

SUMMARY

Summary of Thesis submitted for Ph.D. degree

by

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on

Seeking God by Strange Ways: Cults and Societies in *fin de siècle* literature

The general consensus regarding the role of Christianity at the *fin de siècle* is that while it did not cease to exist, technological and scientific advances had eroded the faith of many educated Victorians. Here, the term “seeking” suggests a spiritual journey with the aim of attaining a true understanding of the universe, which in occult circles is called esoteric knowledge or “gnosis”. One of the purposes of this thesis is to demonstrate how “seeking God by strange ways” in *fin de siècle* literature is a spiritual rite of passage to locate God in man and involves “lifting the veil” between this world and the spiritual realm. The late nineteenth century traveller seeking God enters a “period of margin” or transitional phase between two fixed states. As liminality is characterized by transformation or a process of “becoming”, some liminal beings live outside their normal environment and raise questions concerning their self, the existing social order and “the new hedonism”.

The novels and authors featured here have been chosen to illustrate this thesis because they describe alternative religious cults and societies and spiritual rites of passage, while exploring social and cultural transitions. This exploration often brings with it abjection, marginalization and alienation. In addition to raising questions of “gender inversion”, sexual equality with notions of the “equalization of women and men” and “psychic androgyny”, the occult and mystical revival laid great stress on individual evolution and perfection. The novels chosen illustrate that the goal of the occult journey was to transcend humankind and to become superlative human beings endowed with higher and divine genius. This advancement of humanity is linked to social and political reform; new opinions with regard to sexual equality, and the condition of women, evidenced in the term “the New Woman”. The thesis also examines physical excess, the recognition of sin and “unorthodox sexuality” as expressions of occult, spiritual and mystical desire.

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**Seeking God by Strange Ways: Cults and Societies in *fin de siècle*
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INTRODUCTION

The *fin de siècle* Gnostic quest

The world must look for the final solution of the various problems concerning the nature and conduct of existence, which now - more than at any previous time - exercise the human mind. [...] Representing the triumph of free-thought [...] it represents also the triumph of religious faith, in that it sees in God the All and in All of Being; in Nature, the vehicle for the manifestation of God; and in the Soul - educated and perfected through the processes of Nature - the individualisation of God. (Maitland, 1895: xviii)

The above quotation is taken from the essay “The Hermetic System and the Significance of its Present Revival” included in Edward Maitland’s *The Virgin of the World* (1885) which was co-written with Dr Anna Kingsford. Maitland discusses the significance of the revival of mysticism, esotericism and occult science at the *fin de siècle* and finding alternative paths to God. He describes a Gnostic quest that involves the evolution of the human mind and the recognition of the divine potentiality of man and the immortality of the soul. Others had different views concerning the “mystical revival” and the *fin de siècle* Gnostic quest. In 1893 Arthur Symons published an article in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* entitled “The Decadent Movement in Literature” in which he refers to Ernest Hello’s definition of the Decadents as: “Having desire without light, curiosity without wisdom, seeking God by strange ways, by ways traced by the hands of men; offering rash incense upon the high places to an unknown God, who is the God of darkness” (Symons, 1893: 859).

The term “seeking God by strange ways” describes *fin de siècle* alternative religious groups and societies that chose to accept a spiritual view removed from Christianity and orthodox ritual. Christianity did not cease to exist in the late 1890s, but advances in science and technology had eroded the faith of many educated Victorians. In his memoirs Arthur Conan Doyle commented: “My mind fell out

continually into the various religions of the world. I could no more get into the old ones, as commonly received, than a man could get into his boy's suit" (1924; 1989: 146). Similarly when Holbrook Jackson published his retrospective study *The Eighteen Nineties* in 1913, he refused to view the *fin de siècle* as an era of degeneration, but rather one of necessary regeneration. He observes that the decadence that Max Nordau and others had claimed was the arch-villain of the period was actually a "form of soul-sickness and the only cure for the disease was mysticism" (1913; 2008: 132).

In the introduction to *The Virgin of the World*, Maitland discusses the late 1880s and observes that the revival of "Occult Science and Mystical, or Esoteric Philosophy [...] is due no less to the character of the period of its occurrence, than to the subject itself". He argues that the late Victorian period was ruled by materialism which had resulted in "the extinction of man's spiritual consciousness" that only the revival of mysticism and occult science could restore (1885: ix). He also suggests that the "mystical revival" was a reaction to orthodox religion and the simple fact that some Victorian individuals were looking for other paths to God in the hope that "the passing away of old forms of faith is wont to be the prognostic and condition of new and higher manifestations" (1885: ix-x). At the centre of these "new and higher manifestations" of faith was the belief in the "Spirit of Humanity" which "being [...] real and divine, would, in its own good time, make effectual protest against the extinction threatened" (1885: x).

