claims, emerges at the disjuncture of natural science and social science, which attempted to separate the human from the natural, earthly domain (Tucker 330).

However, this picture of the shifting grounds of earthly knowledge corresponds with similar processes occurring in the formation of geology, archaeology, and anthropology as new disciplinary fields, which I detailed in chapters one and two. “Race,” then, is part of a new way of applying Victorian scientific thought to “nature,” but it is one that is “the result of the scientific urge to classify and order the natural

this account, is determined by “diligent and careful education,” which Desprez fails to provide (just as many, including Stevenson, believed was the case with the influence of the English upon the Irish).

world,” with its roots in the earlier “classifications of the families of man” (Young 54). In this sense, just as Christian chronological science preadapted secularizing geology, the earlier models of human classification, which Tucker suggests were more wholistic and developed in conjunction with Biblical genealogies, was preadapted by Victorian racial science.<sup>78</sup> Whereas geology applied new methods to the study of a newly conceived geological domain, with its own temporality and historicity, the reinvention of human “families” as racialized types emerges as a refashioning of the human “creature” as an earthly “species” which has grown naturally from the Earth. Identifying in racial terms, then, is part of the *saecular discourse* in that it is a way of thinking about what it means to be a member of an earth-born species with an earth-bound destiny under the new ways the entire notion of “nature” and the Earth were being rethought.

In this light, “race” also appears as a framework for temporal classification of human varieties which have their own unique histories and trajectories. For in the Victorian racialized secular imaginary, there are those who are closer and those who are further from their primal, animalistic original states. Recall the efforts of archaeologists such as Lubbock, William Boyd Dawkins, and Augustus Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers to place the material history of human development on a uniformitarian, though progressive, timescale, substantiated in stratified layers of Earth history. These men, as I showed, each

<sup>78</sup> What I want to suggest here is not that secular thought is somehow more “racist” than earlier forms of classification that fit within Christian theology. Rather, in keeping with the post-secular approach, I want to suggest that Christian forms of secularity or being worldly extend to and inform new ways of being earthly that form in a political context that no longer must square itself rigidly with scriptural or theological authorities for epistemic legitimacy. These are new ways of legitimizing a “natural” hierarchy, of ensuring inequity, of justifying injustice. I do not intend to tell what Charles Taylor calls a “replacement” or “subtraction” story, but rather account for the shift in scientific approach by tracing a more gradual adaptation in the ways “nature” and the “human” are conceived in service to new centres of political, economic, and epistemic power and control.



claimed to bridge human history and Earth history. They endeavored to write as complete an account of human history as grounded in natural and geological history as their theories and methods could provide.<sup>79</sup> I posit “race” as part of this effort to produce a comprehensive picture of “nature,” where those who identify as Caucasian, or more specifically of a “Teutonic” or Germanic racial lineage, claim to have ascended above nature over the course of time and wrested control of their own earthly destiny.

Oded Steinberg has recently established the relationship between “race” and time in relation to Victorian historiography that I am suggesting extends from the secularization of the Earth and the human. Noting how “[p]eriodization arose as a concept in the nineteenth century simultaneously with the emergence of two other, sometimes amalgamated terms: ‘nation’ and ‘race’” (1), Steinberg observes that Victorian historiographers and scholars concerned with history used “race” to classify historical time periods “with a more precise criterion” (3). This mode of classification, which I have proposed is part of the structural logic of secularization, racializes history by marking “[t]he appearance of a certain race at a specific space and time” (3). Therefore, the advent of a new *saeculum* is now “signified” by “the ascent or descent of a race or of a nation” (3). As Steinberg argues, in the British context, especially in the Anglo-Saxonist school, the racialization of time meant that “history changed every time a new race entered the island” (25), and the historical unfolding of the English nation was thought to be determined by a succession of “racial alternations” (27).

<sup>79</sup> They did not claim to have fully achieved this, but their confidence in positivism aligns them with what Asad, following Weber, notes is a characteristic feature of secularization, that is, the idea that increasing “intellectualization” is part of an ongoing project of modernization that will gradually “disenchant” nature as scientific knowledge advances. This, Asad claims, is a confidence that implies not that all mysteries are solved, but that they can be (*Secular Translations* 15).

This racialization of historiography gripped the imagination of prominent Scottish historians and scholars as well. According to Colin Kidd, nineteenth century Scottish archaeologists, ethnologists, and historians were similarly divided over the place of the Celtic Highlands in the growing sense of Scotland as a modern nation. Influential Scottish historians were revising “the story of Scotland” as “a conflict between two antithetical and antagonist races, the Celts and the Teutons” (Kidd 884).<sup>80</sup> With respect to race, the anatomist Robert Knox looms large, both over Scotland and Stevenson. Knox denied the liberal valuation of the nation as a composite body altogether, recommending that Scottish ethnologists and historians “forget for a time the word ‘nation’” for “race is everything in human history” (qtd. in Kidd 887). He made no bones about the historically deterministic nature of blood and what course of action it entails: “[T]he source of all evil lies in *the race*, the Celtic race of Ireland. Look at Wales, look at Caledonia; it is ever the same. The race must be forced from the soil; by fair means, if possible; still they must leave” (qtd. in Young, 69). This way of thinking about history reimagines those held to be of “Teutonic” racial lineage as the enterprising, liberty loving, Hanoverian-loyal, Protestant, light skinned, long-headed lowlanders and English, while the Celt became the degenerate, Catholic, Jacobite, round-headed, anachronistic, and anarchical internal other.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Others were even more audacious, holding that Lowland Scots “were, on the grounds of their purer Teutonic blood, racially speaking more English than the English themselves” (Kidd 887).

<sup>81</sup> This internal division is well depicted in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* where Stevenson backloads nineteenth century racial prejudices on to the Lowlanders of the eighteenth century following the put-down of the Jacobite rebellion. Stevenson’s alignment of eighteenth-century Whig snobbery and its brutal suppressionist policies that were decimating the Highlands can be held up to reflect Victorian Scotland’s racial discourse, which likewise seeks union with a powerful ally at the expense of internal cohesion.

The mode of racialized historical periodization Steinberg details, which I have argued in chapters one and two is the essence of “secularization,” is the conceptual backbone of the *saecular discourse* that establishes secularity as what Michael Rectenwald calls a “substantive category in its own right” (4). Secularity, I argued following Asad, mediates identities and orients sensibilities, experiences, and ways of feeling and being earthly. Steinberg’s insights are especially enlightening with regards to the debates around English ethnicity and the ways in which the *saecular discourse* contributed to models of national identity that constructed Celticity as a racial category, and Celts as a race whose times lay in prehistory, and who, even for secular liberals are not, unless guided by their racial superiors, fully fit for modernization.

In the case of Victorian reinvention of “race,” what we see is a process of developing a sense of national and racial belonging that appeals to historically periodized time for its political and cultural ascendancy and requires homogeneity in blood and language for its authenticity. The English were, after all, supposed to be one in blood and speech, as the popular Saxonist historian J. R. Green declared (Young 55). A major part of establishing the unity of English blood and speech was in doing the same for the Celts. This was achieved by a twofold process of temporal-spatial distancing and racial “darkening” of Celtic bodies. In terms of the periodization Steinberg details, the racial time of the Celts was past. They belonged to prehistory, where they played their part in the story of Britain as its first Aryan colonizers, conquering and either assimilating, evicting, or exterminating the pre-Indo-European indigenous populations (taken to be sometimes “Iberian” or “Basque”). The Celtic “age” of British prehistory was long held to be the Bronze Age (McMahon 61), and Celts were supposed to have held dominion

until they were in turn supplanted, displaced, and/or assimilated by Roman invaders beginning with the arrival of Caesar in 55 BC. History, according to this view, turned again with the arrival of the Saxons in the fifth century AD and the general collapse of the Roman Empire. By then, it was argued, the Celts had been displaced to the peripheries of the island and the nation, dwelling in “the Celtic Fringe.” However, the taint of their *pre*historic success and their defeat by a thoroughly historical “race,” meant that they also were displaced from history, and thus for many conservative thinkers, could not be part of its progressive advance, or for many liberals, could only do by submitting peacefully to racial, cultural, and political assimilation.

In this way, the Celtic peoples, like the “pre-Aryan” natives before them, are written into the margins of history and the nation. Moreover, the two prehistoric “races” were crumpled into each other by both conservative and liberal commentators in a way that kept them in the “darkness” of the past. For instance, as Chris Manias has shown, testimonies of the racialized past of the island were imagined to be witnessed in the surviving pre-Celtic “‘Iberian’ elements” in various racialized populations. This archaeological conceit borrowed credibility from racial scientists like John Thurnham and John Beddoe, who argued that “the Neolithics were a settled and numerous people” who “had blended into the later Celtic invaders,” who themselves “had been in turn assimilated within the next wave of Teutonic invaders,” a racial succession that is supposedly still perceptible in the “identifiably ‘Iberian’ characteristics” which, though “largely bred out as a type in most of the country,” still can be discerned (Manias 193). The idea gaining consensus among liberals and conservatives alike was that the further back in time you go, the “darker” the peoples who populated the island became. And that

“darkness” is still perceptible in the Celtic bodies at the fringes of the nation. Indeed, Manias cites William Boyd Dawkins, a recognized authority on prehistoric Britain (and committed liberal Unionist), who claimed that “non-Aryan blood is still to be traced in the dark-haired, black-eyed, small, oval-featured peoples” in England, Ireland, and Wales who are “in every respect, except dress and language, identical with the Basque inhabitants of the Western Pyrenees” (qtd. in Manias 192-93).

By Stevenson’s time, the liberal view of race as mutable and intermixed had gained prominence. During the 1860s, as Young shows, a theory of racial hybridity developed by W. F. Edwards and typically favoured by liberal historians, ethnologists, archaeologists, and cultural critics like Arnold, was accepted “as received scientific knowledge” (Young 92). In brief, Edwards’ theory was that mixed races will always either die out or be subsumed by the “superior.” This meant that full “racial fusion” was an impossibility, and implied “permanent separation” of too “distant races” and racial homogenization of near or “proximate” races (Young 90). This theory, however, still left plenty of room for anxieties about racial degeneration, because the nature of that mixture was still very much ambiguous. For instance, in 1885, John Beddoe, a self-declared “apologist for the Saxon view,” produced *The Races of Britain*, a text which propagated the fear that people in the country were “getting darker” (Young 134). Beddoe obsessively recorded “racial signifiers” such as eye and hair colour, which he charted on his “index of Nigrescence” in order to prove that “the Gaelic and Iberian races of the west, mostly dark haired, are tending to swamp the blond Teutons of England by a reflux migration” (qtd. in Young 137). He blamed this for causing the “increasing Nigrescence of the English” (138). Thus, although as Manias has pointed out, “progress and racial

mixture were fundamentally intertwined” (130) and the populations which “had been (or were being) disciplined and ordered into the wider national community” stood as the “principal lesson of British ethnological history” for liberals (131). Beddoe’s late example shows the persistence of anti-Celtic “darkening” to bolster Saxonist racial and national unity. I will come back to the importance of this “darkening” of Celticity below when I discuss *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and again in chapter seven when I look at “Thrawn Janet” and “The Merry Men.”

It is from within this climate of racialized hostilities within Britain and between Britain and Ireland that Matthew Arnold defends and denigrates Celticity in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). This text demonstrates the way race informs Victorian secularity in Arnold’s attempts to delineate the various ways the contributing “races” that have landed upon the island throughout its history have shaped English character, culture, and aesthetics. Arnold discourses on the pros and cons of the Celtic, Roman, Norman, and Saxon contributions to English identity, and he suggests that these are discrete racial agencies at work within the English individual and national character. I want to focus on what he has to say about the first and last of these “races.”

Arnold, following Renan, presents Celticity as a mode of racialized secular embodiment defined by a predisposition to an over-abundance of sentiment, a natural inclination to beauty, and a heightened sense of spirituality. These admirable attributes are counterbalanced by racially construed psychological, social, and cultural deficits such as a “rebellion against fact” (Arnold 105) that accounts for Celtic “ineffectualness” in politics and business, and which mixes tragically with a dangerous sense of “self-will” (115). For Arnold, the Celt is “undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature”

(109), and therefore appears as a natural disciplinary subject for the pragmatic Anglo-Saxon and its Teutonic “steadfastness,” “fidelity to nature,” and predilection for competent and orderly self-governance (109-115). Though Arnold holds that Celtic peoples should willingly submit to Anglo-Saxon disciplinary guidance, the relationship is not figured as one-way. The Anglo-Saxon also benefits in the cultural marriage with the Celt. For the Germanic Anglo-Saxon nature has “commonness” and Philistinism as its defects (115). The Celtic cultural legacy will heighten English aesthetics with the Celt’s sentiment and spirituality, while the Anglo-Saxon will help civilize and enlighten the Celt.<sup>82</sup>

However, as Daniel Williams remarks, Arnold approaches the English “encounter with the Celt” with “a sense of uncertainty” and “self-questioning” which seem endemic to Victorian Anglo-Celt relations (72). I want to suggest that such moments reveal a deeper sense of unease inherent to Arnold’s hybrid model of English identity that Stevenson sees as reflective of Scottishness as well. For example, Arnold pauses at one point to reflect on the assumed Englishness of the English:

And we, then, what are we? What is England? I will not answer, A vast obscure Cymric basis with a vast visible Teutonic superstructure; but I will say that that answer sometimes suggests itself at any rate, sometimes knocks at our mind’s

<sup>82</sup> Arnold’s essays on Celtic literature focus primarily on English relations with Wales and especially Ireland. The book ends with a plea for support in his efforts to “found a chair of Celtic, as to send, through the gentle ministrations of science, a message of peace to Ireland” (181). Here we see, as I touched on in my introduction, Arnold advocating for a liberal secular centralist culturally administrative stance which would synthesize the diversity of cultural differences amidst Britain and Ireland, while maintaining English political ascendancy.

door for admission and we begin to cast about and see whether it is to be let in.  
(84-85)

Arnold's denial, then, is also an admission. His two metaphors are also telling. Arnold evokes a secularized, archaeological image of stratification and superimposition. The "Cymric" (Welsh-Celtic) is obscured but ever-present under an imposed Germanic present. This enacts a division, but it also suggests a kind of internally confused and uneasy coexistence of the two. The second metaphor, that of acceptance of Celtic roots of English identity, acknowledges the anxiety about the Celtic heritage of the English, and the perception that the English have estranged themselves from the once familiar cohabitants. The implication here is that Celtic ethnography of England is received in anxiety, a threat to a domestic space that is trying to secure itself from the admission of an evicted familiar who has returned as the stranger at the door. In another instance in the text, Arnold pauses to reflect on the "strangeness" of the English to others: "No people . . . are so shy, so self-conscious, so embarrassed as the English, because two natures are mixed in them . . . which pull in different ways. The Germanic part, indeed, triumphs in us . . . but not so wholly as to exclude hauntings of Celticism" (134). What we see here in Arnold's moments of racialized national self-reflection is a sense of the uncanniness of the Celtic both within English, England, and the modern English people.

In both instances, Arnold draws attention to that uncanniness of racialized secular embodiment in the English national and individual self. The English, he thinks, are not at home in themselves nor *feel* that oneness in blood and speech lauded by some Saxonist historians because they are troubled by the "hauntings of Celticism." The Celt is a lingering stranger who is denied admittance, but also a familiar that is both desired—



Arnold emphasizes that “we are deeply interested in knowing them” (178)—and denied. This denial of Celtic heritage, Arnold suggests, is a kind of self-denial, and this self-denial contributes to the sense of self-estrangement that unsettles English identity. However, Arnold does not fully admit Celticity either. As Young argues, Arnold ultimately seeks a “strictly textual resolution” of the Anglo-Celtic “dialectic,” one which allows for “mingling” but not “blending” (153). Arnoldian racialized secularity, then, figures embodiment as psychologically riven, a state of internal incongruence owing to its inherited and uneasily inhering racial agencies.

### *Deviant Familiars and Intimate Strangers*

Stevenson affects Celticity in such ways as to exploit Arnoldian Anglo-Celtic unease. In effect, Stevenson tells the English their own story of Anglo-Celtic relations in ways which provoke uncomfortable self-reflections. This story as retold by Stevenson comes in two general types: comedy (although Stevenson’s unions are nearly always troubled) and tragedy. In the comic type, we have Stevenson’s Scottish romances *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, as well as short pieces like “The Treasure of Franchard.” These dramatize Celtic racial relations in the way they show the slow process of growing affections, mutual sympathies, and expanded understandings both between characters and groups, and within protagonists.<sup>83</sup> The tragic type stages the reverse: the gradual decay of

<sup>83</sup> *Kidnapped*’s ending, as Julia Reid observes “underlines this rejection of the meliorist account of Scotland’s progress towards enlightened modernity” because its “conflict . . . is not resolved” (129). Thus, though the romance is a comedy in certain respects—David and Alan bond over a newfound sense of affection and respect—it is a suspended comedy in that this union cannot yet be realized due to the political and cultural climate in Scotland.

interpersonal bonds and individual identities. Examples are *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and short stories such as “Thrawn Janet” and “The Merry Men” (these last two will be the focus of my final chapter). Stevenson’s “comedies” then are structured by communal integration and the expansion of selves in the bonding with others they were once prejudiced against. His tragedies are structured by self-disintegration, often impelled by the intense fear, hatred, or condescension of a self-deceiving and prideful (and frequently confessional) narrators. In either mode, by staging encounters with racialized embodiments of projected Celticity, Stevenson unsettles English and (Lowland) Scottish temporo-historical and geographical belonging. These encounters revoke the validity of “race” as a mode of earthly embodiment through confrontations with an abjected Celtic alterity that cannot be assimilated, exterminated, or evicted because racialized difference is a process of abjecting into another what is loathed in the self.

My reading of Stevenson’s work in these two modes and his treatment of Celticity is informed by a few strands of thought in Stevenson scholarship that I want to synthesize and bring to bear upon my study of his participation in the pagan revival. First, as Michael Shaw notes, Stevenson contributed to a Scottish cultural revival which appealed to Scotland’s Celtic past and present, though he remained a “a highly provisional” Unionist both in relation to the Irish Question and in terms of Scotland’s union with England (51). I follow Shaw’s lead, but I want to suggest that what Shaw sees as “provisional” reflects Stevenson’s suspicious ambivalence towards the racialized terms of the *saecular discourse*. As exemplified by Arnold, racialized secular embodiment is inherently troubling because the propagation of notions of blood-based, hereditary

recapitulations of historical antagonisms serve the struggle for political and cultural hegemony that is being adapted by the *saecular discourse*.