Numerous *fin de siècle* cults including the spiritualists, theosophists, Rosicrucian societies, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its various offshoots embraced the concept of the higher evolved or "Divine Self" and promoted a Gnostic quest. This "will" to attain mystical knowledge and understanding, which in occult terms is referred to as "gnosis", is linked to the divine potentiality of man, as Maitland suggests:

Gnosis [...] derives all things from pure and absolute Being, itself unmanifest and unconditioned, but in the infinity of its plenitude and energy, possessing and exercising the potentiality of manifestation and conditionment, and *being*

[sic], rather than *having* [sic] life, substance, and mind, comprised in one Divine Selfhood, of which the universe is the manifestation. (Maitland, 1885: xii)

The “Divine Selfhood” is therefore the desire to go beyond human existence and to locate God in man and this is the core of my thesis. The “mystical revival” describes the need of late Victorian society to break away from orthodox religion, but at the same time to follow and worship *something* bigger than itself. The spirituality that Christianity catered for appeared to be in decline, leaving for some Victorian individuals a gaping void. Other versions of God that were compatible with modern advances and sensibilities were needed. In mystical and occult terms this could only be achieved by the acceptance of a “magnetic”, “mental”, and “psychic consciousness” that eventually led to “divine” or “absolute consciousness”. As there were many conflicts between Christianity, Darwinism and the Theory of Evolution, the “mystical revival” laid great stress on the divine potentiality of man and embraced “evolution” by using consciousness, gnosis and the powers of the mind as the means to seek God and discover the path to enlightenment. As Maitland explains:

and whereas all proceeded from this last [divine consciousness], so all return to this last, in that every entity possesses the potentiality of it. Herein lies the secret of evolution, which is no other than the expression of the tendency of things to revert, by ascension to their original condition – a tendency, and therefore an expression, which could have no being were the lowest, or material mode of consciousness to be the original and normal mode. (Maitland, 1885: xii)

An important aspect of many of the alternative cults and societies was the concept of the many planes or “spheres of existence”. It is this principle which is linked to the divinity of man, as the “law of correspondence between all planes, or spheres of existence, [is] the universal as the individual, the world as man, and man as God.” As

Maitland therefore concludes: “an earthly man [...] is a mortal God, and the heavenly God is immortal man” (1885: xiii). He suggests that those individuals who refused to accept this principle should be labelled as “subhuman” because they were unaware that the soul is immortal and therefore they were “ignorant of the meaning and potentialities of man” (1885: xiv). Maitland’s ideas amount to the separation of humans into two distinct species: the orthodox “subhuman” who is bound by tradition and convention and the Nietzschean “Overman” who is allied with occultism and mysticism. According to a high-ranking member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Moina Mathers, it is the occultist’s “object then, to become that Perfect Man” and to initiate “the Regeneration of the Race of the Planet” (Mathers, 1893; 1971: 140-141).

In this thesis, “seeking God by strange ways” is the act of undertaking a Gnostic quest to pass through the veil which separates this world, and the path to enlightenment. In Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894) Dr. Raymond discusses the concept of the veil : “there is a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision, beyond these ‘chases in Arras, dreams in a career,’ beyond them all as beyond a veil” (*The Great God Pan*: 10). Dr. Raymond explains the consequences of lifting the veil: “the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan” (*The Great God Pan*: 10). “Seeking God by strange ways” is the act of lifting the veil and ultimately a spiritual rite of passage between this world and the “real world”. Yet the veil that separates these two worlds is transitional and unknowable. It is the barrier between the material and the immaterial; it is the “liminal zone” or the “threshold.”

The *fin de siècle* can be described as a liminal period in its own right marking, as it does, the end of the nineteenth century and the start of a new era. As Sarah Gilead observes, the nineteenth century was the age of transformation:

it was perhaps inevitable that a virtual obsession with liminality should characterize Victorian literature: social critics commonly characterize the period as an “age of transition,” as a liminal period in a history of spiritual, moral, and intellectual as well as material progress. (Gilead, 1986: 186)

As the act of “seeking God by strange ways” is a rite of passage this thesis is also concerned with the concept of “liminality”. The traveller seeking God is always in the liminal zone, as she or he is between the states of departure and arrival. Victor Turner suggests that liminality is characterized by transition, which is a “process”, a “becoming”, and also implies “transformation” (1967: 93 - 94). Yet liminality is more than this. Agnes Horvath, Bjorn Thomassen and Harald Wydra provide another definition:

Liminality refers to in-between situations and conditions that are characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty regarding the continuity of tradition and future outcomes. The central idea is that such liminal conditions of uncertainty, fluidity, and malleability are situations to be studied in their own right where lived experience transforms human beings cognitively, emotionally, and morally, and therefore significantly contributes to the transmission of ideas and to the formation of structures (2009: 3-4).

Thomassen argues that during the liminal period: “the initiands live outside their normal environment and are brought to question their self and the existing social order” (2006: 322). For this reason *fin de siècle* groups and societies embraced the concept of liminality. Spiritualism, for example, situates itself in the liminal zone by “threatening to erode the boundaries between the living and the dead” (Wynne, 2002: 153). Daniel Stashower concludes that Conan Doyle “would never have countenanced Holmes as a spiritualist mouthpiece” (2001: 408). Yet Catherine Wynne argues that the detective’s return in “The Adventure of the Empty House” (1903) is a significant turning point in the Sherlock Holmes stories: “The date is 1894, and Holmes has spent this period after his supposed death-duel with Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls on, besides exploration and espionage, a spiritual mission”. Holmes’s connection with spiritualism and, more significantly, liminality is understandable, as Wynne explains:

Biographically and fictionally, Doyle traversed the topography of Gothic occultism, soul possession, and mesmerism and moved to an endorsement of spiritualism and to the preoccupation in his later years with piercing the veil between life and death. He vacillated between the real and the unreal, the natural and the spiritual and plundered science, or more specifically, empiricism to substantiate his beliefs. (Wynne, 2002: 156)

Different societies and cultures characterize and portray liminality using “a variety of symbols [...] that ritualize social and cultural transitions.” In particular liminal beings are generally “endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new situation in life” (Turner, 1969: 95). Similarly, Kelly Hurley observes that liminal beings “exist across multiple categories of being and conform cleanly to none of them” (2004: 24). She also argues that it is because of this failure to conform that liminal figures of *fin de siècle* literature “are monstrous precisely because of their liminality. To be Undead, to be simultaneously human and animal, to shift from one sexed identity to another, is to explode crucial binarisms that lie at the foundations of human identity” (2004: 25).

Hurley’s theories regarding liminality in *fin de siècle* Gothic literature are based on social anthropologist Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966). In the chapter “the Abominations of Leviticus”, Douglas concludes:

[Christian] holiness is exemplified by completeness. Holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused. [...] Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination and order. Under this head all the rules of sexual morality exemplify the holy. (2003: 54)

Hurley describes liminality as “the ruination of the human subject” and “the abhuman [...] characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other” (2004: 3-4). Thus, for others who are faced with “threshold beings”, liminality accompanies abjection and, as Julia Kristeva proposes, abjection is linked to marginalization and alienation: “what is abject [...] draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. [...] It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter’s rules of the game” (1982:2). As something that is abject is neither “subject nor object”, the “abject” is liminal (1982: 1) and as Kristeva notes: “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (1982: 4).

In the novels and short stories examined in this thesis all the protagonists undertaking a spiritual rite of passage are faced with the choice of liminality and it is women rather than men who are portrayed as liminal entities. In *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) Barbara Creed argues: “All human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (1993:1). Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894), Marie Corelli’s *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) introduce monstrous representations of femininity that are liminal and abject. The psychology is understandable to an extent when we consider that the status of women was also liminal during this period, with the beginning of the journey towards equality and the advent of terms such as “the New Woman” and “Feminism”.

Moreover, these beings are feared by men as they are the representation of the myth of the “vagina dentata” (Creed 1993: 2). Creed refers to Freud’s paper “Fetishism” (1927), but also Joseph Campbell’s *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* which suggests:

There is a motif occurring in certain primitive mythologies [...] which is known to folklore as ‘the toothed vagina’ – the vagina that castrates. And a counterpart, the other way, is the so-called ‘phallic mother,’ a motif perfectly illustrated in the long fingers and nose of the witch. (Campbell, 1976: 73)

Abjection is linked to the theory of the “uncanny.” Ernst Jentsch proposes in “On the Psychology of the Uncanny” (1906) that the word “unheimlich” (uncanny) “appears to express that someone to whom something “uncanny” happens is not quite “at home” or “at ease” in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him”. Jentsch notes: “It is an old experience that the traditional, the usual and the hereditary is dear and familiar to most people, and that they incorporate the new and the unusual with mistrust, unease and even hostility (misonism)”. For Jentsch the “uncanny” therefore represents the “new/foreign/hostile” in contrast with the “old/known/familiar” (1996: 8-9).

Importantly, Freud identified “themes of uncanniness”, the most important with regard to this study being the idea of the “double”. He refers to Otto Rank’s *Der Doppelgänger* (1914, trans. *The Double*) which suggests that a person’s ego can take the form of a double not only a twin, but also a reflection in a mirror, a person’s shadow, or even guardian spirits. In terms of this thesis, the “double” was also “originally an insurance against the extinction of the self or, [...] ‘an energetic denial of the power of death’ and it seems likely that the ‘immortal’ soul was the first double of the body” (2003: 141-142). It is understandable that from an orthodox point of view “seeking God by strange ways” is met with deep suspicion, anxiety and revulsion.

When Edward Carpenter described the *fin de siècle* as “the oncoming of a great new tide of human life over the Western World”, his ideas are similar to the occult views concerning human perfection (1916; 2003: 245). As Alex Owen recognises esoteric, mystical, spiritual and occult groups and societies “lay great stress on individual evolution and perfection, and offer an all-embracing account of individual existence in a living, meaningful universe” (2004: 34). Adepts of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn undertook a spiritual rite of passage with the aim “to patiently aspire to be more than human” or to transcend humanity and find divinity (Regardie 1989 / 2003: 135). The Adeptus Minor obligation states:

I further promise and swear that with the Divine Permission I will, from this day forward, apply myself to the Great Work – which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with

the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my Higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me. (Regardie citing the Adeptus Minor obligation 1989; 2003: 10)

Hurley notes that the “abhuman” is a contradiction: “The prefix “ab-” signals a movement away from a site or condition, and thus a loss. But a movement away from is also a movement towards – towards a site or condition as yet unspecified – and thus entails both a threat and a promise” (2004: 4). The occult journey to transcend humankind and to become superlative human beings endowed with “higher and divine” genius is an example of Nietzsche’s theories concerning the “Übermensch” or the “Overman” and relates to Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, Stoker’s Count Dracula and Corelli’s Heliobas.

“Seeking God by Strange Ways” explores alternative esoteric, spiritual, mystical and occult groups and movements of the Victorian *fin de siècle* including Rosicrucianism, spiritualism, theosophy, paganism, occultism, Luciferianism and Satanism. During this period Britain was undergoing immense social and political reform; new opinions and changes with regard to sexual equality, evidenced in the term “the New Woman”, and extraordinary technical and scientific advances. Yet in some quarters this was accompanied by an overwhelming sense of degeneration: “this nineteenth century of Christendom is held to be a creature reeling to its death presumptively in dire exhaustion” (Nordau, 1895; 2007: 2).