This skepticism about politics and aesthetics that appeal to “race” relates to another familiar avenue of Stevenson scholarship. Critics frequently frame Stevenson’s engagement with Scottish identity with reference to the Gothic. For instance, Steven Arata locates him in relation to a tradition of urban middle class Lowland Scottish literature which conjured a “phantasmatic ‘authentic’ national identity” (60). Stevenson’s turns to the Gothic, according to Arata, capture feelings of “intimate estrangement” arising from failure to achieve authentic national belonging (60).<sup>84</sup>

However, it is the Celt and not the Goth that troubles Scottishness for Stevenson. In this light, I want to bring Arata’s notion of “intimate estrangement” in conversation with Nick Groom’s attention to the racial aspect of this desire for authentic Scottishness. According to Groom, Celtic “deviant familiarity” subsists “subterraneously” (like Arnold’s “Cymric base”) within the so-called “Scottish Gothic.” For Groom, this under-dwelling Celtic “deviant familiarity” is exemplified in Mr. Hyde, who appears as “the horrific Celtic alternative to British Unionism” (25). However, as Julia Reid notes, Stevenson is especially interested in “eroding constricting boundaries and finding affinities between apparently incongruous cultures” (173). She demonstrates further that

<sup>84</sup> Roderick Watson also figures something like this sense of “intimate estrangement” in Stevenson as a mode of “Gothic existentialism” which explores the fragmentation of the self in relation to the intersection of historical religious affects and modern secularity. Watson notes that Stevenson blends Scottish Presbyterian distrust of and disgust with the body and the physical world with Victorian evolutionary psychology and its own intimations of the original depravity of the species. This is discernable in Stevenson’s preoccupation with the simultaneity of “sickening and seductive drives” embodied in the same person (Watson 151). The nation and the private self for Stevenson, then, is fragmented due to a compulsion to self-identify via a process of self-denial, both in terms of recognizing the implication of the other as integral to the self, and in terms of the irreconcilable yet fundamental interdependence between desire and disgust at the core of national and private identity formation.

by blurring “the distinction between self and other, savage and civilized,” Stevenson’s Scottish romances and tales reject “the progressivist vision of cultural evolution” by “unsettling the binary terms on which Britain’s internal colonialism and the ethnographic enterprise both depended” (129). To put Arata’s, Groom’s, and Reid’s observations together, then, the Celt appears in Stevenson as a *deviant familiarity* within the self-supposed member of the ruling or superior “race” who provokes the *intimate estrangement* of Scottishness and secular self-identity more broadly.

What this all demonstrates is Stevenson’s evocation of Celticity as a site of pagan alterity that troubles secularity and its assumption of ordered, obedient nature, embodied in racialized types. In this regard, we can recall Henry Jekyll’s potentially infinite decomposition of the self as a Knoxian Saxonist nightmare version of pagan animist dissipation. If racialization is, as I argued above, a form of secular ordering of self and nation in the domain of Earth history, and a form of embodied earthliness that coordinates racialized subjectivities along temporo-historical timelines which assure Anglo-Saxon ascendancy, then Stevenson suggests Celticity as a way of disturbing this secularity that ultimately appeals to deeper embodiments of a transancestral pagan past. These last points will be clarified in chapters six and seven, where I make the connection between Celticity and Stevenson’s take on the “universal pagan sentiment” (Pater 99) more apparent. For the rest of this chapter, I look at two instances where ostensibly Celtic coded characters appear as intimate strangers and deviant familiars which trouble clean

divisions between Saxon and Celt. This internalized trouble is especially evident in his confessional narrators of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Kidnapped*.<sup>85</sup>

Particularly of interest in *Strange Case* is not so much Hyde himself, but how those who meet him are affected by their impressions of him. Frequently those who meet him confess to a confused mixture of attraction and repulsion, and this brings out their own worst natures. Upon first seeing Hyde, Enfield remarks that he “took a loathing” to him “at first sight,” and furthermore that the doctor, to whom Enfield has taken the child who Hyde trampled, also went “sick and white” with the “desire to kill him” which Enfield also shares (33).<sup>86</sup> The reaction to Hyde troubles those who look upon him in more existentially destabilizing ways. Hyde causes within those who behold him an identity crisis akin to that which Jekyll has undergone in so far as they become unlike themselves. Yet with Jekyll, this crisis was a conscious one, born out of a recognition that he desired to indulge his own deviance in a controlled way. The crisis which Hyde occasions in others is one of existential uncertainty: Hyde revolts but he also sends the self in revolt against itself—he excites in others a desire to kill him that has no recognizable reason other than that he is extremely unsettling. That Hyde can make an otherwise unviolent person react in such a supposedly uncharacteristic way, throws into question the stability of that person’s underlying character. Is Hyde bringing out the

<sup>85</sup> The London of the former has long been noted as doubling for Edinburgh; hence G. K. Chesterton’s observation that there is “something distinctly Caledonian about Henry Jekyll” (qtd. in Groom 24). The tale thus concerns “Scottishness” as well as “Britishness” more generally.

<sup>86</sup> When asked to describe Hyde further, Enfield expresses an excited difficulty: “There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I know not why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point” (37). Perhaps if Enfield started palpating Hyde’s skull, he would have put his fingers more precisely on what it is that bothers him.

worst in them, or does the worst in them reveal itself when a suitable object to which they can attach their own inherent violence and hatred appears?

Furthermore, just as the Arnoldian Anglo-Saxon deeply desires to know the Celt, those who run into Hyde deeply want to know him—even despite his extremely revolting nature. This revulsion also manifests as an attraction. Enfield’s story of Hyde and this initial encounter infects Utterson with a kind of morbid longing: the figure of Hyde “haunted the lawyer all night,” for “there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer’s mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde” (41). This curiosity to behold Mr. Hyde turns Utterson into an obsessed man. The desire to finally encounter Hyde troubles his dreams at night and in the day finds him haunting the door from which Hyde is known to appear (40). The Saxon-coded Utterson<sup>87</sup> is here on the other side of that Arnoldian door of the mind. When he finally meets the ostensibly Celtic coded Hyde,<sup>88</sup> Utterson’s impressions concur with those of Enfield. The lawyer is perplexed by an “unknown disgust, loathing and fear” (43), and in attempting to name the “something else” which eludes those who react so dramatically to Hyde’s appearance, Utterson settles on a term then aligned with anthropological and archaeological accounts of the deep prehistory of the human species, “troglydytic” (43).

A similar and more overt dealing with the deviant familiarity of Celticity and the way it intimately estranges Scottish self-conception is in *Kidnapped*, where the

<sup>87</sup> Recall Utterson’s steadfastness, self-centeredness (“I let my brother go to the devil in his own way” [33]), lack of sentimentality, and stern pursuit of the facts—all traits Arnold assigns to the “Teuton” and those which precisely contrast Celticity.

<sup>88</sup> For instance, an 1862 article in *Punch* laments the Irish as a “creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro” (qtd. in Smyth 38). Hyde, who is also described in simian terms, apes the *Punch* author’s simianization of the Irish, which was prefigured by Thomas Carlyle, who in 1839 lamented Irish “apehood” (Young 29).

Lowlander David Balfour finds himself on the run through the Highlands and at the mercy of the Gaelic rebels. David's shame and pride figure prominently in his narratorial style, as he frequently chides himself for his presumptions about his Highland countrymen. For example, he has his preconceptions of the Highlanders corrected a number of times, especially during instances where he is accepted and treated with hospitality: "If these are the wild Highlanders" he reflects, "I could wish my own folk wilder" (128).<sup>89</sup>

David's ignorance of Gaelic, the Highlanders, and the Highlands mirror a basic ignorance of himself, his ancestry, and the Scottish cultural and linguistic landscape. For instance, when he is stranded on the isle of Erraid, it is his lack of knowledge of the native language that prolongs his misery. Highland fishermen sail by early on after he ends up there and try to inform him of the land-bridge that emerges with retreat of the tide, and that he can just walk across when it does (123-25). David is stranded both by his lack of even a basic comprehension of Gaelic, but also by an inability to conceive of the Highland Gaels as decent folk, for when the fishermen first call out to him, he can only imagine that they are cruelly laughing at his plight (124).

A parallel incident occurs when an exiled clan chief accosts David not only for not being able to comprehend the language but for being ignorant of how it informs his own identity. When David confesses, "I have no Gaelic, sir," the old chief replies, "Your name has more sense than yourself then . . . for it's good Gaelic" (209).<sup>90</sup> David's

<sup>89</sup> On David's gradual respect for the Highlanders and their customs, see Reid (128).

<sup>90</sup> Stevenson points out his intentions with David's name in a letter to J.M. Barrie: "I gave my Lowlander a Gaelic name, and even commented on the fact in the text; yet almost all critics recognised in David and Alan a Saxon and a Celt. I know not about England; in Scotland at least, where Gaelic was spoken in Fife

response here is, as we will see again in chapter seven, a denial that hides a confession—he denies “having” Gaelic and confesses a deeper ignorance that his name signifies. As I suggested above, the story is impelled by the gradual forming of bonds and the expansion of self-understanding in relation to those bonds. David is dispossessed by a selfish uncle and struggles to get back home and claim his rightful inheritance, a struggle that takes him through the Highlands and recapitulates within him the struggles the Highlanders faced under English and Lowland oppression.

Yet, it is worth also noting that although David advances in self-knowledge, the novel does not completely resolve the tensions that underwrite it. Nor could it, for Stevenson’s use of historical distancing is simultaneously a way of collapsing historical distance. The divisions between Highland and Lowland Scotland gained a new authority in the racialization of secular embodiment, which, as we have seen in *Knox*, could be appealed to as a justification for evictions, disarming, and the banning of Gaelic. Thus, the romance closes with David coming into his inheritance, learning more about himself, gaining a brother-figure in Alan Breck Stewart, and yet feeling “lost and lonesome” because ongoing internal national strife means that Alan must go into hiding (277). The deviant familiarity of the Celtic-coded Alan means, sadly for David, that they must for the time being remain intimately estranged. David is re-homed in the Lowlands, with his inheritance secured, but it is still a troubled inheritance: “[A]ll the time what I was thinking of was Alan . . . and all the time. . . there was a cold gnawing in my inside like a remorse for something wrong” (277). As Janet Sorenson points out, the text parallels the

little over the century ago, and in Galloway not much earlier, I deny that there exists such a thing as a pure Saxon, and I think it more questionable if there be such a thing as a pure Celt” (qtd. in Shaw 55).



terms of eighteenth-century internal divides and the racialized model of Stevenson's present. She argues that *Kidnapped* "complicates the binaries upon which" Victorian "cultural and racial distinction" are made (289). When Stevenson does indulge the racial categories, according to Sorensen, it is not, as Groom suggests, a reaffirmation of the racial distinctions, but rather works to "dissolve them in the motifs of uncanny doubling" (293). Thus, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Kidnapped* show how Stevenson affects Celticity as a form of deviant familiarity because it speaks to the intimate estrangement at the core of British identity.

At the beginning of this chapter, I endeavored to add to Victorianists' understanding of how race was "reinvented" from the 1850s by rethinking the way in which racialization, and specifically questions of Celticity, are extensions of the *saecular discourse*. Then, by attending to Stevenson's comedic and tragic contestations of Celticity, I have shown how he dramatizes the extensions and dis-integrations of nations and selves when they are either bonded by expansions of affection or recoil inwards in the internal decomposition attendant with racialized self-loathing. In my next two chapters, I will show how Stevenson contests the *saecular* idea of racial embodiment by opting for a transancestral, universal pagan sentiment. This sentiment takes two obverse forms: a form of "primitive ecstasy" that expands the horizons of the self by extending it into a deep ancestral past, and a form of self-dis-integration which is provoked by the eeriness of internal and external manifestations of alterity. I will turn to the former in my next chapter and the latter will be the subject of inquiry in chapter seven.

## Chapter 6

### Stevenson's Affectations of Celticity and the "Primitive" Ecstasies of Romance

In private, Stevenson was ambivalent about the reality of "Celtic" as a distinct "race." He wrote in one letter to J. M. Barrie that he did not believe in any such thing as a "pure Celt" (Reid 124), but then in another to his cousin he argued that the Saxons may have "super-imposed their language," but "they scarce modified the *race*" (Shaw 51, italics added). And yet again, according to Julia Reid, in the last years of his life Stevenson began enthusiastically investigating his own ancestry. Noting the "thrill of his genealogical discoveries," she cites an 1894 letter to the same cousin wherein Stevenson confesses, "I wish to trace my ancestors a thousand years," admitting "[i]t is not love, not pride, not admiration; it is an expansion of the identity, intimately pleasing, and wholly uncritical" (158). Stevenson fancifully speculates, "you are Cymry on both sides . . . and I Cymry and Pict. We may have fought with King Arthur and known Merlin" (158). Reid states that Stevenson turned to genealogy to forge "a sense of personal and national identity" which doubled as an attempt to "create a reassuring sense of continuity with the past, connecting his family with Celtic mythology" (158). Yet, Stevenson is also insistent upon what this new enthusiasm for genealogy is *not*: it is not Celtophilia (neither "love" nor "admiration"), and it is not Celtic nationalism ("pride"). Rather, his motivations are aesthetic and affective: self "expansion" *pleases* him "intimately." Like Jefferies atop Liddington Castle, then, Stevenson performs Celticity to imaginatively expand what Jefferies called his "horizon of feeling." This time, however, the landscape ascended is internal. Stevenson's Celticity is therefore a self-conscious pagan affectation, an intimate

re-familiarity impelled by a deviant estrangement from the ways of secularity, a “self-pleasing” decomposition of the boundaries of racialized secular embodiment that recomposes the self. Surveying paths of ascent and descent that remap the internal terrain of one’s ancestral line, Stevenson suggests, means being able to participate the long romance of personal genealogy back into pagan times and, as we shall see, even further.

In this chapter, I will look at two related ways in which Stevenson affects Celticity that reveal it as a means to achieve something similar to the self-pleasing expansion of identity he confessed in his letter. First, Stevenson affects Celticity as an authorial personification of his version of the Paterian “universal pagan sentiment” (Pater 99). Second, he theorizes the composition and consumption of romance literature and style in terms which evoke Arnoldian Celticity as a means of destabilizing the grounds upon which secular embodiment is constructed. What secularizing racialists identify as “Celtic” traits turn out to be buried feelings that can be resurrected in anyone by romance because romance occasions a re-embodiment of transancestral and universal pagan sentiments. In considering the nature of Stevenson’s adaptation of Pater’s “universal pagan sentiment,” I will think through the convergence of two related affects that re-occur in much of the literature of the pagan revival: “primitivity” and “ecstasy.” These affects combine in Stevenson’s performances of Celticity and his theories of romance composition and reception. I will demonstrate this convergence of Celticity, ecstasy, and “primitivity” across three essays, “A Gossip on Romance” (1882), “Pastoral” (1887), and “A Chapter on Dreams” (1888)—though I will not read these chronologically. In these Stevenson affects Arnoldian Celticity as he theorizes romance as a literary form and the affectivity of style and language.

Ultimately, I will suggest Stevenson's affectations of Celticity reveal it to be a particularized expression, perhaps best thought of as an "ethnic" variant of a universal, transancestral pagan mode of feeling he imagines latent in all humans, and to which, especially while reading romance, they incline. In this, "Celticity" is revealed as a localizable expression of an ancient and universal pagan mode of feeling and being earthly, not a racially determinate essence or inheritable package of genetic traits. Thinking and feeling *through* Celticity thus becomes a way of seeing through "race" and embodying deeper and more ancient structures of feeling that dissolve the boundaries of the *saecular discourse's* racial embodiment and opens the self up to a transancestral, universal pagan sense of earthly embodiment.

### ***Ecstasy, Primitivity, and Celticity***

Victorian pagan revivalists inherit an interest in modes of ecstatic experience from their earlier romantic counterparts, who turned to Greek ritual veneration of Dionysus, whose followers were thought to "temporarily lose their selfhoods when they succumb to the music, dance, and wine of the bacchanal" (Barnett 102). As Barnett shows, ecstasy was venerated in the poetry and letters of Romantics such as Shelley, Peacock, Hunt, and Keats. In Stevenson, as we shall see, the emphasis is on the experience of self-dispossession rather than divine repossession and poetic vision. For him, ecstasy becomes a mode of self-dissolution that compels self-expansion. The Greek *ἔκστασις* and Latin *exstasis*, prior to taking on the more exclusive religious and mystical meanings, were used in classical sources to signify a person gone "out of his wits," and later "withdrawal of the soul from the body," and more simply "to put out of place"

(“ecstasy”).<sup>91</sup> Stevenson’s idea of effective romance, as we will see, is prose fiction which can “rapt one clean of oneself” (“Gossip” 140). However, whereas Shelley and members of the second-generation Romantics could be Greek pagans without being Greek, for later pagan revivalists like Stevenson, identity expands because it encompasses a pagan past that is in the body linking them with an ancestral, native British paganism (i.e., the “Cymry” and “Pict” of Stevenson’s letter). However, while Stevenson turns to Celtic lore to imagine his own sense of self-expansion and whereas he performatively incorporates the traits of Arnoldian Celticity, he ultimately suggests “Celtic” as only a less compromised expression of transancestral pagan sentiment basic to all. In this sense, Stevenson appropriates something of the logic of secularized racial embodiment to think through it in a way that contests its legitimacy. Stevenson performatively recuperates aspects of the racial embodiments of the secularized self as a site wherein one may fancy themselves as able to revive the dwindling Tylorian survivals of their own deep ancestral history and achieve heights of ecstatic deindividuation. Relatedly, in the aestheticization of ecstatic experience, there is a notable difference from Romantic Hellenistic paganism in the way post-1860s pagan revivalism incorporated newer notions of “primitivity.” Before moving on to analyse Stevenson’s essays, though, I want to demonstrate the connections between ecstasy, “primitivity,” and Celticity which colour Stevenson’s post-Panoleptic participation in the pagan revival.

<sup>91</sup> The OED lists a number of meanings in past and current usage which reflect Stevenson’s comments upon romance. For instance, the prime definition listed, “(t)he state of being ‘beside oneself’, thrown into a frenzy or a stupor, with anxiety, astonishment, fear, or passion,” which as will become clear, resonates with Stevenson’s aesthetics, as does the more then-contemporary meaning, “(a)n exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought,” examples of which the OED lists as used by Walter Scott, George Eliot, and Matthew Arnold. Whereas mainline Victorian aesthetics derided excessive affective states such as ecstasy (as we have seen, for instance, in Ruskin), Stevenson recuperates them in his theories of popular prose fiction composition and consumption.