While some accepted Max Nordau’s views, others regarded the period as the first step towards a new, enlightened age: the twentieth century, the golden age and all it promised. In *My Days and Dreams* (1916) Edward Carpenter reflects:

It was a fascinating and enthusiastic period – preparatory, as we now see, to even greater developments in the twentieth century. The Socialist and Anarchist propaganda, the Feminist and Suffragist upheaval, the huge Trade-Union growth, the Theosophic movement, the new currents in the

Theatrical, Musical, and Artistic worlds, the torrent even of change in the Religious world – all constituted so many streams and headwaters converging, as it were, to a great river (2003: 245).

“Seeking God by Strange Ways” also aims to extend existing criticism of certain authors and their works. The first chapter “The Victorian Crisis of Faith and Mystical Revival in Context” introduces the nineteenth century “crisis of faith” and contextualizes the Victorian “mystical revival”. It presents several explanations for the establishment of esoteric, spiritual and occult groups. It also discusses the impact of scientific and technological discoveries and social, political and cultural changes on the role and status of Christianity in late-Victorian society. Chapter One also introduces the realization of the centrality of the “self”. Although this was not new to the nineteenth century, Grant Allen advocated “the new hedonism” as:

an aim for all; an aim which will make all stronger and saner, and wiser, and better. It will make each in the end more helpful to humanity. To be sound in wind and limb; to be healthy of body and mind; to be educated, to be emancipated, to be free, to be beautiful – these things are ends towards which all should strain, and by attaining which are all happier in themselves, and more useful to others. This is the central idea of the new hedonism. (1894: 381)

The subsequent chapters have been ordered to demonstrate the timeline of the various esoteric occult, spiritual and mystical groups discussed. My thesis begins with the early influences of the East and “religious orientalism”, Rosicrucianism and spiritualism leading onto paganism, occultism, Luciferianism and Satanism. The thesis introduces a mixture of popular and obscure *fin de siècle* texts and examines the role of mysticism, spiritualism and occultism in late-Victorian fiction.

Chapter Two is entitled “The Unveiling of Isis” and discusses Christianity versus Eastern mysticism and occultism in Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897) and

Clara Lanza's *Scarabaeus The Story of an African Beetle* (1892). The chapter argues that lifting the veil introduces anxieties concerning religious imperialism and religious and cultural otherness. It also introduces a theme that is recurrent throughout this thesis, namely "reverse colonization", this time specifically linked to "religious Orientalism". A major factor in this "religious Orientalism" was theosophy, as it played "a central role as a pioneer in the incorporation of Hindu-Buddhist elements into the magical-philosophical wealth of the West" (Chaves, 2008: 628).

Chapter Three is an exploration of Marie Corelli's connections with the Rosicrucian Order and Rosicrucian philosophies in the "Heliobas" novels. It discusses the advancement of humanity, particularly the condition of women, through spiritual evolution and enlightenment. This chapter also discusses Corelli's ideas concerning the divinity of man, the transcendence of humankind and the surpassing of earthly boundaries and limitations.

Chapter Four is entitled "An Isolated Phenomenon". Continuing the idea of recognition of the higher self and the divinity of man, this chapter focuses on the Nietzschean "Overman's" powers and the apotheosis of Sherlock Holmes as he becomes elevated to a higher status, as though he possesses god-like powers. It presents Holmes as a "threshold being" whose rituals of detection and beliefs concerning crime, punishment and humanity mirror the guiding principles of spiritualism.

Chapter Five is an investigation of paganism and occult Science in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894). It examines physical excess, the recognition of sin and "unorthodox sexuality" as expressions of the occult "Divine Self" and mystical desire. It argues that late Victorian Celtic revivalism, paganism and the wild and primal figure of Pan symbolize Victorian anxieties about Christian ideas of sin including sex (notably incest), homosexuality and gender inversion.

Chapter Six examines religious tensions in *Dracula* (1897). It explores ideas concerning the preservation of Western Christendom from the threat of religious Orientalism and the Count's desire to introduce occultism to a predominantly orthodox Christian Victorian society. This chapter argues that *Dracula* describes a Gnostic quest that is symbolized by the ritualistic vampiric rite of passage and discusses themes including the Nietzschean "Overman", liminality, abjection and religious mania.

The final chapter is a discussion of Marie Corelli's conceptualisation of Satan, Luciferianism, sin and evil in *Wormwood* (1890) and *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895). Here I suggest that the descent into evil is marked by egoism, degeneration, sadism and aestheticism. This chapter also refers to J. K. Huysmans's *La Bas*, trans. *The Damned*, (1891) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

"Seeking God by Strange Ways" is the "will" to undertake a Gnostic quest to attain knowledge and understanding of higher "Divine Self". The quest is a spiritual rite of passage that involves the traveller attempting to lift the veil between this world and the spiritual world. The lifting of the veil enables the recognition of the potentiality and divinity of man. As Maitland concludes:

The quest must be made within oneself. In order to *know* [sic], man must first *be* [sic]. This is to say, he must have developed in himself the consciousness of all the planes, or spheres [...] and become thereby wholly man. It is to his inmost and divine part, the spirit, that the mystery of existence appertains, since that is Pure Being, of which existence is the manifestation. (Maitland, 1885: xiv)

Fin de siècle esoteric, spiritual and occult groups shared a universal vision: in 1887, the founder of the Theosophical Society Helena Petrovna Blavatsky called it the "unveiling of Isis". Madame Blavatsky believed that beyond the veil "science, theology, every human hypothesis and conception born of imperfect knowledge [was] lost forever" (1887; 1994, vol. 1: vii). "Seeking God by Strange Ways" discusses the question proposed by Blavatsky: "Who of our modern, materialistic dwarfs and unbelieving Sadducees will dare to lift the Veil of Isis?" (1997: 122). More importantly, it debates the evolution of the occult "Perfect Man", the mystical desire to be "more than human" and orthodox fears concerning "the Regeneration of the Race of the Planet".

CHAPTER ONE: The Victorian Crisis of Faith and “Mystical Revival” in Context

In 1882 Nietzsche published his first edition of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (trans. *The Gay Science*), with a second edition appearing in 1887. It introduces one of his most prominent themes: the death of the orthodox Christian God. Nietzsche describes the mad man, who is searching for God and declares: “God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers!” (Nietzsche, 1887; 2001: 120). Nietzsche’s mad man expresses a definite “Crisis of Faith” in the late Victorian period and that the responsibility for the death of God lies at the feet of mankind. Yet, in reaction to a Christian belief that was diminishing in force, there were some Victorian individuals who chose to turn away from the scientific positivism of the period and move towards neo-mysticism, neo-paganism and other esoteric faiths.

Darwin concluded in *The Descent of Man* that religion essentially reduced man to a primeval state, inducing weakness of the self, feelings of inferiority and negative emotions, including “complete submission to an exalted and mysterious superior, a strong sense of dependence [and] fear.” In fact, Darwin likened religious devotion to “the deep love of a dog for his master” (1879; 2004: 118 – 119). Nordau, dedicated the second book of *Degeneration* (the German edition *Entartung* was first published in 1892) to a rejection of mysticism and comments that belief in mysticism is due either to a weakness of the will, or depreciation in attention and consciousness. Blind faith was one symptom of degeneracy, as Nordau suggests: “The mystic, nurtured in religion and nourished with dogma, refers his shadowy impressions to his beliefs and interprets them as revelations of the nature of the Trinity, or of the condition of existence” (1895; 2007: 60).

In *Consciousness and Society*, H. Stuart Hughes observes that the Victorian *fin de siècle* was “a period of over-ripeness, of perverse and mannered decadence – the end of an era” and he attributes the decade’s new beliefs to a “neo-romanticism or neo-mysticism” attitude (2002: 34). As Stephen Hunt observes, Christianity had dominated the West for centuries shaping politics, education and society, with terms

such as the “Christian Civilization” and “Christendom” frequently used (2003: 7). Ieuan Ellis argues that post-Darwin, Christianity faced its greatest “intellectual challenge” and that “the ‘dogmatic’ and ‘unscientific’ in religion must be swept away, and history must be seen in terms of the progress of civilization, rather than the narrow picture contained within the Bible” (1988: 49). Janet Oppenheim similarly argues: “The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was such a time, as triumphant positivism sparked an international reaction against its restrictive world view” (1985: 160).

Nineteenth-century periodicals also documented this “intellectual challenge”. Writing in the *National Review* F. Legge notes in “The Origin of Modern Occultism,” that there were more alternative esoteric spiritual societies practising in England than in any other European country, even France where Comtism had flourished, and Germany which had “produced the philosophic schools of Hegel and Schopenhauer” (1889: 10). Legge estimates that about one hundred and twenty-five different esoteric spiritual groups existed at this time in England. Oppenheim similarly notes in her study of spiritualism and psychical research, *The Other World*: “in England, it was the age of ‘Esoteric Buddhism’, of the Rosicrucian revival, of cabalists, Hermeticists, and reincarnationists” (1985: 160). Only America had experienced similar changes, with an estimated one hundred and sixty new sects established during this period. This leads Legge to observe: “For some reason that is not very immediately apparent, the Anglo-Saxon is the one among the modern races that has been fertile in the invention of new religions” (1889: 10).

Yet, for a Victorian society that was predominantly Christian, the emergence of new alternative spiritual and esoteric groups signalled a change in the way occultism was regarded, particularly as the *Holy Bible* actively denounces practices such as mediumship. For example, in 2 Kings 21:5-7, Manasseh Reigns in Judah, it is written:

And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: He

wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke *him* to anger. (edn., London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804)

The emergence of new esoteric spiritual groups throughout the 1890s along with people's increasing awareness of alternative esoteric spiritualities and occultism through the press and popular literature led to the development of a new term: the "mystical revival". Alex Owen notes that the term was coined by Edward Maitland in 1896 to mark a "distinctly 'esoteric' turn in matters religious" (2004: 20). Maitland was an English humanitarian and writer. He was also associated with Dr. Anna Kingsford, a follower of theosophy and later Esoteric Christianity. Together they published *Keys of the Creeds* (1875), *The Perfect Way: or the Finding of Christ* (1882), and founded the Hermetic Society in 1884. After her death he founded the Esoteric Christian Union in 1891.

In retrospect, Owen argues that the origins of the new groups and their esoteric teachings lay partly in the result of "an upsurge of interest in medieval and Renaissance Christian mysticism, heterodox inspirational neo-Christianity, and, most notably, a nondenominational – sometimes non-Christian – interest in "esoteric philosophy," or occultism" (2004: 4). This renewed interest in ancient philosophies was, as Oppenheim proposes, due to the fact that alternative esoteric spiritual groups were trying to recapture a former age and were formed to challenge Victorian sensibilities, especially where materialism was concerned. Spiritualists, in particular, viewed themselves as leaders in the fight against materialism, which was "widely perceived as the archvillain of the age. [...] it uprooted churches, made a mockery of morality, undermined social sanctions, and sapped the very foundations of western society and culture" (Oppenheim, 1985: 61).