Constructions of “primitivity” and Primitivism overlap with pagan revivalism by way of some basic assumptions of the Victorian *saecular discourse* which we have already seen, such as the “primitive’s” conflation of objective reality with subjective perception, the alignment of “primitive” epistemologies and “religions” with animism and witchcraft, and the comparative method that takes modern “savages” to be contemporary analogues to the distant prehistoric ancestors of the “civilized” Europeans. However, “primitivity” was also imagined as a kind of affective state (recall again Pater’s description of the pagan sentiment as “primaeval” [99], the Panolept’s desire for ritual submission to the Arcadian goat-god, and Jefferies’ desire to feel the rush of the prehistoric hunt). Ben Etherington argues that the modern desire to feel “primitive” or to experience states of supposed “primitivity” indicates patterns of longing that are valuable for the insights they offer into the various aesthetic and artistic responses to social, cultural, economic, and political pressures which put the artist in tension with their present (8).<sup>92</sup>

Ecstatic experience is one important site around which pagan revivalists and aesthetic primitivists converge. Modern primitivists, Mariana Torgovnick demonstrates, were interested in recovering experiences of *primitive ecstasy*, which were imagined as

<sup>92</sup> Although, as Etherington points out, we must be mindful of “primitivism’s deep entanglement in colonial reality,” the movement is worth re-evaluating in order that we can “recover its longing” (8). That for which the primitivist longs, Etherington argues, is sense of alterity to the seemingly all-encompassing spread of imperialism and global capitalism, which for early twentieth century Modernists was thought to obscure possible modes of aesthetic and artistic expression and feeling. Etherington does, however, make a distinction between what he calls “philo-primitivism” and “emphatic primitivism,” the latter of which is Modernist primitivism proper (xi). “[P]hilo-primitivism” is a less critical, less self-reflective romanticizing idealization of primitive otherhood (xi-ii). Modernist Primitivism proper, Etherington argues, is a more nuanced, speculative, aesthetic response to capitalist imperialist colonial expansion. Etherington notes that Stevenson seemed to pivot “between this romantic vision of life beyond imperialism’s perimeter and a forthright engagement with contemporary colonial conditions” (23).

foundational to the psyche, but that, like the strata of the geological and archaeological records, are buried beneath superimposed, culturally evolved forms. She notes that, while “primitive” is often a derogatory or at least patronizing label, it also comes to name an object of desire: the “primitive” is “a vast, generalized image, an aggregate of places, things, and experiences” (4). In this regard, the “primitive” of what I am calling the *saecular discourse* becomes coveted by pagan revivalists as containing “eons of prehistoric human experience” (Torgovnick 4). “Primitive” ecstasy was associated with certain affects: “sensations of relatedness and interdependence,” “effacement of the self,” and a desire for “profound connections between humans and land, humans and animals, humans and minerals” (4). For the pagan primitivist ecstatic, then, the secular “buffered” self is that which *stands* in the way, and ecstasy, that experience of *standing outside* of oneself, becomes a radical way of dissolving the boundaries of secular earthly embodiment.

Furthermore, pagan revivalist primitive ecstasy accords with what Denisoff observes of the variety of Decadent paganism inspired by Paterian aesthetics. Denisoff explains that within fin de siècle expressions of paganism, a “dissipative model” of aesthetic experience turns to animism to emphasize the “role of agents that are often inconstant and deindividuated” (“Dissipating” 432). Torgovnick’s observations about the Modernist primitivist’s self-effacement and pursuit of interconnectivity between human and non-human domains, coupled with Denisoff’s observations about late Victorian pagan pursuits of non-human “agents” and the dissipated self, suggest that primitivism converges with paganism by way of animism. Animism is of interest in both the secular

and pagan revivalist imagination because it was held to be a “primitive” experience of the “forces” of nature.

Given its folkloric cosmos populated by powerful beings that animate trees, stones, streams, and other non-human things, Celtic paganism was a ready-made, native prehistoric “British” animism, re-exoticized in such secular languages of those of Lubbock’s “savage” fetishists and Tylorian primitive cultural “survivals.” Arnold captures something of this in his patronizing admiration of the Celt’s “natural magic”:

“[H]is sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature . . . he seems in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it” (Arnold 108).

Furthermore, Arnold presents the Celt as having something of a capacity for the kind of ecstatic merger with nature. Throughout his studies of Celtic literature, Arnold writes of the Celt in both an erotic and violent register. Arnold writes of the Celts, “how deeply nature lets him come into her secrets” (160). Elsewhere, he cites a leading philologist and linguist, claiming that the alleged etymology of *Gael*, which allegedly means “wind,” therefore appropriately suits the Celts, who are “the violent and stormy people” (82). Arnold, then, like Renan before him, presents Celts and Celtic culture as a seductive and enchanted people, who are also prone to relapses of “primitive” affects.

### ***Stevenson’s “Sleepless Brownies”***

I will first look at the role of ecstasy in relation to Celticity in Stevenson’s thought, before then linking this with the way “primitivity” comes into play. Stevenson’s “A Chapter on Dreams” (1888) finds him affecting Celticity in the way he fancies



himself a pagan author possessed by creatures from Celtic folklore. Stevenson claims that he is possessed and enchanted by “Little People” and “Brownies” who produce his fictions and deserve the credit for any success he enjoys as a writer. These entities occupy a backroom of his psyche, and, when he passes from waking to dreaming, supply him with ideas for successful tales, specifically *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.<sup>93</sup> In a further irony, the essays find Stevenson playfully Jekyll like, dis-integrated within himself. Stevenson also takes himself as the occasion to parody Arnoldian racial embodiment. For, though the Brownies produce the raw material, the process is supervised by a more practically minded, editorial “I”: “I am an excellent advisor . . . I pull back and I cut down; and I dress the whole in the best words and sentences that I can find and make; I hold the pen” and make these tales fit for public consumption (103). In this, Stevenson recalls the dialogical structure of the liberal hybrid theory of the racialized English psyche. In Arnoldian terms, the Teutonic superstructure of the individual governs and restrains the sentimentality and “natural magic” of the Celtic imagination (163).

The kind of ecstatic self-expansion Stevenson desires in his letter cited above is brought out in the essay’s formal features. These it shares with *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the way the authorial “I” gradually recedes, standing aside to admit the multitudinous “Brownies,” the fuller share of not only his own creativity, but his identity

<sup>93</sup> The essay is based on an interview for an American newspaper which sought to give readers a glimpse into the mind behind the successful *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Stevenson takes the opportunity to make himself a strange case study. Stevenson presents of himself as a profound and uniquely powerful dreamer who, when dreaming, connects with a “primitive” psychic domain. Though he is being deliberately coy, affecting a pagan mode of feeling, he does express similar notions in his letters and was even taken as something of a psychologist’s object of study when Meyers and Sully used Stevenson as a case study to get insight into an artist’s psyche (Reid 27).

as an author. Indeed, by the end, he reveals that the “real” author may not be involved in the creative process at all: “For myself—what I call I, my conscience, ego” turns out to be a mere “*denizen* of the pineal gland . . . no storyteller at all” but rather “a realist bemired up to the ears in actuality” (99). Here, Stevenson invokes the same language he had Dr. Jekyll use to describe his self-dis-integration at the close of *Strange Case* where Jekyll speculates that in the wake of his experiments, future scientists will discover that the human self is not one but “mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens” (76). In his affectations of Celticity as a mode of ecstatic self-expansion, then, Stevenson contests Arnoldian secularist aesthetics. In fact, he upends the Arnoldian system of checks and balances between the internal Teutonic and Celtic geniuses.

This is further demonstrated in the way Stevenson affects Celticity to parody the relationship between the creative production and the commercial distribution, which he implicitly aligns with Celtic lore and the “realism” or “fidelity to nature” as Arnold puts it, of the internal Teuton (Arnold 101). His “Brownies” resemble those of Highland folklore in that they play the role of servants devoted to the well-being of their human masters. Early nineteenth-century folklorist of the Highlands W. Grant Stewart claimed that a Brownie is “the indefatigable guardian and promoter of his adopted master’s interest; and from his powers of prophecy and information, his services were truly invaluable” (121). Stevenson’s Brownies, too, are deeply invested in his material success: “When the bank begins to send letters,” we are told, “and the butcher to linger at the back gate, he sets to belabouring his brains after a story, for that is his readiest money-winner; and behold! At once the little people begin to bestir themselves in the same quest, and labour all night long” (96). Indeed, these beings are even portrayed as superior

storytellers in their abilities to come up with interesting and original material. Stevenson wonders “how often have these sleepless Brownies done him honest service, and given him . . . better tales that he could fashion for himself” (96). He goes further, attributing all of his abilities as a writer to them: “my Brownies, God bless them! . . . do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself” (99).

As well as parodying Arnoldian secular racial embodiment, the essay also finds Stevenson playfully engaging theory of “fairy-Euhemerism” popularized in its later Victorian form by Scottish folklorist and ethnologist David MacRitchie (Silver 7). Fairy Euhemerists argued the beings of premodern and modern folklore—the fairy folk, the little people, the brownies—are actually the memories of a prehistoric race or races of peoples who inhabited Britain prior to the coming of the Aryans. MacRitchie associates these earlier races with the Picts in Scotland, while others following or adapting his theories associate them with Celts or earlier “darker” Neolithic “races.”<sup>94</sup> In suggesting that he has some intimate relationship with these occupants of his own psyche, Stevenson playfully incorporates a Fairy Euhemerist conflation between the creatures of folklore and the folk who told their stories. In this, Stevenson suggests a compression of Celticity within the British psyche similar to Arnold’s “Cymric base” and Teutonic

<sup>94</sup> Stevenson dismissively alludes to MacRitchie’s theories in the footnote to his poem “The Heather Ale” (1892), though the poem also ironically dramatizes just this tale of racial subsumption. Other folklorists such as John Rhys, Frederic T. Hall, Sabine Baring-Gould, and Laurence Gomme variously ascribed to ideas that fairies were memories of a “pre-Pictish” and “oldest and lowest” race; that “dwarfs, trolls and fairies were folk memories of prehistoric races of small people” (Silver 47); and that “fairy lore preserved traditions of short, dark, early aboriginal peoples who preceded the Aryan occupation of Europe” (48). In his *Celtic Folklore*, John Rhys bluntly argued that “when fairy land is shorn of its glamour,” we find, “a swarthy population of short stumpy men occupying the most inaccessible districts of our own country” (qtd. in Silver 49).

“superstructure.” If the prehistoric pre-Celtic peoples were themselves reduced to fairies, Good People, and brownies, subsumed into the racial unconscious of the Celts, who were subsequently also to form, as Arnold called it, the “Cymric base” over which the Teutonic superstructure insecurely rests in the English psyche, then, in a sense, somewhere in the back rooms of the minds of the English and Lowland Scots dwell unevict-able, “darker,” and “primitive” races, conquered but defiant within the liberal racial hybrid, who come out to play when the Teutonic “I” goes to sleep. Stevenson’s otherwise ironical engagement in Fairy Euhemerist racial typology has some troubling implications for adherents of the racialized model of embodiment. Not only does the “remnant” of the “primitive” survive within, but it also dwells in that most intimate yet most strange lair: the realm of dreams, where consciousness shades into unconsciousness, memory into fantasy, fear into desire, where one encounters oneself as both deviant familiar and intimate stranger.

There is another unsettling implication in Stevenson’s self-portrait which recalls the scene I cited at the beginning of last chapter from “The Treasure of Franchard” where Madame Tentaillon condemns the “little pagan” Jean-Marie for being a popular entertainer and thus having a corrupting influence. Stevenson and his Brownies likewise reach a popular audience who, as the commercial success of their tales attest, want what the brownies are selling. Thus, for all the pretenses of self-possession and fidelity to nature, rationality, and factual objectivity, the Arnoldian racially layered British self, Stevenson suggests, is captivated by primitive vestigial traces of superseded animism. Stevenson’s pagan revivalist challenge to the secular self suggests that the body is host to, as Denisoff puts it, “inconstant and deindividuated” agencies (“Dissipating” 432). In

this, Stevenson exploits his own popularity and widespread desirability within “civilized” nations like Britain and America to champion what Tylor wanted to reform: the revival of “primitive” animistic “craving[s] for the marvelous” (Tylor 2:231).

Whereas “A Chapter on Dreams” affects Celticity as a site of ecstatic self-expansion in an ironically distanced way, Stevenson’s essays wherein he develops a theory of romance composition and consumption, I will show, associate pagan ecstasy with “primitivity,” suggesting that for him romance occasions feelings of ecstatic “primitivity” which appear as what we can recognize as a Stevensonian spin on Pater’s universal pagan sentiment. In the rest of this chapter, I will look at two such pieces: “A Gossip on Romance” (1882) and “Pastoral” (1887). As these essays attest, Stevenson’s style is highly affected and deliberately artificial. Unlike Jefferies who, in his performance as a channel for the archaeo-logoi of Wiltshire, affects a kind of a-chronic pagan authenticity, Stevenson’s pagan affectations take the opposite tactic, drawing attention to the artificiality of authorial affectation and the highly mediated mode of experiencing pagan sentiments. His “Brownies” tell him stories, recall, but he retells them in his own style: “I dress the whole in the best words and sentences that I can find and make; I hold the pen” (“Chapter” 99). In this way, Stevenson’s pagan revivalism draws attention to mediation and artifice, to the agency of words and how they craft experiences and identities. I will now underscore some of the ways in which his affectations of Celticity and its associations with “primitive” ecstasy inform Stevenson’s theories of authorial style and romance reception.

### *Reading to get “Rapt Clean of Ourselves”*

In “A Gossip on Romance,” Stevenson adopts and celebrates many of the qualities that get rendered as Celtic “deficits” by Arnold. These deficits have a precedent in Arnold’s *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). For instance, in “The Modern Element in Literature,” Arnold claims that a “modern” literature must be characterized by “intellectual maturity,” a “tendency to observe facts with a critical spirit,” and a “search” for the general “law” of such facts—“not to wander among them at random” but “to judge by the rule of reason, not by the impulse of prejudice or caprice” (62). I want to draw attention to the qualities that a literature ought *not* display if it is to be a modern literature: immaturity, a randomness of incident, prejudice, and caprice. If we keep in mind his earlier criteria, Arnold’s *Study* heavily suggests that “Celtic” peoples and their literatures are not modern.<sup>95</sup> “Celts” Arnold maintains, are “sentimental, quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly” and “keenly sensitive to joy and sorrow,” prone to emotional extremes, now being swept up in “wistful regret” due to their innate “passionate, penetrating melancholy,” now swelled by an ardent aspiration for “life, light, and emotion to be expansive, adventurous, and gay” (101). The “Celtic genius is more airy and unsubstantial, goes less near the ground, than the German” which displays a “fidelity to nature” (101),<sup>96</sup> whereas “the Celt” is “*always ready to react against the*

<sup>95</sup> In fact, Arnold explicitly states that for Welsh people and Welsh literature to become fully modern, the Welsh must adopt English as their spoken and written language—hence Arnold’s notorious advocacy for the suppression of the language in Welsh schools when he was working as inspector (Fulton 217).

<sup>96</sup> Arnold’s use of “nature” throughout his discussions of Celts and Teutons demonstrates a pagan mode of being earthly positioned against a secular one: “fidelity to nature” for the Anglo-Saxon has to do with the observations of facts—a necessary quality for a modern people. When he uses “nature” in relation to Celts,

*despotism of fact*” lacking “balance, measure, and patience” (101-02, italics in original). These qualities are in part what make them such ideal subjects for Saxon tutelage and governance.

For Arnold, Celts have a kind of natural predisposition for self-dispossession. They require external leadership, which, in turn, justifies Saxon occupation of and dominion over Celtic territories, and central governance. However, as their supposed excesses of feeling, sentimentality, expansiveness, and insubstantiality attests, they are imagined as naturally ecstatic. They are, Arnold suggests, pathologically prone to go “out of their wits,” as the OED puts it, to be “put out of place” within themselves, to be thrown into states of feeling to the detriment of rational self-control and thinking.

I read Stevenson’s “A Gossip on Romance” as a response to the Arnoldian aesthetic demands upon secular modern literature in general, and to Arnoldian Celticity more specifically. He claims the merit of romance is to be found in how successfully the writer can gratify their audience precisely on the points Arnold accuses Celtic literature of falling short. “[T]he great creative writer,” Stevenson proclaims, ought “to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader” by appealing to readers’ sensuality, to the whims of desire, to the fantastic, and to the ecstatic—to the capacity for a loss of self-control and self-expansion (144). Reading “should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be *rapt clean of ourselves*, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or continuous thought” (140, italics added). Here we see Stevenson urging an aesthetics of ecstatic reading, and in it, a

this has to do with “magic”—a spiritual, aesthetically pleasing, but unmodern element in the literature and psychological make-up of a race.

recuperation of those qualities which Arnold defines as quintessentially Celtic: keenly felt impressions, a revolt against facts, and a fluid sense of self.

Furthermore, Stevenson's theory of ecstatic reading requires "voluptuous" bodily engagement and satiation of "nameless longings" (144). I want to linger over the way Stevenson uses gendered language, which also reflects Arnoldian Celticity. Arnold writes that Celts are "peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy" (108). It is hard to tell exactly what he might mean here, but it seems Arnold is equating Celticity and femininity with a passivity: Celts are feminine because, so the idea goes, women, as mentioned in chapter three, were defined as more sentimental, more spiritual, more sensual, and more prone to "fits" and "enthusiasm" than men (Schwartz 19). Arnold's equation between Celts and femininity thus also entails a lesser capacity for self-control which makes them, again as women were imagined, "naturally" given to subjection.<sup>97</sup>

Stevenson, like Pater, reevaluates this gendering of passivity as part of his romance aesthetics. Romance reading is a "passive" form of satisfaction which encourages one to be swept out of themselves by "lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales" (142). There is something of a gender inversion at play in Stevenson's picture of romance. This is illustrated, as I demonstrated in chapter three, in the way Stevenson's aesthetics appeals to malcontent males. Recall that in "Pan's Pipes" he declares that "Romance herself has made her dwelling among men (209). "Romance" is female and its readers are male. Stevenson is suggesting that romance affects a femininization and, in the reversal of the

<sup>97</sup> This language is part of a running metaphor throughout Arnold's study: Celts and Saxons need to come together in a kind of racial and national marriage because Celts are like women and Saxons are more manly.



Arnoldian logic I find him engaging, a kind of Celtic-ization of men. Romance seduces readers and permits in them a self-subjection to the ecstasies of readerly sensation.

The inversion of the gendered subject in Stevenson's formulations of romance and style is made all the more salient if we consider some of his particular word choices. For instance, in his stipulation that effective style and story should "rapt" readers "clean" of their selves, Stevenson evokes language of seduction which entangles ecstatic experience, sexual violation, abduction, and a loss of possession. According to the OED, among its contemporary meanings, "rapt" denotes "a trance, ecstasy, rapture" ("rapt" 1.), but it also had two other, more archaic meanings that were "chiefly Scottish." "Rapt" meant both rape and an "abducted woman" (2.a and 2.b), but also "violent robbery" (3). In this sense, then, romance, rapt readers clean out of themselves in an ecstatic, near-violent and violating way, where one is carried off, unsuspectingly, almost unwilling, by the forceful intent of the story and the entrancing style of its author. Likewise, "voluptuous" has a number of relevant uses: firstly, the OED lists, "(o)f or pertaining to, derived from, resting in, characterized by, gratification of the senses, esp. in a refined or luxurious manner; marked by indulgence in sensual pleasures; luxuriously sensuous;" next, simply, "(o)f pleasure or pleasurable sensations." This second meaning is used contemporaneously with how Stevenson is using it here. The second definition given is "(a)ddicted to sensual pleasure or the gratification of the senses," a meaning which was in use a generation before Stevenson. The implications of involuntary submission in "rapt" and addiction in "voluptuous" that Stevenson values as crucial to good romance and an effective style suggests that an ideal reader is capable of being addicted to, or compulsively pleased by things that exceed the reader's powers to resist them. In this,

Stevenson is directly opposing Arnoldian aesthetics, and those entailed by the *saecular discourse*, both of which disparage feminized Celticity, loss of self-control, excesses of sentimentality and sensuality, and anything that may nurture “primitive” survivals.

Stevenson’s theory of Romance reception, like his vision of authorial Brownie possession, imagines a reader overwhelmed by agencies they cannot resist, and which, in putting aside their individuated sense of self, expands their “interiority” to use madame Tentaillon’s phrase.