While feelings regarding materialism were strong in the late nineteenth century, it cannot be the single reason for the "mystical revival". Such was the influence of the occult, new periodicals were produced and societies established to investigate and debate occult, spiritual and psychic or rather "psychical" phenomena. Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst describe the Society for Psychical Research, which was founded in 1882 by a number of Cambridge dons including Henry Sidgwick and

Frederic Myers. Known as the “Spookical Society”, it was the most ridiculed society in London and lampooned in the Gentlemen’s Clubs. In spite of its adversaries however, the Society for Psychical Research conducted many investigations into occult and spiritual phenomena in the late-Victorian era. More importantly Ledger and Luckhurst term psychical research “the exemplary marginal science of the fin de siècle” and the Society’s investigations highlight the desire of many individuals to surpass the boundaries and limitations imposed by materialistic science (2000: 269). In reality, not only was the Society for Psychical Research the precursor of modern parapsychology and, moreover, an indication of the growing interest in the occult and alternative esoteric spiritualities which characterized the 1890s, it was also an example of alternative scientific thought: one that believed that the merging of spirituality, faith and scientific reasoning could be possible.

Historically, there were several contributory factors to the rise of occult and esoteric spiritual groups in the late nineteenth century. One explanation for the surge in interest in the unexplainable was a new desire for “spirituality *à la mode*”. H. R. Haweis comments in his article “Ghosts and their Photos”, published in the *Fortnightly Review*, that the occult was definitely fashionable in late-Victorian society and observes:

planchette and seeing in crystals are now the scarcely veiled companions of many a young lady’s solitude; and the willing game, the fortune-teller or the hypnotic *séance* are considered appropriate pastimes in society, whilst the experiments are admitted generally to be “very odd” and even “uncanny”. (Haweis, 1893: 120)

While it is important to acknowledge that changes in trends contributed to the popularisation of the occult, fashion does not explain the religious or social need and desire of individuals to found and join alternative esoteric spiritual groups and societies that disregarded or refashioned orthodox Christian teachings and “traditional” forms and means of Christian worship. Nineteenth-century science was a major challenge to Christian belief.

In 1802, William Paley published *Natural Theology: Or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature*. Paley argued that “natural history” was “proof of an intelligent Creator” (1853: 292). Yet, by the mid-Victorian era, some Victorians were not prepared to accept God as an “intelligent creator” purely because of a belief in Natural Religion. In his article “A Catholic Theologian on Natural Religion”, which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, W. H. Mallock recognizes the feelings of many Victorians of the 1890s and writes: “We need more than a natural knowledge of God; we need a supernatural revelation from him. It is not enough that our reason raises us towards him: his goodness must descend and speak to us” (1890: 361).

Christianity faced one of its greatest challenges in the scientific positivism that was at the forefront of Victorian society, as Dennis R. Dean observes:

through Lyell’s work and John Herschel’s [...] Victorian England during the 1830s came face to face with what Tennyson would later call its “terrible muses”, geology and astronomy, or, more precisely, with the immensities of time and space, which wonderfully and fearfully revealed both the powers of man’s mind and the seeming insignificance of its being. (Dean, 1985: 115)

When Charles Lyell published his *Principles of Geology* between 1830 - 1833 and followed this with *Geology and Minerology* in 1836, he explored the geological processes and changes of the Earth’s surface. Lyell “argued for the uniform operation of these forces through time, hence the name uniformitarian to describe his school.” There was an increasing belief in Lyell’s principles and an acceptance of “uniformitarianism” from the 1830s onwards that contributed to the scientific positivism of the nineteenth century. Lyell’s research presented a “cyclical, self-renewing universe, accommodating but not demanding God as an explanation” (Gilmour, 1993: 120). Lyell’s ideas concerning a universe where change and adaptation were constant were also central to the arguments against evolutionary theory. As Gilmour recognises, the ruling Anglican professoriate in Oxbridge and London were agreed

“that species were fixed” and that they were “the product of individual acts of Divine Creation.” Therefore, if species could adapt into other forms of life as science proposed, then mankind ceased to be the creation of God and was merely “the inheritor of the animals” (Gilmour, 1993: 121).

Robert Chambers’s *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) is explicit in establishing this link between geology and evolutionary biology. Chambers’s study begins with the formation of the universe, astronomy and space and then moves to other subjects, including geology, palaeontology, anthropology and theology. In the section “General Considerations Respecting the Origin of the Animated Tribes”, he concludes: “In short, we see everywhere throughout the geological history, strong traces of a parallel advance of the physical conditions and the organic forms” (Chambers, 1844; 2007: 59). This leads him to suggest:

A candid consideration of all these circumstances can scarcely fail to introduce to our minds a somewhat different idea of organic creation from what has hitherto been generally entertained. That God created animated beings, as well as the terraqueous theatre of their being, is a fact so powerfully evidenced, and so universally received, that I at once take it for granted. But in the particulars of this so highly supported idea, we surely here see cause for some reconsideration. (Chambers, 1844; 2007: 60)

Chambers’s work had implications for the status of mankind. *Vestiges* suggests that human beings might not be the end of the evolutionary line and that mankind could be subject to mutability and transmutation due to the need to adapt to an ever-changing environment. This might lead to the possibility that a species higher than mankind could evolve.