Affectations of Celticity and exaltations of ecstasy in Stevenson’s theories of Romance imply an active disregard for the kind of “fidelity to nature” Arnold assigns to the “Teutonic genius.” In this, we can see something of his famous efforts to defend Romance against realism. For Stevenson, this is particularly a matter of authorial style. Writers should exploit the fanciful correspondences between words and things, between places and the impressions, suggestions, perceptions, and expectations, and the affects that they convey: “One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. . . . Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted” (142-43). Stevenson’s emphasis here is on style and on the power of suggestion in the writer’s stylizations of places and things, and the conveyance of affects from text to reader. Effective style, Stevenson argues, is attentive to “the genius of place and moment” and transmits this in its ability to “torture and delight” readers (142). Stevensonian stylistic “genius” is thus also redolent of the Arnoldian “Celtic genius” in their shared inclination towards ecstatic experiences.

Successfully stylized romances will put readers out of themselves in excesses of self-expansive swells and swirls of feeling.<sup>98</sup>

In what I find as his affectations of Celticity and ecstatic reading, Stevenson's exaltation of the virtues of romance incorporate something of the Modernist desire for "primitive" ecstasy Torgovnick defined, albeit with a certain qualification. Torgovnick's definition of Modernist "primitivist" ecstasy noted its longing for a sense of unmediated experiences of the "correspondences between bodies and things, direct correspondence between experience and language" (Torgovnick 108)—experiences that Arnold associated with the "Celt's" "natural magic" ("how deeply nature lets him come into her secrets" [*Study* 60]). Stevenson's conception of style *affects* such "direct" correspondences by its power to "absorb" the reader and "rapt" them out of themselves. It is in the effectiveness of stylistic mediations of bodies and places and things, experiences and words, Stevenson suggests, that readers lose themselves in reading, and through reading, experience what Victorian secularists and pagan revivalists alike believed "primitives" experienced: the confusion of the subjective/objective boundaries and feeling of earthly embodiment defined by an animistic sense of the living

<sup>98</sup> As Adrian Poole has shown, Stevenson's contemporary critics discuss his style in terms that reflect the deficits of Celtic art. Stevenson's style is too affected, as one critic complained, "he struts and grimaces and palavers, throws in bits of local color, fine feeling, graceful ornament" (qtd. in Poole 248). A reviewer of *Virginibus Puerisque* accused him of being all style and no substance: "His pen is well worth . . . describing the heaving tints of a sunset river, or the transient emotions of an artistic soul; but a philosopher or moralist we cannot allow him to be" (qtd. in Poole 249). The consistent quality they fixate upon is his "lightness of touch:" "his beliefs are not weighty enough, his truths are not true enough" (qtd. in Poole 250). Frivolous ornamentation, an eye for landscape, and sentimentality, his critics suggest, define Stevenson's stylistic flourish as ultimately devoid of real meaning or resonating moral or intellectual value. In this, there is something of Arnold's devaluation of Celtic art, which he judges in some of the same terms. This is not to say that reviewers equated Stevenson with Celticity, nor that there is actually something "Celtic" about Stevenson's art. Rather, I cite the terms of critics' evaluations of both Stevenson's style and the "Celtic" style to show that reception of Stevenson's style made him, wittingly or not, an embodiment of Celticity, which, as I explained, he would privately come to endorse.

interconnectivity of things. This aspect of his affected Celticity is thus also a stylistic capacity to mediate readerly experience in such a way as to conduct and induce states of “primitive” ecstasy, an affect which reveals that in affecting Celticity, Stevenson is thinking through it to revive something very much like Paterian universal pagan sentiment. “Primitive” ecstasy, for Stevenson then, is an affect that can best be experienced *indirectly*, through the artifice of style. This is to say that Stevenson imagines “Celticity” and “primitivity” as a mode of feeling, a mediation of experience, an affected manner of feeling associated with paganism that reveals his pagan revivalism as a textual affectation. For Stevenson, pagan revivalism is not the adoption of a “natural” religion nor an unmediated, direct experience of the world. Rather, it is a mode of self-stylization, a playing at being what pagans, in the minds of secular reformists like Tylor and Arnold, were supposed to be like, a performance of a revived pagan way of being earthly in which he invites readers to participate.

### ***“That Devious, Tactical Ascent”***

Stevenson’s pagan modes of feeling earthly incorporate what I am referring to as “primitive ecstasy” in a further way which at once conceals and reveals itself as an affect induced via textual mediation. We can recognize the role of stylistic mediation in “Pastoral.”<sup>99</sup> In this essay he traces what I read as his adaptation of Pater’s “universal pagan sentiment” made accessible through deep ancestral memories which are revived by

<sup>99</sup> This essay was first published in *Longman’s Magazine* and later collected in *Memoirs and Portraits* later that year (1887).

Romance written in an effective style. Stevenson suggests that a transancestral, universal pagan sentiment survives deep in the memory, and can be revived during experiences of “primitivist” ecstasy. However, as with Pan, whose music he enticed readers to “fancy” can make all things seem beautiful or terrifying, Stevenson appeals to a similar fanciful icon of aesthetic mediation that he locates within the deep structures of human memory. He formulates this via a tripartite series of parallels or doublings that aligns himself (the pagan revivalist romance author), a lowland Scots-speaking, story-telling shepherd, John Todd, and the ultimate, prehuman ancestor “Probably Arboreal.” The parallels between these three figures are organized with reference to the titular pastoral mode. The essay’s title captures a number of the valances of the genre and other connotations of the word “pastoral.” Stevenson uses iconography typical of the pastoral: its subject is a shepherd, and its setting is the Pentland Hills in the lowlands. But it is also “pastoral” in a few other less obvious ways which find Stevenson pushing the genre by adapting some of its traditional features to new ends.<sup>100</sup>

I want to approach “Pastoral” as “Past-oral,” a portmanteau word, and Stevenson’s double take on the genre. The essay is yet another about style in that it explores the importance of the *past* and of *orality*, as well as the orality of the past and how the past speaks to and through secularity and secular embodiment. Stevenson

<sup>100</sup> For instance, Terry Gifford argues that “pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat which may involve . . . either simply escape from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, our manners . . . or explore them” (47). From the outset, Stevenson recalls this tradition and its pagan heritage, while also making it specifically Scottish, blending a bit of Burns with a bit of Virgil in his invitation to the reader to join him in a Nympholeptic ecstasy of reminiscences “for the sake auld lang syne, and the figure of a certain *genius loci*, . . . if the nymph . . . will but inspire my pen, I would gladly carry the reader along with me” (53). In one sense, then, Stevenson’s essay is a retreat—both a retreat into memory in his portrait of Todd and a more literal retreat homewards to the places and people of from whom he originated and how these compose the self in memory, but also in how they speak in the present.

engages the pastoral as a literary form that contemplates memory. He fancies memory as an expansion of self in the way memories reveal identity as a weave of the impressions made by places and people and from those impressions. Personal identity becomes for Stevenson a pastoral landscape extended into a supposedly deep ancestral past that harbours “primitive” modes of feeling which are reactivated by experiences of ecstatic reading (or listening, in the case of the young Stevenson and John Todd). I will track how Stevenson adapts the pastoral to these ends by following the essay’s formal progression.

First, recollections of the place of his origin become an occasion to question the relationship between place of origin and individual identity: “[T]he streams of Scotland are incomparable in themselves—or I am only the more Scottish to suppose so” (52). However, it is not to the more famous rivers of Scotland that has spurred his “desire for native places” (52), but a particular “nameless trickle that springs in the green bosom of Allermuir . . . and threads the moss under the Shearer’s Knowe, and makes one pool there, overhung by a rock, where I loved to sit and make bad verses” (53). Here we see how the development of the author is landmarked by his intimate familiarity with place, and especially places with a specific, personal importance. Again like Jefferies, Stevenson invests discrete places with a personal developmental importance. The image of the slight trickle that weaves through the undergrowth and pools under the shelter of the landscape and reflects the author. Young Louis and “RLS” meet there in the text, and composing the pastoral essay becomes a way of recomposing the persona through re-collecting the traces of other things, places, and people that pool into authorial identity. Like that pool, his sources weave him into the places from which he has sprung and gather his authorial history, from the “nameless trickle” of “bad verse” he wrote in his

youth to the present famous Scottish author recalling the Pentlands from the uplands of Samoa. Here again, Stevenson imagines self-expansion as a kind of dissipation into one's elements, whether its Brownies or the nameless trickles that weave memory, places, and people into one's person.

Stevenson moves from places of his past to its persons. This move also occasions a self-expansive genealogy in that in turning inwards to the terrain of memory, he traces his own trajectory as a "Scottish" writer backwards to John Todd, then all the way to the earliest ancestor. I will turn first to Todd, a shepherd and fixture of the local landscape, who we discover was also a mentor-figure to the younger Stevenson, as he served as something of an unwitting tutor for the author's learning of Scots. Like the question about Scottish rivers and their effect upon Scottish identity, Todd is another source of Stevenson's "Scottishness." The orality of the past speaks through John Todd to Stevenson in an enchanting dialect of Scots, and thus Todd becomes a pastor of past-oralities stirring compelling reflections on what I have been calling "'primitive' ecstasy."

Moreover, Todd is something of a pastor of paganism to Stevenson, especially in the ways he is depicted in similar ways as the god Pan, as much a staple in the pastoral as the shepherd-figure. Like the lust-riddled, fit-prone goat-god, Todd "knew neither rest nor peace" (54), living a vagabond life on the frontiers between wilderness and civilization, driving sheep from Scotland into England. Like Pan also, Todd is depicted as a figure of pastoral animality: [I]n the lambing time, his cries were not yet silenced late at night" (54). These ambiguous "cries" during "lambing time" meld him into the reproductive process of the livestock. His uncanny powers of communication with dogs, which Stevenson goes on to focus upon as examples of Todd's incomparable powers of

oral storytelling, are also suggestive of a Pan-like *genius loci*. However, as I address below, “Pastoral” looks beyond idyllic nostalgia for Arcadia and re-thinks the half-wild storyteller as a kind of archetype for a hereditary pagan sentiment.

Also, Stevenson’s depiction of Todd indulges in Arnoldian Celticity, and he appears in part as an icon through which to think Lowland-Highland historical and racialized tensions. He is another figure of deviant familiarity that intimately estranges racist identity. Todd’s marginal absent presence disturbs the Lowlanders: “[I]n the gray summer of the morning . . . he would wake the ‘toun’ with the sound of his shoutings. . . . This wrathful voice of a man unseen might be said to haunt that quarter of the Pentlands, an audible bogie,” which gave “John a touch of something legendary” (54). His is the voice of haunting, Celtic-like, at the fringes of their community. In the way Stevenson tangentially adopts Celtic-coding, John Todd’s relation to the “toun” presents Scotland, as we have seen with the Lowlander-Highlander David Balfour, in micro-pastiche: like the unruly Highland Gaels, Todd is the orality of the past that is not “past” properly speaking, and thus a living voice of the irrepressible duality of Scottish identity.

John Todd, then, embodies multiple overlapping but strained identities. He is an analogue for Highland and Lowland relations, but also for Scotland as it relates to the rest of Britain in that Todd’s trade takes him across the border into England. This double duality reflects what Silke Stroh observes is the persistent “ambivalence” concerning “Scotland’s cultural and political status,” since it is historically “both an intra-British marginalised Other” as well as “an integral part of the British mainstream and Britain’s sense of self” (13). Furthermore, Stroh points out, this national ambivalence is also at work within Scotland and between Scotland and the rest of Britain: “Gaels have often



been uneasy subjects of the Scottish or British state, just as many anglophone Scots have been uneasy subjects of the British state” (13).<sup>101</sup>

In his role of pagan pastor and analogue of the uneasy subjection of intra-Scottish identities, Todd mentors Stevenson, speaking through the years and across the Earth as a consistent presence in Stevenson’s work. He also is a pastor of Stevenson’s pagan affectations in his influence upon Stevenson’s style and preference for romance. Just as was the case with Desprez and Jean-Marie, Stevenson makes the pagan, Celtic-coded figure a tutor for a civilized dandy,<sup>102</sup> in this case, the young Stevenson himself. This is particularly the case in relation to Stevenson’s interest in revitalizing the Scots language, which, as Mariana Dossena has shown, was in decline and which Stevenson endeavored to preserve (88-90). Todd, we are told,

spoke in the richest dialect of Scotch I ever heard; the words in themselves were a pleasure and often a surprise to me, so that I often came back from one of our patrols with new acquisitions; and this vocabulary he would handle like a master, stalking a little before me, “beard on shoulder,” the plaid hanging loosely about him, the yellow staff clapped under his arm, and guiding me uphill by that devious, tactical ascent which seems peculiar to men of his trade. I might count

<sup>101</sup> One may want to pause here and ask why, if Stevenson is pursuing Celticity as I have suggested, he gives us a “lallans” speaking John Todd and not, say, Gaelic speaking Alan Stewart-figure in this essay. As Michael Shaw points out, for Stevenson, “Scotland’s internal divisions are key concerns,” and “Stevenson attempts to rupture these divides that he invokes” by “promot[ing] more mutual identification between the Highlander and Lowlander in his romance fiction” (55). For Stevenson, the Arnoldian Celtic-Teutonic dialectic, is better critiqued in a Lowlander who performs Celticity but is not a Celtic speaker because he can embody the falsification of racialized embodiments of secularity.

<sup>102</sup> The Stevenson that sat and composed bad poetry by the pool was then a self-styled bohemian known in the Edinburgh subculture as “Velvet Jacket” (Shaw 52).

him with the best talkers; only that talking Scotch and talking English seem incomparable acts. (55-56)

Here we see John Todd playing the role of tutelary spirit, a mentor in the ways and words of romance, as well as guide to the “devious, tactical ascent” out of the secular and towards the transancestral pagan sentiment. Todd is emblematic of Stevenson’s desire “to restore ‘primal energy’ to words and phrases,” which Richard Dury argues Stevenson stylistically realizes in strategically making “unexpected word-choices” (66). The “vocabulary” Todd draws on and his way of carrying his audience along as he tells his tales is figured as “tactical ascent” of the rough terrain up which he is leading his protégé. These techniques show him also to be a guide to the romancer’s efforts to elevate readers to great heights of ecstatic experience. Todd is the archetype of effective romance stylistic flourish: “He touched on nothing at least, but he adorned it; when he narrated, the scene was before you” (55-56). And it is through John Todd, that “Pastoral” achieves another “tactical ascent” towards “primitive ecstasy,” an ascension of the ancestral tree all the way up to the original descendent.

In the fancied “Pan” of his earlier essay and the Pan-like John Todd, Stevenson embodies a pagan revivalist contestation of the *saecular discourse*. We get a sense of this in that Stevenson’s name for this figure is a double reference to Darwin<sup>103</sup> and, more pointedly, to Arnold. Arnold parodically turned to Darwin’s description of the earliest human ancestor as “Probably Arboreal” in his famous debate with Huxley, published as “Literature and Science” (1880). There, Arnold claims that despite this primitive

<sup>103</sup> In *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), Darwin writes “[w]e thus learn that man is descended from a hairy, tailed quadruped, probably arboreal in its habits” (qtd. in Reid 182n34).

creature's inhuman origins and its "pointed ears and a tail," even on the evolutionist account, the fellow must have something "in him which inclined him to Greek," a language Arnold defended as one of the highest achievements of human culture and therefore worth preservation and study (561). Stevenson invokes "Probably Arboreal" to fancy that, rather than "civilized" humanity's ascension going up and away from what in *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold called "the plain faults of our animality" (56), there is something still within moderns which incline them to their ancestral "primitivity." "Probably Arboreal" was there speaking to young Stevenson in the voice of John Todd's "lallans" Scots, for this ancient creature threads, like the nameless trick under the moss, through all and makes its appeal to all in the thrills of reading:

There is a certain critic . . . whom I dare be known to set before the best: a certain low-browed, hairy gentleman, at first a percher in the fork of trees, next (as they relate) a dweller in caves . . . often described as Probably Arboreal, which may serve for recognition. Each has his own tree of ancestors, but at the top of all sits Probably Arboreal; in our veins there run some minims of his old, wild, tree-top blood; our civilized nerves still tingle with his rude terrors and pleasures; and to that which would have moved our common ancestor, all must obediently thrill.

(59)

"Probably Arboreal" is the supreme icon of primitivist ecstasy and its jubilant deindividuation and dispossession of the self. This creature has more in common with the troglodytic Mr. Hyde than with the dapper Mr. Arnold. That "Probably Arboreal" is at once atop the ancestral tree of all and also still in some sense alive in all speaks to Stevenson's adaptation of the Paterian "universal pagan sentiment," which Pater also

called “primaeval” (though I am not sure he would have extended it back as far into the protohuman as Stevenson). But in its name, “Probably Arboreal” captures the place of affectation, artifice, and the mediation of experience. He is a textual creature whom Darwin conjectured as an embodiment of our most remote ancestor and whom Arnold parodied as therefore destined to ascend to Greek. As he draws attention to in his parenthetical clause “as they relate,” Stevenson is playing with the metaphor, pretending to take literally what is literary. Stevenson captures this creature as an icon for aesthetic mediation, a representative of a state of experience surviving in the animalistic thrills of exciting stories.

“Pastoral” reevaluates “primitive” ecstasy, repurposing Lubbock’s sinful fetishism and the surviving and reviving animism that worried Tylor. For Stevenson, progression is cyclical. As we move on, we are called back. This is captured in the essay’s first sentence: “To leave home in early life is to be stunned and quickened with novelties; but when the years have come, it only casts a more endearing light upon the past,” as the journey away brings with it “a desire for native places” (52). This desire is in part for contact with original animality, for the unmediated experience of earthly embodiment that can only be artificially revived through textual affectations of primitive pagan sentiments.

For Stevenson, the powers of romance are the powers to charm and enchant, to overwhelm and take possession, a fancied rekindling of bodily responses that trigger ancient psychological structures and thereby expand the boundaries of the self by blurring the individual into its own genealogical deep history. Stevensonian romance requires a Paterian passionately passive reader compelled onwards and pulled backwards at the

whims of agencies not firmly under the governance of an individuated, rational, emotionally restrained, secularized self, who can be revived in the encounter, staged and stylized by the author of romance, with the “aged things” that “lie near. . .the trunk and aboriginal taproot of the race” (59). Stevenson’s use of “race” here is monogenist to a degree that collapses it as a signifier of meaningful difference. In such ancestral affects, what is common to the genealogy of all the species, he suggests, is Paterian “universal pagan sentiment” (Pater 99), a mode of feeling through which one can speculatively experience a revival of the “primitive,” animistic—even animalistic—earthly embodiment.

This chapter has attended to three related features I argue are characteristic of Stevenson’s participation in Victorian pagan revivalism: his incorporations of Celticity, ecstasy, and primitivity. These contribute to Stevenson’s pagan persona, his theories of Romance composition and consumption, and his adaptation of the pagan sentiment in the way he evokes them as contributing factors to his pagan affectations and modes of stylistic mediation. As with his personal interest in his Celtic ancestry, his stylistic indulgences in Celticity serve as a mode of aesthetically oriented self-expansion. By thinking *through* Celticity, I have argued, Stevenson destabilizes the grounds for secular racial embodiment by implicitly revealing it as a kind of ethnic variant of a much older and more universal pagan sentiment. However, while he may fancy the universal pagan sentiment as a manner of feeling induced by the stylistic and formal features of the Romance genre, he was also interested in a process provoked by racialized affects associated with what we would now call the “folk horror” genre. As we will see next chapter, his work in this genre relies on the reverse effects as that of romance, namely,

the encounter with the feared and despised other which induces inward recoil and a slow traumatic process of self-dis-integration.

## Chapter 7

### **The Witch, “The Muckle Black Deil,” and “Yon Saut Wilderness o’ a World:” Secularity, Paganism, and The Eerie in “Thrawn Janet” and “The Merry Men”**

As we have seen in Stevenson’s theories of ecstatic reading, stylistically mediated reactivation of common trans-ancestral pagan affects are central to his romance aesthetics. This chapter will consider how participation in pagan revivalism informs his work in another (sub)genre: folk horror.<sup>104</sup> Such tales explore the relationship between lore and communal and individual identity and stage a conflict between insular groups who are coded as “backwards” and in the grip of the paganism that survives within their local folk lore, customs, rituals, and ways and representatives from urban “civilized” centres whose secularized sense of self and world gradually becomes overwhelmed by the “folk” they try to reform. The horror of this process is in the slow traumatization of the secularized body and the gradual dis-integration of the secularized psyche. The fear being played upon is that which is represented by Tylor’s anxiety about survivals of belief in witchcraft, and by extension the “primitive” animistic cast of mind that underly witchcraft belief, and the threat of their getting out of hand and growing into “revivals.” For Tylor, secular reform is the weapon of modern civilization to wield against these

<sup>104</sup> “Folk horror” is a subgenre of horror and a relatively recent coinage, but I believe it is useful category, not for rigid generic classification, but for focusing on common themes, tropes, and stylistic devices gaining popularity among a number of Victorian authors whose work is contemporary with the establishment of the Folklore Society and Folkloristics as a field of anthropological inquiry. Literature that aligns generically with “folk horror” perhaps can even be thought to have contributed to the interest in folklore as an academic discipline. Stevenson is part of a Scottish trio of authors, along with Walter Scott and James Hogg, who are examples of influential writers in this regard. I am by no means the first to recognize this. “Thrawn Janet” appears in folk horror anthologies such as Richard Wells’ *Damnable Tales: A Folk Horror Anthology* (2022).

outbursts of paganism that can swamp reason. In Stevenson's "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men," as I will demonstrate in what follows, the consequences of denying this common "primitive" heritage in oneself and attempting to "primitivize" an abjected pagan other in order to guarantee one's own racial purity is revealed to be the real source of inner breakdown. In these tales, Stevenson exploits Victorian fears of racialized others like the Celts who are held to be hereditarily prone to dangerous concentrations of pagan affects, and even "evil" in the case of Knox.

The historical-contextual contest that Stevenson is staging in these texts, then, is one between modes of subjective mediation of earthly embodiment: secularity and pagan revivalism. As I demonstrated last chapter, paganism for Stevenson is a manner of self-stylization, an affectation that orients the subjectivities towards earthliness in a way that cultivates self-expansion and a fluid sense of identity and internal/external relationality. In this chapter, I will specifically look at how Stevenson's contributions to Scottish folk horror "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men" are sites of this clash between secular and pagan modes of subjective mediation. I will attend specifically to the ways in which secularized subjectivity (again, recall Charles Taylor's "buffered" self) is worn thin by its own fear and loathing of the racialized pagan other. I focus on a key affect Stevenson puts in circulation in these stories: the eerie.

The eerie, as Mark Fisher defines it, is an affect depicted in and provoked by fiction that is typically considered exemplary of Freud's "uncanny." Eeriness is the feeling of radical uncertainty in the confrontation with things that do not behave or affect the way they are supposed to. Because eeriness troubles familiar and basic epistemic assumptions, its reverberations fracture subjectivity, occasioning something of a



temporary existential crisis that, similar to Freud's uncanny, opens one to an animistic ecology of unfamiliar or defamiliarized agencies. In Stevenson, the eerie occurs as that other side of Pater's pagan sentiment, where rather than being providential, the "natural forces" seem "ranged against man" (Pater 99).<sup>105</sup>

In Stevenson, the eerie functions as an affect that is the obverse of primitivist ecstasy. Pagan "primitive" ecstasy, recall, is a process that expands the experience of self by dissolving it into a fluid amalgamation of other places, things, and people—both from one's lifetime but also from one's genealogical prehistory. The eerie, as we shall see, gnashes away at the buffer of the secularized self, causing little puncture wounds that result in a slow inward seepage of the outside and the other, culminating in the disintegration of the self into what it was not and especially its abjected, racialized prehistories. The model of identity under assault here is akin to that which we saw in Arnold, a secularized racial compound with a suppressed "Cymric" base and an insecure "Saxon" superstructure.

In his use of the eerie, Stevenson affects Celticity, but in the tragic mode. Stevenson presents this process as a kind of traumatic irony where all that has been denied in the self and projected onto a racialized Other comes knocking at that Arnoldian door of racialized identity. In this, however, I do not mean to suggest that in his use of the eerie Stevenson uses that fear of the racial Other within to validate it. Broadly speaking, he exploits the anxieties and contradictions inherent to both the conservative and liberal

<sup>105</sup> Stevenson's phrase for these tales "crawlers" demonstrates Fisher's "the eerie" very well, in that what is supposed to make the skin crawl is often not an actual ghost, monster, or other clearly supernatural being. Rather, it is the sense of fear, loathing, and dread arising from the uncertainty about the agencies of antagonistic characters, things, or places which affects his characters, as we have seen with Hyde.

sides of the racial discourse in order to stimulate affects characteristic of the horror genre such as unease, the grotesque, dread, the uncanny, and what I will concern myself with, the eerie.

Following a look at a brief but exemplary scene from *Kidnapped*, I will show how “Thrawn Janet” (1881) and “The Merry Men” (1882)<sup>106</sup> dramatize the dialogic confrontation between heteroglot languages and beliefs set amidst unsettlingly affective landscapes—a struggle which resembles the Teutonic-Celtic tensions Knox saw as inherent to Scotland and Arnold to the English self. Both tales tell a story of how language, lore, and relations with atmosphere affect a self-dis-integration. A recurrent motif is the way Stevenson has speakers of English become unlike to themselves when they try to reform or convert speakers of Scots. This recalls a similar and related motif in which Stevenson stages the undoing of both secularized and/or Christian English and Lowland Scots confrontations with Celtic-coded characters and their pagan beliefs. What this dramatizes is the way in which language, community, context, and belief shapes—or in this case, deforms—character.

As with *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and several other stories, Stevenson gathers several common anxieties, assumptions, and hypocrisies and reflects these back to the Victorian British public, offering it a morbid parody of itself.<sup>107</sup> Fisher’s

<sup>106</sup> Both tales are published together in *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables* in 1887.

<sup>107</sup> This is not to say that Stevenson should be read as a Victorian anti-racist. Although he later mused that “so insecure, so much a matter of the day and hour, is the preeminence of race” (qtd. in Jolly 130), his writing interrogates that racial insecurity on its own terms, caricaturing British self-image by finding it within British visions of racialized others. This means that racialized others serve Stevenson as mirrors into which the Anglo-British gaze, perplexed and horrified, find themselves staring back. Stevenson mocks and chides this tendency but does not necessarily offer a fuller critique of the systems which give rise to it. Even in his more explicitly anti-colonial writing from Samoa, Stevenson’s leverage against colonial

theory of the eerie is of interest here because the eerie names the feeling evoked in the confrontation with the absolute otherness beyond the confines of the familiar. It occasions a crisis of confidence in “epistemic resources” of speech, faith, and reason (63). Stevenson’s use of folk horror exploits some of the same failures of these resources, and his texts evoke affects redolent of the eerie, especially in the way language, beliefs, and relationality amidst unsettling atmospheres are sources of epistemic and existential crises.

For Fisher the eerie arises “either when there is something present where there should be nothing, or there is nothing present where there should be something” (61). Fisher names these implications of the eerie the “failure of presence” and the “failure of absence” (61). The “failure” which eeriness realizes comes in two related varieties, which are inverse of each other. The first mode of the eerie, and that on which I will focus, denotes a “failure of absence:” here “the eerie has something anomalous to the unknown, but not simply the mysterious.”<sup>108</sup> This sense of the eerie must convey a sense of alterity” which requires a recourse to ways of knowing that reach beyond those ordinarily appealed to (62).<sup>109</sup> Fisher argues that “The eerie is fundamentally tied up with the questions of . . . the agency of the immaterial and the inanimate” (11). The eerie arises in

barbarity is the hypocrisy that the European and American officials are not enacting the civilization they claim to exemplify and administer.

<sup>108</sup> The second mode of the eerie (which is of less interest for my concerns, but which I will refer to later) is “the failure of presence,” exemplified in “ruins or other abandoned structures” like those of Stonehenge (62). It is again the “unknown nature of agency” that is crucial: “[W]hat we have to reckon with are the traces of a departed agent whose purposes are unknown” (62-64). Both modes of the eerie, then, evoke a sense of fundamental “unintelligibility” and “inscrutability” of that which falls beyond or outside of familiar epistemic resources (63).

<sup>109</sup> Fisher’s example here is the cry of a bird, an oft-used trope in tales of terror and suspense. The bird’s cry “is eerie if there is a feeling that there is something more in (or behind) the cry than a mere animal reflex or biological mechanism — that there is some kind of intent at work, a form of intent that we do not usually associate with a bird” (62).

moments of bracing recognition of the ambivalences of experience, perception, and knowledge, and, as such, are the moments when the buffer between the secular, ordered, rational world and a pagan, enchanted Earth is punctured, and animistic affects scuttle through. For “the eerie,” Fisher argues, arouses the awareness that “we ourselves are caught up in the rhythms, pulsations and patternings of non-human forces,” which further stirs suspicions as to whether “[t]here is no inside except as a folding of the outside” (11-12). Here, Fisher implies a dissolution of the subject/object divide, a divide which *the saecular discourse* insists upon as stable, and, in fact, claims as a requisite for belonging to “civilization” as opposed to being a “savage” or “primitive” animist. Fisher seems to acknowledge something of the assumed secularity of his own position in the way he defines the eerie in contrast to Freud’s “the uncanny.” Freud’s theory of the uncanny, Fisher argues, overlooks and underestimates the eerie, because Freudian psychoanalysis is a “secular retreat from the outside” that works “by always processing the outside through the gaps and impasses of the inside” (10). The eerie is an affect which opens the inside up to the “perspective of the outside” (10). In this respect, it is very close to the uncanny in that, for Freud, feelings of the uncanny occur during a kind of compulsive relapse to “the old animistic conception of the world” (604). However, in Freud, this animism is a narcissistic projection of subjective misapprehensions—a kind of solipsistic anthropomorphism, whereas, for Fisher, feelings of the eerie reveal animistic reversion to be a disturbing form of recognition.

This eeriness presents a challenge to secularity. For secularity, as I defined it, entails a way of being worldly defined in part by a shared sense of temporal coevalness, a sense of belonging to “civilization,” and an epistemology defined by a stable barrier

between the subjective and the objective and an individuated and racialized self. A secularized Earth is an ordered, bounded, predictable world of intelligible things that are more or less obedient to knowable laws. The eerie is a feeling of uncertainty that threatens the borders and orders of secularity, an intimation of the paganism that can revive and grip the mind during such epistemic disturbances. One of the most urgent implications of the eerie is that secular individuation of self from environment is not fully achievable, and therefore secularity is a façade that has merely denied the enchantments of paganism as opposed to having vanquished it.

Often when Stevenson deploys the eerie, it arises at such moments where atmospheric agencies overwhelm the senses and undermine secular rationalization. For instance, *Kidnapped* features a demonstrative scene that captures the eerie unsettling secularity. Alan and David cross lochs and ascend mountains while fleeing through the heather during their Highland escape. David describes the cacophonous effects of the many streams and rivers converging upon their ears in terms of the eerie with specific reference to Gaelic folklore:

The sound of an infinite number of rivers came up from all round. In this steady rain, the springs of the mountains were broken up; every glen gushed water like a cistern; every stream was in high spate, and had filled and overflowed its channel. During our night tramps, it was solemn to hear the voice of them below us in the valleys, now booming like thunder, now with an angry cry. I could well understand the story of the Water Kelpie, that demon of the streams, who is fabled to keep wailing and roaring at the ford until the coming of the doomed traveller. Alan I saw believed it, or half believed it; and when the cry of the river rose more

than unusually sharp, I was little surprised (though, of course, I would still be shocked) to see him cross himself in the manner of the catholics. (217)

The scene suggests that epistemic structures are built atop foundations upon which they do not securely rest (in this case Catholic over pagan, Protestant over Catholic). Of note in this scene is the way Alan's reaction signifies his belief that, as Fisher says of the eerie, there is "something more" behind the din of the waters, and how could he be sure that it is not the fabled Kelpie? David's response to Alan's Catholic reaction is also telling. Alan's ritual reaction to the clamor of rushing water is seen by David as a disturbing compulsion to not only rekindle memories of local lore, but to react to one superstition with another. Yet David's language is itself conflicted, in that he recalls the Kelpie and has to perform a reassuring secular explanation of it. Furthermore, he himself attributes "voice" to natural phenomena. Though David rationalizes Celtic superstition, he reassures himself that the stifling atmosphere is *not* animated by eerie agencies by borrowing credibility from his friend's discredited superstition. David's own manner of coping with the intrusive influence of the Highland landscape, therefore, is a form of denial. Both Alan's and David's initial, almost automatic responses are to attribute beings from pagan folklore to atmospheric affects. Alan's use of religious ritual (itself a "reversion" to Catholicism) and David's secular rationalizations attempt to manage the overwhelming agencies of the Highland wilderness. This scene from *Kidnapped* exemplifies Stevenson's evocation of the eerie in the romance genre. In his contributions to the folk horror genre, however, the eerie is much more disruptive and unmanageable.

The eerie in Stevenson's folk horror often results in similar experiences of disturbed relationality within the unsettling atmospheres of imposing landscapes. However, he also frequently shows two other related ways in which the eerie arises from an uncertainty about how the self relates to an *interior* landscape inhabited by agencies that are within but not seemingly of the self. This internal eeriness affects an uncertainty which provokes a process of self-dis-integration that is represented both in the unfolding of the story but also in the way that story is plotted.

First, there are the instances such as those I described in chapter five from *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* where encounters of the self with itself, either in moments of disturbing self-awareness, or, more frequently, when selves are doubled or have the likeness of their self reflected back to them in the unlikeness of an abjected other. Second, there are instances wherein language and speech become imbued with self-estranging affects. In such instances, Stevenson incorporates this disintegration in the structure of the text: *Strange Case* begins with a distanced but omniscient third-person narrator, gradually opens the narration to a number of other voices via the collation of various documents, and then ends with Henry Jekyll's personal narrative, that in turn finds a single narrator afraid to find himself dissipated into a "mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" (76). In the first case, Stevenson suggests an eeriness instigated by a belief in racialized models of the self. Under that belief, a fear of agencies at work *within* occasions a collapsing of interiority. I will look at the instances in which these internal agencies appear in Stevenson's tales as incorporations of the kind of racialized "essence" Knox denied to the pure Lowlander or the stratified components of the Arnoldian English self. As I have suggested in the two previous chapters, Arnold

seems to be Stevenson's primary target, probably because, as Young has shown, Arnold held a generally liberal position that also maintained a belief in some form of racial essentialism, and thus comes off as formulating a kind of compromise between the two poles of the debate about "race" (153). The collapsed interiority due to racialized denials appears as the horrific version of Stevenson's affectations of Celticity that fostered ecstatic self-expansion. In the second instance of the eeriness of the interior landscape, that of the eerie affectivity of language and speech, Stevenson stages similar processes in the way English speakers become undone by the eerie power of Scots. In these cases, what was charming and spellbinding in John Todd's oral style becomes a form of twisted and twisting speech, a hexing force that worms into the bodies and psyches of listeners and instigates their slow self-decomposition. In both cases, Stevenson depicts how affirmations of an identity rooted in denial of alterity of selves and others compulsively instigates the recognition of the persistent presence of unadmitted residents. This tendency to admit in denial is inherent to the structural strategy of Stevenson's narrators which dramatizes the process by which the eeriness of the secular self undergoes a gradual self-dis-integration.

***"Thir Days were a' Gane by, an' the Deil was Mercifully Restrained"***

In "Thrawn Janet," this self-dis-integration is played out in minister Murdoch Soulis' confrontations with the eerie agency of local lore and language, which gradually weakens his own commitment to a moderate, enlightened, secularized Presbyterianism. I will give a brief summary of the tale and then return to certain events and details further



down. Though the bulk of the story is recorded in the Scots of an anonymous parishioner, it opens with a framing narrator, who speaks in an elevated English suggestive of a learned folklorist who is collecting local stories for an urban audience with a taste for quaint remainders of rustic superstitions. The English framing narrator's present is approximately 1762, which makes him a contemporary of proponents of various iterations of stadial history current during the Scottish Enlightenment—the eighteenth-century precursor to the Victorian *saecular discourse's* narratives of socio-cultural (and racial) evolutionism. As I will detail later, this framing perspective is placed uneasily around the narration, which is in Scots. For, after a few paragraphs setting the scene and casting one tone over the tale, a Scots speaking parishioner is abruptly given the narrative voice. The events that take place are coloured by his perspectives and religious biases.

The story recounts minister Soulis' experiences with Janet M'Clour, who is assaulted by village women and from then on appears with her neck "thrawn" or twisted. Soulis initially assures the parish that the attack caused a stroke and that she now suffers with a "palsy" (14). Due to numerous uncanny happenings, Soulis slowly begins to question whether Janet is truly possessed by the devil or other supernatural agencies. At the climax of the story, the minister finds Janet hanging from a nail by a single thread. Janet is let from this supernatural noose and descends upon the shaken Soulis, who evokes the hand of God to strike her down. God apparently complies and turns the old woman into ashes. The story's end finds Soulis a wearied old man preaching doom, gloom, and dread—a kind of arch-(John) Knoxian Presbyterian, more radical even than his parishioners, but having earned their lasting reverence and fearful respect.

The tension between the narrative frame and the narration is observable in the way Soulis' gradual relinquishment of his own moderate beliefs are presented by the Balwearian storyteller as affirmation of the righteousness and vindication of the parishioner's persecutions of Janet as a witch. Yet, the tone of the folklorist's frame implies that the minister's reversion to pre-Enlightenment religious mania is a tragic consequence of unreformed orthodox fanaticism. The text thus incorporates layers of perspective that use the story of Janet to signify very different things.

Soulis initially confronts the eerie and attempts to secure his own beliefs by denying the power of the less enlightened others. However, the more the minister does to reassure himself and his parishioners that Janet is not a witch possessed by dark forces, the more susceptible he becomes to villagers' beliefs that she is, and thus the more he conforms to the beliefs of those he was attempting to reform. As I will show below, this has much to do with the eeriness of the interior landscape and the eeriness of the Scots language upon the English psyche. More generally, it aligns with the first type—the eeriness of a self confronting itself in an abject other. In Soulis, this is two-fold as he finds a mirror in both the persecuted Janet and in the Balweary parishioners whom he looks down upon as backwards. Soulis undergoes a similar process of admitting what he has denied as we have seen in *Jekyll, Utterson*, and *David Balfour*. Soulis' admission by denial is further reflected by the Balweary tale-teller's narration, which also confesses its guilt in a form of denial. Ultimately, the parishioners announce their guilt in their misreading of the sign of that guilt when it confronts them. For, following an attempted witch trial, Janet McClour appears "Thrawn"—her neck twisted in the manner of a hanging. She becomes like a hanged witch, and thus what they feared, and they become

the host of the devil, who, although they do not make the connection, they claim to see in the village after they attempt to murder Janet.