Lyell, Chambers and the research into the construction of the Earth and its geology paved the way for Darwin and Darwinism. In his autobiographies Darwin claims that the voyage of the *Beagle* and the investigation of the geology of the places he visited (and his studies of Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* during the voyage) “has

been by far the most important event in my life and has determined my whole career” (Darwin, 2002b: 42). However, Darwinian evolution is non-theological in its very nature and character. Like Chambers’s theories, it was also attacked for its supposed materialism. Objections arose due to Darwin’s refusal of the idea that human development was intrinsically linked to a separate creation of an immortal soul, with Darwin acknowledging: “I do not think that the religious sentiment was ever strongly developed in me [...] to the firm conviction of the existence of God, and of the immortality of the soul” (Darwin, 2002b: 52). Darwin declared that man did not necessarily need to believe in the Christian God but did feel the need to create a religious code. He argued that there was no scientific evidence to suggest that “man was aboriginally endowed with the ennobling belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God” and recognised that different cultures worship different deities (1879; 2004: 116). Even so the unifying factor remains: that each culture, irrespective of which deity or deities are involved, desires to practise some form of religion. Hunt similarly observes that religion is “a positive and ‘functional’ way for the well-being, stability, and integration of society [...] providing a meaningful belief system for individuals” (2003: 2).

Darwin acknowledged this and commented that a sense of religion or “the belief in unseen or spiritual agencies [...] seems to be universal” (1879; 2004: 117). He recognised that this was primarily due to man’s desire to understand the nature of his existence (1879; 2004: 118). In particular, man needed to believe in immortality. In an article entitled “Ghosts and their Photos”, published in the *Fortnightly Review*, the Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis suggests “The special thing which this age requires to know is whether there is any scientific proof of a life after death for any of us” (1893: 116). Haweis’s article is insightful, as it highlights the growing trend of turning to alternative esoteric groups and societies as a means to unite science and faith. The study of the supernatural and especially immortality is key to this unification, as Haweis comments: “Suppose we should strike suddenly, unexpectedly, but decisively, in this age of abnormal discovery, upon the long-sought-for reconciliation between science and religion, and suppose ghosts should turn out to be the missing link!” (1893: 116). In particular, Haweis credits spiritualism and theosophy as two prominent “scientific” religions, as “ghosts are held to be part and parcel” of the

groups' foundations (1893: 119). Haeckel firmly believes: "The importance of ghosts [...] is quite incalculable. They prove the dead are alive [...] [and] suffice to expose the gratuitous assumption that death is "that bourne from whence no traveller returns" (1893: 120). Even Darwin was unable to relinquish belief in the continuation of life in some form after death:

The sun with all the planets will in time grow too cold for life, unless some great body dashes into the sun and thus gives it fresh life. Believing as I do that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress. To those who fully admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful. (Darwin, 1892; 1958: 65)

However, Darwinian evolutionary theory did not allow for the existence of God and this ultimately led to a feeling that mankind had been disinherited. The poet A. E. Housman captured this thought in a lecture that he gave in 1892, suggesting that the Theory of Evolution was like being "in the position of one who has been reared from his cradle as the child of a noble race and the heir to great possessions, and who finds at his coming of age that he has been deceived alike as to his origin and his expectations" (Housman, 1892; 1989: 272).

If geology and evolutionary theory were key factors in the Victorian "Crisis of Faith" then so were the advances made in the field of astronomy. Jacob Korg suggests that "astronomy gradually but persistently dismantled the mythopoetic approach to the heavens, reducing all such ideas to the status of mere intellectual toys." Astronomy reached a new level with Sir William Herschel's investigations of space beyond the solar system which he proposed to be "no more than an infinitesimal part of a vast sidereal universe." According to Korg, "these findings, much more revolutionary and disturbing than any that had gone before, confronted the Victorian imagination with serious cosmological and spiritual dilemmas" (Korg, 1985:

138). In a paper written for the Royal Society in 1811 Herschel offered evidence that nebulae could transform into stars, thus demonstrating a process of continuous change and development in the universe. The heavens were no longer a fixed, stable entity, but were constantly *evolving*. For some Victorians this led to a sense of the displacement of man, as Korg concludes: "Herschel's thrusts into unthinkable depths of space and time had reduced man to an unimportant accident in the vastness of an indifferent cosmos" (Korg, 1985: 139).

The final contributory factor to the diminishing Christian force was the debate between those who supported the theory of "matter" and particles (atoms) and those who contrastingly saw the elevated position of matter as an attack on the idea of the "spirit". In 1874 John Tyndall presented the Belfast Address before the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Using his address to argue for scientific authority over religious belief, he recognised in the conclusion to his address that he had "touched on debatable questions and led you [his audience] over what will be deemed dangerous ground" (Tyndall, 1874: 63). The address was "deemed dangerous ground" for two reasons. First, Tyndall called for rationalism, scepticism and materialism to be at the core of scientific positivism and investigation. The address was an obvious attack on religion, as Tyndall observes:

Now, as science demands the radical extirpation of caprice and the absolute reliance upon law in nature, there grew with the growth of scientific notions a desire and determination to sweep from the field of theory this mob of gods and demons, and to place natural phenomena on a basis more congruent with themselves. (Tyndall, 1874: 2)

His opposition to religion was based on his research into matter. During the address, Tyndall argued for the elevated status of matter, suggesting that all forms of life were developed out of it. He comments: "Matter is not the mere naked, empty capacity which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb" (Tyndall, 1874: 20).