The eerie is embodied in Janet, but only to the minister's perspective (since the villagers "got used" to her strange appearance [414]). Forever after his final confrontation with Janet, Soulis' "eye was wild, scared, and *uncertain*," a sign that he has been affected by the eerie in ways which do not subside (410, italics added). Janet slowly becomes eerie to Soulis; in his gradual acceptance of the parish's accusations of her witchery, Soulis "reverts" to what he had been denouncing as pre-Enlightenment "superstition." But it is the lore around and about Janet that lures Soulis "backwards." In this, he is refashioned to fit a role Janet had involuntarily played.<sup>110</sup> He now confirms their faith through fear, although this time in a way that is expressed by their awe and respect, rather than the fear and loathing they felt for Janet. This is framed at the beginning of the story by the enlightenment-era folklorist narrator as something of a tragic irony that indicates the guilt of the parish. Soulis' gaze, the framing narrator tells us, seems to indicate that he glimpses the damnation Balwearians are destined to endure: when he considered "the future of the *impenitent*, it seemed as if his eye pierced through the storms of time to the terrors of eternity" (410, italics added). Soulis, then, dwells among them as an eerie (but unconscious) reminder of the ruin they have made of themselves and their creed: "the children were frightened into fits" and the "guidmen sitting at the clachan alehouse shook their heads together" when they thought of crossing his "uncanny neighborhood" (410-11).

<sup>110</sup> Reid (121) and Watson (146) have also noted the ways in which Janet and Soulis reflect each other.

As with the triangulation of pagan-Celtic lore, unenlightened religious superstition, and enlightened Protestant secularity in the scene from *Kidnapped*, “Thrawn Janet” dramatizes the struggle between religious orthodoxy, paganism, and the *saecular discourse*. Stevenson parallels this early eighteenth-century context, backloading upon it the terms of the *saecular discourse* of his own day, for as I will show later, the scapegoated Janet, in body and name, is coded Gaelic-Celt.<sup>111</sup>

The eeriness of Janet and Soulis, which causes internal crises of belief in both the minister and the parish, reflects Victorian fears of reversion to irrational, superstitious modes of thought that undermine confidence in Britain’s status as an eminently civilized modern nation. “Thrawn Janet” offers a view of an internal conflict in Presbyterianism that is energized by duelling factions each accusing the other of self-deceit. The minister believes that the parishioners are backwards and ignorant, deceiving themselves by clinging to outmoded superstitions. Likewise, the Balwearians initially believe the young Mr. Soulis to be “a self-deceiver” in his tolerant, watered-down faith (Stevenson 411).

Furthermore, throughout the text Stevenson draws attention to Scotland’s historical background. Though it is set in the wake of Covenanter suppression and “the killing times” of the 1680s and the reinstallation of the Presbyterian Church, the tale is

<sup>111</sup> Julia Reid, Steven Arata, and Matthew Ingleby have noted the ways in which the narration that introduced “Thrawn Janet” folds its historical early-to-mid eighteenth-century setting into the Victorian present. As Jenni Calder notes of his fiction more generally, Stevenson frequently “turns to the past in order to find paradigms for the present” (127). That paradigm for the folklorist narrator’s present is, as I have mentioned, the Scottish Enlightenment and its early forms of stadial history. As Julia Reid notes, the Victorian present for which the eighteenth-century paradigm serves analogously, is the evolutionist turn in anthropology. Reid argues that “Thrawn Janet” evinces an “ambivalence towards a secularizing narrative of cultural evolution,” and that the story “invokes a rationalist progressivism only to undermine it by testifying to the stubbornly persistent force of superstition” (122). However, in the folding of historical time frames and the crisis of the secular which the eerie instigates, Stevenson also implies a subtle equation between the witch persecutions of a supposedly less enlightened age, the political and religious persecutions of the Covenantors at a later age of supposed “Enlightenment,” and the various forms of racial persecution that I have argued are authorized by the Victorian *saecular discourse*.

littered with references to pre-Reformation Catholicism (the devil appears in a Catholic graveyard, for instance). Although the Balweary storyteller offers it as a tale of supernatural threats like demonic possession, living-dead revenants, and witchcraft that test the faith and proves the mettle of the minister, the subtextual conflict is between Moderates and Evangelicals, which, as I have argued, the Enlightenment era folklorist narrator subtly reappropriates as an example of the dangers of religious fundamentalism. In this, the framing narrator takes something of an apologetic tone similar to that of Tylor, who felt it necessary to evoke recurrences of belief in witchcraft as pervasive within Christianity to defend his theory of cultural evolution against detractors who would point to it as evidence of eras of cultural “degeneration.” Recall that Tylor associated the “disease” of belief in witchcraft with “barbarous” modes of thought endemic to “primitive” cultures which are revived by “the spirit of religious persecution” (1.139). Tylorian secular reformism is paralleled by Soulis’ moderate Protestant reformism and this tale ostensibly suggests a kind of relief: those days are behind, and that kind of superstition is on the wane. However, Stevenson positions Soulis as the religious counterpart of the secular Victorian reformer who disclaims the childish superstitions of the peasants and seeks rational explanations for the events and strange conditions that befall Janet.

For instance, when parishioners attempt to warn the minister that Janet is “sib to the deil,” but Soulis dismisses this as all “superstition” for “thir days were a’ gane by, and the deil was mercifully restrained” (412). In an act that exemplifies the Tylorian suspicion of rural populations being more prone to dangerous fundamentalist revivals of witchcraft, the “guidwives” disregard Soulis’ assurances, violently assault Janet, and

force her down to “the water o’ Dule, to see if she were a witch or no, soum or droun” (413). Young Mr. Soulis’ appearance as a “moderate” and a religious reformer of fundamentalist radicals, then, embodies the internal conflict within the Scottish Church which was intensifying since the reinstalment of Presbyterianism as the sole religious institution authorized by the 1707 Act of Union with England.

From the Victorian liberal secular perspective, this likely appeared as the tale of an idealistic young moderate parish minister who undergoes a tragically ironic process of religious reversion among the zealous Cameronian Presbyterians he was determined to reform (Reid 120). In fact, the climax of the story, the morbid miracle of Janet’s hanging and reanimation, is set in August 1712. This year is significant because two reforms were enacted. The “Toleration Act” and the “Patronage Act” were both passed in the spring of that year. These two acts were perceived as threatening by the more orthodox Presbyterians. The “Patronage Act” took away the power of the local kirks to choose parish ministers, and gave it to landlords, the nobility, and the Monarchy, and the “Toleration Act” gave back to Episcopalians the right to perform the Anglican liturgy (Brown 120). Told as it is in the voice of the Balweary Presbytery, “Thrawn Janet” is a story of the triumph of fiery religious fervor over lukewarm, centralizing liberal reformism. Framed by the enlightened English folklorist, it is a cautionary tale of fanaticism, dangerous religious sentiments, cruelty, and the torment of a tolerant, educated man until he becomes an isolated zealot. In other words, the narrative frame wants to read the story as a cautionary tale about the powers of survivals of “superstition” and the need for more systematic reforms and secular outreach to the half-pagan countryside.

Although the framing narrator does not express condescension overtly, as Reid has pointed out, the tone of the elevated English of the folklorist's introduction suggests a distanced, enlightened incredulity with respect to the parish, the tale itself, and the superstitions and religious sentiments expressed in the tale (137). The framing narrator highlights the "atmosphere of terror" which is attached to an old minister known for his "orthodoxy" who "was a common cause of wonder and subject of inquiry among the few strangers who were led by chance or business in that unknown, outlying country" (411). On the surface, Stevenson's folklorist promises readers insight into the religious mania and cruelty of an isolated village. His story is presented as an artifact wherein outmoded superstitions and their dangerous powers serve at once as testimony to the benefits of reform, enlightenment, and civilization's corrective influence, and it cautions against the degenerative cultural affects of rural superstition and religious orthodoxy. The folklorist's framing of the tale intends to tell it one way, but when it comes from the mouth of the Scots of the parishioners, it gets away from him. They tell a self-validating tale of Covenanter fervor holding out against the tide of enlightenment progress.

With his conflicting narrators, then, Stevenson layers the story with tragic and traumatic ironies instigated by the mode of the eerie I suggested is part of the landscape of the interior. In this case, the eerie agencies of the other that is within, the slow and traumatic realization that the deviant familiar and the intimate stranger are found to be one and the same with the self, induces a process of self-dis-integration. This is played out in the way the parish and Soulis become to themselves what they loathed in another. In the dual process of affirming their beliefs in resistance to Soulis' and in their fearful sense of the presence of the devil and of evil, the parishioners invite that devil and that

evil into their midst, and as a community they become kin to that which they feared. Furthermore, Soulis undergoes a process of transformation which moves him from being an agent of progressive social and religious change and toleration to being an object of affirmation and retrenchment of the parish superstitions and intolerance. The parishioners themselves frame this as a move from a naïve, over-educated innocence to sobering experience. Soulis is initially despised in the village for being a “moderate” (410), “fu’ o’book learning” and “nae leevin experience in religion” (411). Almost systematically over the course of the tale, these are the things that Soulis will have revoked by his experience in the Parish. Indeed, he gets better fitted to his name, or at least the anglicization of his name, soul-less, in so far as he becomes animated by the fear of the devil’s power, which to the modern reformist renders him a kind of devil or boogy man himself. Soulis thus becomes an embodiment of a zealous Presbyterianism preached by the more fanatical of the late seventeenth century Presbyterians, the Cameronians. Indeed, Soulis’ annual sermon in August on 1 Peter 5.8 finds him reciting Peter’s warning that “the devil is a roaring lion . . . seeking whom he may devour,” but ironically reflecting the Cameronians’ own leader, Richard Cameron, who was nicknamed “the Lion of the Covenant” (Moffat 355). “Thrawn Janet,” then, is in part, a story about how the eerie agency of stories and beliefs dis-integrate people and recompose them in the images of what they despised in others.

Stevenson also evokes the eerie with the use of Scots, both within the story as it acts upon minister Soulis, and upon Victorian English readers. Stevenson’s contrast between the elevated English prose that opens the story and the Scots dialect in which it is told signals the distances between characters in terms of time and history, class,



education, and culture that reflect the similarities between the Scottish Enlightenment and its own narratives of stadial history and the Victorian present. In ways reminiscent of the eerie, the use of Scots in the story, as Matthew Ingleby notes, “estranges at the same time as entrances the implied reader, who has already been interpellated” by the framing narrator’s proper English “as one of his kind: that is, civilized, educated, the kind of person that reads the *Cornhill*” (“Robert Louis Stevenson ‘Thrawn Janet’”). Stevenson allows the Scots dialect to speak for itself after being introduced, but the narrator is presented as being unselfconsciously othered by the reading public and the framing folklorist. Neither Stevenson nor *Cornhill*’s editor, Leslie Stephens, included a glossary for the text. Ingleby suggests that Stevenson deliberately draws the reader in with standard English, but in then switching to Scots for the rest of the tale, determined to “leave the reader cast adrift” in the world of the Balweary parishioners (“Robert Louis Stevenson”).<sup>112</sup>

In “Thrawn Janet,” Stevenson’s use of Scots language and Scottish history reflects a Victorian present made uncanny to itself. Here, he writes in the language of John Todd, the “lallans” that can tactically ascend to the heights of “primitive” ecstasy. However, when that language is deployed in Stevenson’s folk horror, it evokes what I am arguing is its obverse affect, the eerie. Stevenson uses pagan folklore, religious orthodoxy, and regional dialect to excite contrasting affects in his audience, namely curiosity and disgust over, as he puts it in a footnote to the collected edition, “the quaint

<sup>112</sup> Ingleby and Glaswegian Scots speaker Lucy Brown have produced an audio recording of “Thrawn Janet” which demonstrates the forceful orality of Stevenson’s tale that is not, as he points out, as immediate or effective to the silent reader. See <https://victorianeveryday.org/2019/11/08/robert-louis-stevenson-thrawn-janet-audiobook-recording>

and the grisly” (415).<sup>113</sup> In “Thrawn Janet” Scots is depicted as having a bewitching quality that makes eerie the agency of words. He demonstrates a version of what in “A Gossip on Romance” he celebrated as the way effective stylization of words can “suggest” or affect readers in ways that “torture and delight” readers, if the speaker can capture the “genius of place and moment” (“Gossip” 142). The power of the language, then, can be ecstatic or eerie in its capacity to provoke different ways of undoing the self. Stevenson demonstrates the eerie agency of Scots in how it affects readers and listeners by its aural qualities and its oral animations—the way it takes possession of ears and mouths.

For instance, English readers unfamiliar with Scots can feel its eerie agencies and perhaps appreciate how it conspired in Soulis’ undoing. At the climax when the reanimated Janet appears suddenly before an incapacitated Soulis, her effect over him is eerie, but so is the way diction and dialect of her description affects the English reader: “[T]here stood the corp of Thrawn Janet wi’ her grogram gown an’ her black mutch, wi’ the heid aye upon the shouther, an’ the girn still upon the face o’t—leevin, ye wad hae said—deid” (418). Amplifying this to highlight the oral effects, I find the quick succession of dental consonants interlaced with alternating short and long vowels cause the tongue to rattle harder off the palate, forcing the lips to stretch then pucker for the short and long vowels (“wi’ her grogram gown”—is particularly expressive and

<sup>113</sup> There is something suggestively accusatory in Stevenson’s story of a revenant witch who signifies unacknowledged guilt, and this comes across as well in his footnote indicating his own sources for these macabre happenings, which he notes are rich sources for those who take pleasure “in the quaint and the grisly” (415). This footnote itself reads as a confession and accusation, not only of the author, but also of his audience, in that Stevenson acknowledges a shared desire to be reminded of what they also want to forget. “Thrawn Janet” seems insistently reminiscent of a past that he and his readers look back upon with macabre curiosity, condescension, desire, and trepidation.

suggestive in the widening of the mouth and tensing of the tongue on “wi’ her,” followed by the puckering of the lips and the bouncing of the tongue for the hard “g’s” and rolled “r’s”). The interjected clause plays out the suspense with the longer forced-breath vowels and diphthongs and the hard dental stop at “deid.” This effect amplifies the eerie image of Janet, whose twisted body embodies what to the English reader may sound like the “twisted speech” of Scots. Familiar words like “shoulder” and “grin” catch on the teeth or clatter in the mouth as “shouther” and “girn.” Stevenson uses the dialect to return the physicality of these words to the mouth and draws attention to words that signify parts of the body made intimately strange by the deviant familiarity of Scots.

This capacity of the language is underscored in how the native speakers fixate upon Janet’s mouth and teeth and the oral and aural qualities of her speech, and the narration draws attention to itself. For instance, when Soulis has Janet renounce “the devil and his works” before the crowd “she gave a girn that fairly frichtit them that saw her, an’ they could hear her teeth play dirl thegether in her chafts” (413), English speakers, unused to Scots, end up somewhat aping Janet’s broken speech, for, after she is “thrawn”, when she tries to speak, she is said to have merely “slavered” (414) and “yam-yammered, like a powney wi’ the bit in its moo” (415). Even reading silently to oneself, an English speaker unfamiliar with Scots is compelled to imagine the operations of their mouth. Stevenson thus enlists the dialect for its power to affect and impress sensually and possess readers in their efforts to enunciate these Scots words, forcing them to mimic Janet herself. The irony of Janet’s inability to speak “like a Christian woman,” who now only “played click wi’ her teeth like a pair o’ shears,” is that in the physicality of her speech she becomes an English parody of the Scots dialect (414). This irony seems not

lost on Janet as she is lead off by the minister “scrighin and laughin” not only at the minister’s failed attempts at reforming the parish and herself, but perhaps also laughing at the readers whose own speech is possessed by the language of the story, eerily animated by a strange tongue (413).

The eeriness of the narration is paralleled both by the eeriness of Janet’s inarticulate yet powerfully affecting voice and the eeriness harbored in her body. Janet’s body is eerie in Fisher’s second sense: it appears in the story as a kind of ruin that causes a sense of eerie uncertainty about who or what is animating it and how and why it is the way it is. After the incident at the Dule, Janet—“or her likeness, nane could tell”—appears in the village “wi’ her neck thrawn, and her heid on ae side, like a body that has been hangit, and a girn on her face like an unstreakit corp” (413-14).<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, the affected subjects—in this case minister Soulis, the Balweary storyteller, and the readers—are all implicated in the transmission and embodiment of eeriness in that Janet is made eerie by their and our own accounts. For Stevenson this is explicitly a matter of guilt. Janet appears in the village the day after the “guidewives” assault her, as a sign of communal guilt: she has become like the corpse of a woman who has been hanged as a witch.<sup>115</sup> Janet, then, appears as a woman murdered by hanging and left “unstrekit” or unprepared for burial—hanged, dead, and yet to be burned. Thus, when at the climax of the story, Minister Soulis invokes God to intercede and Janet “lowed up like a brunstane [brimstone] spunk [spark] and fell in ashes to the grund,” he has finished what the

<sup>114</sup> Stevenson’s story is set before the repeal of the 1563 Witchcraft Act, which was abolished in 1735 (Brown 109).

<sup>115</sup> Though popular culture is filled with images of witches burning at the stake, in England women (and men) accused of witchcraft were hanged, while in Scotland they were hanged or otherwise strangled first, then burned (Goodare 6).

“gudewives” of the parish began (419). The trial that Janet represents, then, is the trial for Soulis to initiate himself into the parish. The young moderate minister chosen by the “laird” of the village and not the kirk, thanks to the recently passed Patronage Act, himself has become thrown in his path to enlightenment and accepted into the parish. Janet’s body is a revenant of the eerie agency of history repeating what should be past and “a’gane by,” the sign of “civilization’s” own “barbarity” that will not keep its place in time.

However, Janet does not only figure as a revenant reminder of Scottish historical guilt. Stevenson also indicates what to his contemporaries would be a racial connotation to the Balwearian’s bigotry against her. We learn that Janet has not taken communion in thirty years and had an illegitimate child with a Jacobite dragoon (which may indicate that she was the victim of rape during the suppression of Presbyterianism in the later seventeenth century). Janet’s surname M’Clour, as well as her alleged fraternization with Jacobites (frequently associated with Highland Gaels), indicates that the parishioners’ persecutions of her are, in Victorian terms, racially motivated. It has been noted that Stevenson gave names to characters and places “with a precision’s pains” (Parsons 551). McClure, and various spellings thereof, is a Gaelic clan name. In its Gaelic form, *Mac Gille Uidhir*, the name means son of “the swarthy lad.” Here Janet becomes an embodiment of the kind of “darkening” of the racialized Celtic body we saw in chapter five with Beddoe and Dawkins (“McClure,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*). Janet reflects Lowland and English associations with the Celtic Highlands and the “darker,” pre-Christian practices of the allegedly less enlightened,

indeed more endarkened, and uncivilized Celts. Janet's aforementioned Jacobite connections add a further politicized dimension of her Celtic coding.<sup>116</sup>

What Stevenson thus suggests is that the secularization of history, as opposed to being a process of progressive enlightenment and civilization, is a process of adapting old modes of persecution and oppression to new circumstances of power, authority, and control. This is further implied by Janet's association with the devil, who is also racialized as "the black man." The devil appears to Soulis in a graveyard which was "consecrated by the Papists before the blessed light shone upon the kingdom" (414). Here, Satan is a man "of a great stature, an' black as hell" (415). Stevenson refers to the racialized nature of a common belief that the devil "appeared as a black man" as well in that Soulis, being a man of learning, "heard tell o' black men, mony's the time" (415). In this, Stevenson intertwines theories of history that rely on demonization: of Celts, Catholics, Covenanters, and so-called "primitive" "races." Moreover, in having the "black man"-as-devil take possession of Janet, Stevenson is perhaps referencing the idea that the Neolithic inhabitants of Britain were Iberians or Basques, who mixed with the Celtic invaders of the Bronze age, and can allegedly still be traced in the more "primitive" of the Celtic inhabitants of Britain, and who were called the "Black Kelts" due to their darker hair, eyes, and complexion (McMahon 254). Having Janet's body become the terrain of "darkening" through which Soulis and the Balwearians fear that the devil/ "black man" might get them recalls Beddoe's racist paranoia about the increasing

<sup>116</sup> Internet searches for the name "Soulis" have lead me to "De Soules" and "Soules," which may be of Norman and/or Anglo-Saxon origins, but I could not track down a scholarly source for this, and thus must leave as an unverifiable possibility that Stevenson chose these names very blatantly to stage a struggle for the Anglo-Saxon soul against a Celtic-coded "witch."

“Nigresence” of the English. Finally, an even more direct analogy is suggested between the “thrown” necked persecuted witch (allegedly possessed by the “black man”) and the history of racially motivated hangings of people of African descent. The tipping point for Soulis is his fear that since he can no longer see “the black man” he has taken possession of Janet’s body, a racialized other within a racialized other, the body of whom is made eerie by being apparently controlled by an agency that cannot be determined. All told then, the tale of “Thrawn Janet” dramatizes the eeriness of racial, religious, and political alterity internal to British self-conception. Although the old Scottish folk belief that the devil is a “black man” was in circulation well before Victorian scientific racism emerged, I am arguing that in referencing it Stevenson purposefully entangles older forms of prejudice and hate with newer, more subtle ones.<sup>117</sup> Through “Thrawn Janet,” then, Stevenson implicates nineteenth century secular racial persecutions into larger recurrent historical patterns that see Protestant succession, Enlightenment stadialism, Whig historicism, and Victorian socio-cultural evolutionism and racial science as instantiations of a similar impulse for legitimizing the present order by reframing the past.

That the man who Soulis comes to believe is the actual devil is said to be “black as hell” captures this well. “Blackness” and “hell” appear as the substance and domain of the absolute racialized other, and, as such, are analogous to the absolute “beyond” or

<sup>117</sup> By drawing out the way Stevenson makes this parallel, I do not intend a conflation between Victorian white on white racism and white supremacist racism against people of colour—especially given the uses of supposed “Celtic” heritage by some white supremacist groups. I am not sure if Stevenson makes that conflation either. It seems to me that he is engaging racial discourse on its own terms by referencing the fears of English “darkening” I discussed in chapter five. In other instances, such as *The Beach of Falsae*, “Olalla,” and other of his “South Seas” tales, Stevenson indulges in racial stereotypes in potentially less critical ways, although in these instances as well there are similar levels of narration, doubling, and irony as I have discussed here. None of this is to say that the racialization of characters in a critical way absolves Stevenson from his participation in the circulation of racial stereotypes or Victorian racism.

“outside” which Fisher argues is the root of the epistemic and existential crisis evoked by the eerie. What Stevenson’s use of the eerie finally suggests, then, is the way that orders of earthly power require an abyss. For the Christian, it was a hell, an underworld for the lost and the damned who had transgressed, fallen away from, did not obey, or could not be reformed by the ruling centres of power and order. For the Victorian *saecular discourse*, hell is no longer an otherworld or an underworld. Rather, as Lubbock’s equations of sin and “savagery,” and Tylor’s evocations of the “swamp” of “primitive” superstition well attest, secularized hell is the “darkness” of the racialized body, which is at the margins of the civilized world and denied coevalness, bogged down in the prehistoric past. What Stevenson’s use of Celticity to evoke the eerie in his folk horror fiction suggests, then, is again the obverse of what it meant for his use of it in romance, that is, the dissipation of the borders of identity, the undoing of the self. For his romance fiction, this meant jubilant ecstasy in an experience of self-expansion, even to the point of deindividuation. For his folk horror, it means an uneasy sense of being mired in an identity that is made uncanny to itself, becoming Jekyll/Hyde-like, descending to the pit of abjection where all that is loathed and denied as Other (in order that the self can articulate itself against what it is not) dwells—an expansion of identity that folds the present into the past, the modern into the “primitive,” the secular into the pagan. This process is interrogated further and more centrally in the next tale I will discuss, “The Merry Men.”



***“It wasnae the Lord, but the Muckle, Black Deil that Made the Sea”***

Perhaps even more so than “Thrawn Janet,” “The Merry Men” evokes the eerie in relation to both the interior and the exterior landscape in ways that problematize that division and in ways that unsettle the *saecular discourse* by folding, as Fisher puts it, the outside upon the inside, but also by folding the past into the present. The story takes place around the 1750s, contemporaneous with the framing narrative of “Thrawn Janet,” and similarly features a protagonist who comes from the Enlightened world of Edinburgh to a remote village, this time in the Hebrides. Julia Reid has argued that “The Merry Men” launches a challenge against “the idea of the ‘primitive’” in its suggestion that “it is fear of human savagery—rather than savagery itself—which causes degeneration” (82). However, though like “Thrawn Janet,” the “The Merry Men” does challenge the notion of “primitivity,” it does not assume a straightforward acceptance of the *saecular discourse* in which notions of degeneration and progress are assigned to “primitivity” and “civilization,” respectively. In many ways, Stevenson challenges the idea of degeneration because it assumes a state of advancement which he suggests is a deceptive consequence of the *saecular discourse* and its unilinear model of the historical progression of the Germanic race.

As I did with “Thrawn Janet,” I will give a summary of the tale and then back up to consider it in more detail. “The Merry Men” is narrated by and centres around Charles Darnaway, the young urbane protagonist who journeys back to his uncle Gordon’s small farmstead on the isolated Isle of Aros in the Hebrides. The elder Darnaway, along with his daughter, and his Gaelic servant Rorie are the only inhabitants of the island. Charles

returns with intentions to both recover lost treasure from a sunken ship and marry his cousin Mary. Before Charles set out on his journey to Aros, he was working as research assistant to famed Scottish historian William Robertson, when he first reads of the *Espirito Santo*, a ship from the Spanish Armada which reportedly sank near the Island. The treasure of the wreck is his ticket to “bring back our house of Darnaway to its long-forgotten dignity and wealth” (330). When Charles arrives, he finds that his uncle Gordon has made significant repairs and redecorations with exotic materials. Charles surmises, correctly, that his uncle has scavenged these from a recent shipwreck. Both wrecks were caused during storms that thrust the ships into the titular “Merry Men,” titanic breakers that surge more than fifty feet into the air and toss ships against the jagged and spiraling rocks that rise like fangs at the mouth of the island (328). Charles discovers that his uncle had murdered a survivor of the *Christ-ana* who made it ashore. Gordon all the while becomes obsessed with feelings of impending damnation and divine judgement, increasingly identifying himself with the devil, the sea, and the Merry Men. The tale comes to a climax when, upon seeing the small salvage vessel of the rival treasure hunters in the harbour and the signs of an impending storm, Gordon anticipates that it will be fed to the Merry Men. The next day Charles finds one survivor, a black man, who agrees to help capture his frantic uncle in exchange for safe deliverance to the mainland. Charles sends the survivor after Gordon, who believes the man must either be a dead crewman returned for vengeance or the devil to claim his soul. During the confrontation, Gordon and the black man are swept out to sea and drowned.

In “The Merry Men,” eeriness manifests in at least three thematic topoi: environment, epistemology and belief, and relations between allegedly different “races”

(in keeping with the eighteenth-century setting, Stevenson has his narrator use the word “stock” [325]). For the first, the eerie is most directly provoked by the maritime landscape and atmosphere, specifically in the figure of the titular Merry Men, the monstrous breakers that treacherously guard part of the coast, but also in the stormy atmosphere of the island as a whole. In terms of the second, the eerie is occasioned by the confrontation between secularism, Christianity, and Gaelic pagan folklore. In relation to this triangulation, the text also deploys the eerie in the blurring between the racialized selves and others who embody the different modes of relating to the landscape, and whose engagement with each other occasions the confrontations between secularity, Christianity, and paganism. Moreover, the drama is motivated by the inner struggles of supposedly Christian (Gordon) and secularized (Charles) characters who reveal themselves to be inconstant with their own identity. This situation implicitly entails a tension between racialized bodies, centrally between Hebridean Gaels and self-superior Lowlanders (especially Charles) who fail to successfully settle into the landscape. Stevenson plays all of this out in a series of ironic, uncanny doublings: two shipwrecks, two looters and murders, two racialized others (Rorie and the marooned black man) peripheral to the two tormented Lowland Scots.

These themes I have just delineated are not actually neatly divisible from each other, and the eeriness that circulates through the text is locatable in the way they each overlap and entangle each other. That being the case, I will focus on how embodiments of racialization become sites of the eerie in the way they emerge from the interrelations between and within selves, others, and the environment. The black man, as in “Thrawn Janet,” represents a two-fold symbolic position in the story and is one site of the eerie. To

the religiously deluded uncle, he is a literal devil come up from the sea to enact retribution for the elder Darnaway's sins. Charles pities the survivor, but his "mercy," is ironically negated by his calculating exploitation of the man's vulnerability. His actions are all the more insidious in that he turns this man into both a murder weapon and a murder victim. This survivor is the final pivot in Charles' transformation into that which he loathes, pities, and fears in his uncle. Just as Gordon had murdered a survivor of *The Christ-Ana*, so too, Charles sends this man to his death, effectively eliminating both obstacles to his initial ambitions: his cousin Mary, who had insisted that she would not accept his marriage proposal or leave the island so long as her father was alive, and the last survivor of the competitor crew who were searching for the *Espirito Santo*.

The black man in this story appears on the scene as part of a loaded iconography. He is the devil to Gordon, a pitied slave, and later a murder weapon for Charles. He is also a sign that signifies the guilt concealed within both Gordon and Charles. It is Charles' treatment of the survivor, the figure to whom, as Soulis with Janet, he purports to offer salvation, which exposes how Charles enacts the "savagery" he denounces. The story is permeated by the confessional tone of Charles' narration. From the outset, Charles divulges his retrospective internal conflict, claiming to "repent" the motivations which brought him there, and immediately defending them in his denials of them. For instance, he initially claims that he has come with the noble intention of restoring "our house of Darnaway" but then claims that "if I desired riches, it was not for their own sake" but for that of "Mary Ellen" (330). As well, Charles constantly feels the need to denounce his own tendencies towards superstition: "I have said a thousand times that I am not superstitious" even though he consistently expresses such habits of mind, as for

instance when he attempts to read marks in the landscape as portents of his future (361). Furthermore, at the culminating moment of the story, when Charles, claiming to act in the interest of the salvation of both the black survivor and his unrepentant uncle, plainly states that “[i]t was on his fear of the black that I relied, for I made sure, however he might run, it would not be in the direction of the man he supposed to have returned from the dead” (366). Yet, as it happens, he tucks his own guilt under that of his uncle’s, hiding it from himself, but inadvertently confessing to it in his denial: “my uncle Gordon saw” that “the chase was driving him . . . towards the scene of his crime” (367). Charles thus is possessed by the supposed sinfulness of his deluded uncle, both projected and reflecting back upon himself, an announcement of his own guilt.

Such guilt is also an expression of the historical legacy of imperial intrusion and abuse of the Highland Gaels, which comes in the name of “improvement,” civilizational influence, and religious edification. However, Gaelic lore and Celtic-coded landscape affects an eeriness that collapses Lowland Scottish identity in upon itself. We see this in how Charles, with his mix of secular humanism and enlightenment Christianity, involuntarily gives himself over to animistic perceptions, and in how Gordon, who is otherwise an inflexibly orthodox Presbyterian, is thrown into a religious crisis when faced with Rorie’s Celtic tales and premonitions.

As the prime agent and embodiment of Celticity and Gaelic lore in the story, Rorie functions somewhat as one of Stevenson’s “Brownies.” Rorie is made to resemble a Brownie in that he is “an old servant of the Macleans” handed on from one generation to the next (328). Moreover, like one of Stevenson’s Brownies from “A Chapter on Dreams” who are kept “in the back garret” of the author’s psyche (105), Rorie sleeps in

“a closet bed” in the Darnaway farmhouse (331). Furthermore, recall that in Highland folklore, the Brownie was a “promoter of his adopted master’s interest” also valuable for “his powers of prophecy and information” (Stewart 141). Rorie’s ability to read the landscape for omens seems to be one of his chief services to Gordon, even though Charles disparages the tradition when it is performed by the Gael. We are first introduced to him as he ferries Charles across the bay to the Aros and Rorie carefully studies the water giving “strange glances and ominous nodding” (331). Rorie’s “superstitious” nature “infected” Charles “with a measure of uneasiness” (331). Furthermore, as Rorie trucks Charles across, he warns the Lowlander that “a great feesh” is “waiting for the right man,” to keep from leaving the island (331). Here again, Rorie’s omen proves to be correct, although it is unclear that it refers to Gordon or Charles.<sup>118</sup>

The eeriness of Rorie’s lore figures into Stevenson’s thematic triple contrast between paganism, Christianity, and secularism. This is integral to Charles’ disputes with his uncle, but also the nature of his enterprising opportunism which is veiled in a kind of interfamilial missionary objective. Charles is employed as an R.A. by Dr. William Robertson, a historian at Edinburgh University, who produced a foundational work of stadial historicism. Robertson is a significant absent presence in the story. As Julia Reid notes, Dr. Robertson was a “famous Enlightenment historian and Principal of Edinburgh University” (81) whose mentorship over Charles invites comparison between the

<sup>118</sup> There are several instances of Rorie’s accurate prognostications. In a powerful moment of foreshadowing, Charles recounts the tale Rorie once told him of “a piper” who was entranced by a mermaid who sung to him “on a bright midsummer’s night, so that in the morning he was found stricken and crazy, and from thenceforward, til the day he died” was known only to speak one phrase in Gaelic: “Ah, the sweet singing of the sea” (328). This anticipates both Charles’s and Gordon’s own entrancement, not by a mermaid, but by the promise of treasure from the two wrecked ships. Furthermore, the piper’s madness and unself-possessed speech prefigures that of Gordon, who is also increasingly entranced by the sea, but not its “sweet singing,” rather “the horror, the horror of the sea” (336).

instantiations of the *saecular discourse* of the Scottish Enlightenment and that of the Victorian Era.<sup>119</sup> Like Minister Soulis, Charles takes it upon himself to contest Gordon's and Rorie's "childish superstitions" (335). Gordon's response touches specifically upon the interaction between religion, secularity, and pagan folk beliefs. He rebukes Charles for assuming that his education has exhausted the mysteries of the world: "ye come frae the College! . . . Gude kens what they learn folk there . . . do ye think, man, that there's naething in a' yon saut wilderness o' a world oot wast there, wi' the sea grasses growin', an' the sea beasts fetchin', and the sun glintin' down into it, day by day?" (335-36). This passage samples but a few sentences of a longer rant which overwhelms and entrances Charles. Gordon's rebuke demonstrates the geographic distance from the urban centres of mainland Scotland, and the strangeness of these two distant worlds. Yet, in his own gradual identification with the untamed sea, Gordon does not degenerate, but rather becomes dispossessed of himself in his recognition that the things he had denied were most within him all along. In Charles' gradual inheritance of his uncle's crimes and guilt, he is also poised to repeat this tragic process of admitting what he denies.

Moreover, the scene shows religious affects to be eerie in their power to overwhelm one's agency and reason. As I suggested previously, the core of Fisher's theory of the eerie is in that this affect suspends epistemic certainty and objective perception in the unsettling suggestion of unaccounted and unexpected agencies. The suggestion of animism that plays upon Stevenson's characters is not limited to the

<sup>119</sup> Reid points out that Dr. Robertson's absent presence in the text is revealing "because his work cohered around an Enlightenment interest in superstition, and he traced the evolution of religious belief from primitive religions' basis in fear to the apparent progress of modern Christian societies towards tolerance and politeness" (81).

external world, but given the way the story indulges Victorian racial paranoia, the eerie also occurs as a reaction to the threat of unfamiliar agencies within oneself. The threat of reversion, with its inherent fear of racial others, is existential, for something that ought to be of the other is imagined as an involuntary, instinctual, hereditary component and agentic influence within the self. This aligns Robert Knox's racial determinism with the fiery predestinationism of the Scots-Calvinist theologian, John Knox.

A debate between Gordon and Rorie makes apparent the way that paganism can overwhelm Christianity from below. When the two debate about whether a local fisherman was killed by a merman or a "deil," Rorie insists that "it will hae been a merman" and an incredulous Gordon responds "Auld wives' clavers. There's nae sic things as mermen. . . . I find nae word o' mermen in the Scriptures" (337). However, Gordon is stumped when Rorie suggests, "you find nae word of Aros Roost, maybe" (337). What this scene demonstrates is the likeness between Gordon's and Charles' claims to exhaustive knowledge and the limitations of both of their epistemic frameworks. Just as Gordon rebukes Charles for believing that his urban education can comprehend the mysteries and powers of the Hebridean sea, so too does Rorie catch Gordon up for believing that the Bible is an exhaustive or fully authoritative source of knowledge. Rorie, who Charles claims is especially "greedy of superstitious lore," gradually entrances the orthodox Gordon with his bestiary of sea devils from Gaelic folklore. Gordon becomes more and more susceptible to the superstitions as he "listened with uneasy interest" (337) and eventually assented. Uneasy interest and gradual assent are tendencies both Darnaway men share, and Rorie's role in their descent into self-dissolution is ambivalent. At times he seems to counsel, while at others to confuse.



The Hebridean landscape also effects an eerie agency over the Darnaways that influences their process of interior dis-integration. The main source of this eeriness is the Merry Men. Gordon admits that the “dance” of Merry Men “comes ower me like a glamour” (359). Finally, he fully confesses, “I’m a deil, I ken’t . . . I’m wi’ the sea, I’m just like ane o’her ain Merry Men” (359). This is true both in the sense that he revels in its thrilling violence, and in the more direct sense that, like the breakers, he will take the life of those who get in his way. Gordon’s self dis-integration and subsequent dissipation amidst the landscape evinces the way the eerie agencies circulate between the psyche and the impinging atmosphere. This whole episode retrospectively throws light on Gordon’s earlier confession that “if it wasnae printit in the Bible, I wad whiles be temp’it to think it wasnae the Lord, but the muckle, black deil that made the sea” (334). Therefore, this is not so much a process of regression, but one of admission of that which is denied in order to maintain a certain fictional version of a self.

Moreover, when pressed by Charles about the sinful pleasure he takes in watching the Merry Men devour ships, Gordon confesses, “if it wasnae sin, I dinnae ken that I would care for’t,” clarifying that “it’s defiance” against his own rigid creed (359). All of this brings Gordon in line with both Knoxian and Arnoldian assertions about anarchical Celticity. Knox, recall, was blunt: the race is “evil” and needs to be driven out by fair means or foul. For Arnold, Celtic indulgence in the sensual, the superstitious, and the mysteriousness of the natural world require Teutonic discipline. These are things which Gordon has come to embody. This racialized conflict is dramatized, but not between Rorie and the Darnaways, but rather in themselves. Though Gordon came to the Hebrides to settle, cultivate the landscape, restore his Lowland stock, and intermarry with the

locals, what has occurred is not a regressive atavistic slide into “primitivity” prompted by prolonged exposure to Celticity. His confessions reveal that these traits and tendencies were not fully unconscious nor contagious infections of Celticity. Rather, they are intrinsic temptations within his own creed, which, as he says, are intensified by their denial, and which thus provoke his defiance. Presbyterian conflation of sin and desire, Stevenson seems to suggest, leads Gordon to accept himself as desiring sin. Similar to Soulis, it is the paranoia about falling prey to the devil that has driven Gordon to the devil.

Though racialized Celtic others and lore are a prominent source of the eerie in the tale, the sea-fringed landscape also causes a crisis of eeriness. Stevenson racializes that landscape, parodying certain elements of Arnoldian Celticity in the descriptions and agency of the island and its geological features. As I have shown in chapter five, Arnold makes a passing but significant reference to the Highland Gaels, claiming that the word “Gael” is related to the word “gale,” and furthermore that “Gael” and “Scot” share an etymological connection. “Gael” and “Scot,” Arnold claims “signif[y] *the violent and stormy people*” (82, italics added). Indeed, chapter four of “The Merry Men” is titled “The gale” and features the climax of the story, when Charles, Gordon, and Rorie get drunk during the storm that throws the salvage ship to the Merry Men. Stevenson demonstrates Fisher’s eeriness in the way that Charles conflates the Merry Men with those Scottish-Celtic racial stereotypes: “the noise of them seemed almost mirthful . . . even human. As when savage men have drunk away their reason, and, discarding speech, bawl together in their madness” (355). This is the obverse of the kind of ecstatic experience I discussed last chapter, a brutally ritualistic revelry in which Charles

passively participates (355).<sup>120</sup> Charles' description of the sound of the Merry Men as being like that of "savage men" who "have drunk away their reason" is telling here in the way that it evokes discourse of too much sensuality as associated with Celts but also the discourse of "savagery" which would have taken on a new meaning between the historic setting and the Victorian present of Stevenson's audience. Furthermore, Charles' descriptions of the overwhelming affectivity of the Merry Men associate their eerie agency with the "storminess" of the Gaelic people. He describes the spectacle of the Merry Men as "maddening in its levity," while "[t]hought was beaten down by the confounding uproar . . . and I found myself at times following the dance of the Merry Men as it were a tune upon a jigging instrument" (355). Stevenson thus codes the Merry Men, or rather the affects they provoke, as "Celtic." Recall that the Gaels, like all "Celts" in Arnoldian terms, are supposed to be unable to govern themselves rationally and tend to be consumed in emotional outbursts, and recall also the more general association between "jigs" and "Celtic" styled folk music. Charles' experience of the eerie agency of things and places that impose upon the secular "buffered" self, then, have an air of Celticity about them.

However, the Celticity Stevenson seemingly inscribes upon the landscape also signifies the ill-treatment of the Gaels by English and Lowland Scottish rulers throughout history. The island of Aros was the site of a particularly sinister episode that implicates Christian missionary history and efforts of internal British imperial suppression and assimilation. Historian Alistair Moffat recounts that during the early seventeenth century,

<sup>120</sup> This description also recalls Stevenson's interest in Pan in "Pan's Pipes," which I discussed in chapter three. The Merry Men, like Pan, resemble not only an attractive and repulsive force of nature, but also signify something cosmologically pervasive which is innate to the psyche and the body.

over a century prior to the events of “The Merry Men,” Clan leaders were tricked aboard a ship sent by James the First and forced into imprisonment under the guise of religious instruction. The chiefs “had been told that a minister would preach an improving sermon but, instead, they were abducted and imprisoned in the Lowlands” (312). These chiefs were ransomed on the condition that they sign an agreement to conform and to surrender their Highland territories, and to accept a number of assimilationist measures such as a prohibition on Bards and other local cultural practices and an agreement that sons of the tribes would be given a Lowland education in English. Despite these efforts, Stevenson seems to suggest, there is something ineradicable about the paganism and Celtic culture of northern Scotland. Though the Highland population is consistently depicted as prideful, but demoralized, surviving, but in decline, what seems unable to be suppressed is the local lore and language, which makes an eerie fit with the dizzying and sensually overwhelming sea-girted landscape. There is a strange permanence to the paganism in these parts, making it a kind of Tylorian survival, but more in line with those of Jefferies’ Exmoor rustics, where paganism was not dwindling, but thriving. Stevenson suggests this Gaelic folk belief is, like the Merry Men and the island itself, a kind of geological feature. Christianity and civilization come to the island with the fate of ornate, weapon bearing ships that wreck against the treacherous Hebridean coasts to be plundered by the locals to form a parodic patchwork that superficially superimposes itself over the native culture. Such ineffectively overlaid impositions are revealed as features of systems of self-denial, and, as we saw with minister Soulis, and here with Charles, self-deceit.

Thus, discourses of religious succession and primacy over paganism, discourses of secularization and cultural progress, and fears of degeneration are revealed as modes

of denial. When the Lowland Scot, taught to distinguish himself from the Highland Celt and believe he is morally, religiously, culturally, and racially superior comes to dwell in the lands of the Celt, the narratives of superiority breakdown in the assumption of paganism and “Celticity” almost by nature. This is not to say that Stevenson was saying that all Scots are inherently Celtic, but that the idea of racial delineations between Celt and Saxon, Highlander and Lowlander, are finally false impositions whose definitive traits breakdown into each other.

The insubstantiality of racial embodiment sheds light on the opening sentences of the story, which works to confess what it denies. Charles’ first act of denial is to proclaim, in the story’s opening sentence, that he is “far from being a native to these parts” and priding himself as “springing . . . from an unmixed lowland stock” (325). In his gradual replication and replacement of Gordon, Charles proves this to be false. That distance and purity he tries to will as a personal truth is dissipated in the closing distance not only between himself and his uncle, but in between the eeriness of native lore and landscape he desperately tries to keep separate from himself. Moreover, as Rorie predicted, Charles gradually takes the place of his uncle, seemingly settling there with Mary and never escaping. So too, Charles’ supposed racial purity is exposed as a kind of secular myth. Once his self-deceit is confessed and his ambitions realized in his murderous actions, he emerges to himself and to readers as impure, enacting the very malevolence and uncivilized lack of self-control Knox and Arnold attributed to the Celts. Whereas in “Thrawn Janet” the Balweary parishioners’ narrative unself-consciously announces their own sin and guilt, in “The Merry Men” Charles’ narration makes the

implication of the recording of the tale itself a direct confession of the insecurities of self-validating racism and imperialist guilt.

Stevenson's folk horror stories disturb the Victorian *saecular discourse* by suggesting that its historical patterns and instrumentalizations of racial embodiment are not only modes of power and control, but also forms of secular self-deception. These stories insist upon the non-linear nature of historical progression, and part of what makes them uncanny is the way he uses historical settings to reflect the present. The assumption that Anglo-Saxon "civilization" is teleologically progressing, for Stevenson, requires a kind of socio-cultural amnesia about the tenacity of English and Lowland Scottish othering and persecution that he saw ongoing in his own days. In all of this, then, Stevenson returns to the Scottish past as an occasion to give voice to Victorian secular anxieties and, in so doing, questions embodied racialized secularity by evoking the eeriness of the past in British history's persistently reiterated historical patterns. The racialization of "Saxons" and "Celts," Stevenson suggests, turns out to be a kind of a recent "cultural evolution" of a more familiar form of rhetorical weaponry put in service to the desire to gain, maintain, and reproduce structures of power, from centre to the margins, from the "Saxon" stronghold to the "Celtic" fringe.

In these chapters, I have looked at various ways in which Victorian racialization informs Stevenson's participation in the pagan revival. Stevenson, I have argued, contrasts the ways identity is formed, mediated, and maintained by this *saecular discourse* with those of what I have called a "pagan affectation," a self-styling of subjectivity as if it were pagan. Ultimately, this is a form of experimentation with authorial identity. I have suggested a number of ways he performs Celticity in service to

this end: as a way of collapsing Scottish identity in upon itself in *Kidnapped*, as a way of expanding the self for aesthetic ends in his letters and his theories of Romance composition and consumption, and finally as a way of traumatizing the secular self via slow incursions of internal, abjected racialized alterity.

He consistently comes back to the scenario I cited at the beginning: the feeling for racial signifiers upon the racialized body. Doctor Desprez's efforts to place Jean-Marie upon the cephalic index by diagnosing him as "Celtic" captures the ways in which Stevenson has so many of his characters size each other up looking for what makes them unlike each other and what can guarantee their own individuality, uniqueness, and quite often, superiority. He probes this as yet an adaptation of an impulse that is as old as "Britain" itself, if not older—the impulse to mark territories, claim authority, justify the incursions of centralized power upon marginalized peoples. "Race" turns out to be yet another way of marking divisions and Stevenson is interested in disintegrating those divisions by probing the secular (and Christian) pretenses upon which they are constructed. His main mode of doing this, I have argued, is to fancy paganism as a shared, transancestral way of being earthly, a manner of constructing expansive, fluid identities open to what they can become and not determined by the terms of the *saecular discourse*.

## Conclusion

Throughout this project, I have been concerned with the ways in which a new sense of paganism that incorporated ideas of animism, primitivity, and prehistory became a popular alternative mode of subjectivity from around 1860 onwards. I have suggested that although Christianity in particular, and changing conceptions of religion more broadly, played a major role in its development, pagan revivalism caught hold because of a disaffection with strengthening currents in “secular” thought. I have drawn on post-secular theory, which complicates familiar understandings of “the secular” and “secularization,” to explore the entangled nature of theological and non-theological constructions of worldliness.

My study shows how Jefferies and Stevenson, whose works I have analyzed as representative cases of pagan revivalism, affect versions of the Paterian “universal pagan sentiment” (99), which they leverage against Victorian secular worldliness. For revivalists like Jefferies and Stevenson, affectations of a prehistoric pagan sentiment are a means of participating in modes of subjectivity that affiliate with counter-secular pagan ways of being earthly. “Pagan affectations” gain appeal in contrast to secular worldliness because paganism makes room for forms of experience that are disqualified from secularity, such as enchantment, ecstasy, and de-individuation amidst an animistic ecology of internal and external agencies. However, though pagan revivalists sought counter-secular ways of being and feeling earthly, their notions of paganism were derived in part from the *saecular discourse* and thus paganism itself often appears internally fraught by a simultaneous reliance upon and a contestation of the archaeological and anthropological knowledge the *saecular discourse* authorizes.



I have shown this fraught relationship in the affectations of a form of paganism associated with the god Pan. What I called “Panoleptic paganism” appealed frequently to male authors who pursued “Panolepsy,” ecstatic possession by the goat-god, as a mode of experience and feeling which could accommodate non-normative and/or queer forms of masculinity. As I suggested was the case with Stevenson’s expressions of Panoleptic pagan masculinity, this form of paganism is unable to fully distinguish itself from secularized forms of Victorian gender normativity. Likewise, I demonstrated that for Richard Jefferies, paganism was imagined as a counter-secular mode of subjectivity similarly troubled by an inability to fully embrace the animism which he espoused. However, in the case of Jefferies, what is perhaps finally fully counter-secular is the way he engages animistic thinking in his aesthetics. In style and form, his work embodies the pagan alternative which he often seems both to desire and yet is unwilling to fully embrace. This is especially observable in the way the enduring prehistory of Wiltshire plays such an informative role in his authorial persona, which I defined as a form of pagan affectation prevalent throughout his later works.

Additionally, I have studied some of the ways in which notions of Celticity, which have been a major characteristic of ideas of British paganism from at least the nineteenth century onwards, informed the Victorian revivalist imagination. I returned to Stevenson in this regard because in his work the collision between secular ways of being worldly and pagan ways of being earthly come especially to the surface where he queries Victorian racial science and its constructions of Celticity as a deterministic racial heritage. In Stevenson Celticity is a mode of pagan affectation, but one which he thinks through rather than embraces in and of itself. He pursues a Paterian universal pagan

sentiment of which Celticity is merely a variant, and, in doing so, he recuperates some of the aesthetic values and traits Matthew Arnold denigrated as Celtic. In Stevenson's work in this respect, I emphasize how pagan revivalism is an affectation, a mode by which Stevenson imagines moderns can "fancy" themselves capable of adopting pagan modes of subjectivity.

In my use of "pagan affectation," I underscore the role of creative engagement within the self and with regards to earthly experience at the core of pagan revivalism. As such, "fancy," or a creative, playful engagement with aesthetic experience and earthly embodiment, is of central importance to the pagan revival. In this, it defies religious and secular ways of being worldly in that paganism demotes epistemologies which require a divide between the subjective and the objective and seek validation in authorizing orthodox traditions or methods. In this regard, affecting paganism is a means by which to disengage typical epistemic resources like faith and reason. Something of this playful relaxation of epistemic resources in which paganism invites readers to indulge is witnessed by Arthur Machen, who complains that modern Neo-Pagans are nothing like the barbarous prehistoric cultures they model themselves upon because they escape to a "Rosy Lubberland" of the imagination (207). Here we can see that one of the common complaints is that pagan revivalists are indulging in a kind of premature or adolescent play, which would, Machen implies, be harmless enough, if it were not so appealing.

Although I have argued that pagan revivalism takes shape frequently as an "affectation," this ought not to be taken as though it can be applied to all forms of participation in the pagan revival. Paganism has been recognized as a modern "religion," and there were many Victorian figures who had a sincere desire to develop a spiritual

system, whether constructed out of or based in the histories of “pagan” traditions made available to them. Within this vein of pagan revivalism, there are overlaps and important histories that connect paganism with queer history. There has been a small but rich body of Victorianist scholarship on this aspect of pagan revivalism, especially as it appears in the works of Vernon Lee, Michael Field, Fiona McCloud (William Sharp), and Edward Carpenter. However, there are further considerations to be made in the works of lesser studied figures like Goldsworthy Lowes Dickenson and in relation to how queer figures who participated in the pagan revival confront the *saecular discourse*.

Similarly, my study has been concerned almost exclusively with men, but paganism was also important to Victorian female authors like Mona Caird. Important work on this aspect of paganism has already been well established, for instance by Yopie Prins in *Victorian Sappho* (1999) and in T. D. Olverson’s *Women Writers and the Dark Side of Victorian Hellenism* (2010). Both these works are concerned with how Victorian writers engaged ancient Hellenic religion, myth, and literature. There are, however, many lesser studied female figures like poet and fantast May Kendall, Celtic revivalist Edith Wingate Rinder, and the popular children’s author Edith Nesbit, studies of whose work would greatly benefit a fuller comprehension of the form of native British pagan revivalism I have analysed. In my own future research, I hope to expand the contours of this project by engaging critically with the works of these authors.

An additional area of scholarly concern which I also hope to pursue in the near future is the subject of Victorian constructions of “animism” as definitive of Indigenous spirituality. Much has been written on the subject by anthropologists and historians of religion, but important work is still to be done in recovering Victorian and Edwardian

Indigenous voices that define their own spiritualities and “write back,” to use Ni’s phrase, to Victorian British anthropological translations and appropriations of Indigenous ways of relating to the Earth. In this regard, we can think of Tekahionwake (E. Pauline Johnson) and her embrace of the term “Paganism” to positively define her own sense of her community’s Mohawk spirituality in prose pieces such as “A Pagan in St. Paul’s Cathedral” (1906).<sup>121</sup>

Moreover, in relation to the history of modern Paganism or Neo-Paganism, a prevalent and valid assumption is that the movement has appropriated aspects of various Indigenous traditions. “Animism” is a worthwhile site of interest in this regard because it has often been used to universalize Indigenous epistemologies to serve modern Europeans seeking an alternative, perhaps even “secularized” spirituality, which can encourage settler self-Indigenization or “playing Indian.” However, figures like Tekahionwake and, later, Vine Deloria Jr., express dissent from the *saecular discourse* and its definitions of religion. Recovering these voices would contribute to scholarly understanding of the limits of not only secularism but post-secularism as well, since

<sup>121</sup> In “A Pagan in St. Paul’s Cathedral,” Tekahionwake triangulates the secular, the religious, and the pagan in subtle and surprising ways. She stages a confrontation between “Paganism,” Christianity, and colonialism during her visit to the titular Cathedral, where she reflects upon “The Great White Father” (the King of England), “the white man’s Great Spirit” who dwells in St. Paul’s, and the “primitive stateliness” of her own community’s “pagan religionists” (213-14). Although she hears the Cathedral “calling” her in, she answers this call by recalling her own community’s sacred rituals. For, as she kneels before the altar, she is transported back to “my own people in my own land” and the ceremonial gifting of a beloved pet “white dog” to “the Great Spirit” in thanksgiving and peace (215). In this scene, Tekahionwake not only reclaims and reverses some of the tropes which figures like Lubbock and Tylor used to characterize Indigenous spirituality, she also celebrates and defends elements of Mohawk culture which would likely have appeared as shocking confirmations of Victorian and Edwardian anthropological assumptions about Indigenous spirituality. On this essay and her references to “the White Dog” ceremony, see also *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* by Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson (165-70).

many Indigenous cultures do not make the same kinds of distinctions between “the secular” and the “religious” as Western cultures traditionally have (Stonechild 20-22), and this aspect of their ways of being and knowing was likely a key part of the appeal for early British pagan revivalists and modern Neo-pagans alike.

Finally, another potential departure for future research, which I have touched on only briefly in relation to Jefferies and Stevenson, is the nineteenth-century origins of “folk horror” as a subgenre of popular literature. The Victorian era is of special interest here because of the enthusiasm for folklore in the period, the establishment of the Folk Lore Society in 1878, and the rise of folkloristics as an academic field throughout the late nineteenth century. Many of the tropes and themes of contemporary folk horror fiction were established in the works of Victorian folklorists like Andrew Lang and James Frazer, the latter of whom is an oft-cited source for filmmakers in the first “wave” of folk horror films in the 1960s and 1970s (Scovell 22). That so many of the themes, tropes, and iconographies of nineteenth century horror fiction inspired by folklore still make compelling fuel for twenty-first century folk horror is a testament to the force and scope of Victorian ideas about rurality, paganism, time, history, and secularity. Victorian folk horror fiction and its twentieth and twenty-first century legacies are sites of scholarly interest for Victorianists, post-secularists, and cultural critics alike and serve as records of the consistencies and shifts in post-Victorian adaptations of the *saecular discourse* and the persistence of its pagan shadow.

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