For this reason, esoteric spiritual and occult groups realised that they had to endeavour to embrace science if they were to appeal to the public's imagination. Oppenheim notes that advances in science and new scientific theories "gave ever greater authority to naturalistic interpretations of the universe and reduced the credibility of the Christian saga of man's fall and redemption" (1985: 60). It was necessary for alternative esoteric spiritualities such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which popularised the attraction of merging science and religion, not only to embrace science but also to attempt to demonstrate its boundaries and limitations. Spiritualists recognised the necessity to "synthesize modern scientific knowledge and time-honoured religious traditions concerning man, God and the universe" (Oppenheim, 1985: 59). The Rosicrucians and the Theosophists similarly attempted to apply science to religious thought, but at the same time endeavoured to demonstrate that their scientific knowledge surpassed the boundaries and limitations of Victorian materialistic scientific knowledge. Oppenheim suggests that many Victorian occultists actually "resented the confidence and certainty with which science reduced nature's majesty to measurable quantities" (1985: 160). Moreover, both the Rosicrucians and the Theosophical Society "characterized modern science by its fanatical thirst for measurement, and its neglect of all knowledge that was not quantifiable" (Oppenheim 1985: 161).

Darwin stated at the time of the voyage of the *Beagle*, that he was an orthodox Christian. However, belief in Christianity changed during the period 1836 – 1839, when he began to distrust the validity of the Old Testament and remarked: "I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation" (1892; 1958: 62). In part, this problem was linked to the rise of biblical scholarship, in particular German "Higher Criticism" in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose of this kind of biblical research was to examine surviving records using, wherever possible, scientific analysis and historical enquiry. The German "lower criticism" was concerned with the original form of the text, whereas the "Higher Criticism" sought to examine the Bible in greater detail. It examined questions concerning the authenticity and accuracy of biblical texts, including sources of evidence, possible influences, authorship, dates, interpretations and literary form. "Higher Criticism" even used the term "Myth" to describe biblical narratives and "stories which were records not so much of actual

happenings as of the religious consciousness of pre-scientific people, symbolic narratives which expressed their spiritual conceptions of the universe” (Gilmour, 1993: 55).

David Friedrich Strauss used the term “Myth” extensively in *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), which was first translated into English by George Eliot in 1846. As Gilmour suggests:

Strauss’s life of Jesus was the first to draw upon the work of German scholars; accepting their view of miracles and of the unreliability of the gospel narratives, he pressed on to uncover the historical Jesus. This Jesus was entirely human, a great prophet and teacher around whose life and death Messianic hopes had gathered. The fact that these hopes were illusory did not, to Strauss, invalidate Christianity, for the ethical teachings remained as well as the profound symbolic truth about human destiny expressed in Christ’s life and death. (Gilmour, 1993: 55).

A major source of the discontent was the book of Genesis, which was beginning to be questioned in scientific circles. Then, Thomas Huxley similarly suggested the unreliability of the New Testament:

There is no proof, nothing more than a fair presumption, that any one of the gospels existed, in the state in which we find it in the authorised version of the Bible, before the second century, or, in other words, sixty or seventy years after the events recorded. And, between that time [...] there is no telling what additions and alterations have been made. (1889: 175)

A diminishing Christian force is not only explainable by scientific positivism and the rise in biblical scholarship. The origins of the “Crisis of Faith” can be traced back to Victorian religious reform, denominational power struggles and rejection. In 1851 a Population Census was taken on 30th March. Along with this census, two others were taken for the first time: the Educational Census and what became known as the Religious Census (its official title was “Accommodation and Attendance at Worship”). The figures are not definitive, as the census was an additional data record carried out in conjunction with the main census. However, it still provides a good insight into the diversity of religious denominations during the early part of the nineteenth century. According to the 1851 Religious Census, fifty one percent of the British population was Anglican and between thirty and forty percent was Non-conformist. In comparison, the number of people attending Roman Catholic services was much lower. Only four percent of people attending religious services were recorded as Roman Catholic. This number, in spite of a slight increase during the second half of the nineteenth century, remained extremely low at just five percent (McLeod, 1996: 11 – 12).

Gilmour suggests that this “ culture of Nonconformity, shaped as it was by long experience of slight and exclusion, is of the greatest importance to understanding nineteenth-century religion” (Gilmour, 1993: 70). A lack of unity in one religious faith through its varying denominations means that the religion in question would not satisfy the needs of its followers and must be modified to suit individual sections of society, groups or specific individuals. According to W. E. Gale this “must inevitably reinforce the evidence that the very foundations of those religions and their associated “gods” are based on false assumptions” and as Gale also observes “if more than one rendering of “truth” is claimed to survive, then it is probable that real truth is absent entirely” (1988: 12). There were many Christian groups and offshoots in Victorian Britain and it was the diversity of these Christian denominations which ultimately failed to unite the British public. As Hugh McLeod suggests, the majority of the population was either Anglican and attended Church, or Non-conformist, also known as Dissenters. The Non-conformists could be further broken down into smaller individual groups and societies. A small number included groups and movements such as the Wesleyan Methodists, the Independents (or Congregationalists), the Baptists, the

Unitarians, the Quakers, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, Moravians, Swedenborgians, the Covenanters, the Plymouth Brethren, the Presbyterians, the Catholic Apostolic Church and the Puritans (McLeod, 1996: 11 – 12).

While the disunity of the many Anglican denominations might have contributed to the ever-diminishing Christian force in Victorian society, Gilmour suggests that even “by the 1840s [...] what was at issue was no longer the validity of the Anglican orders, but for an increasing number of thinking people the validity of Christianity itself” (Gilmour, 1993: 86). The legitimacy and status of the Anglican Church and Protestantism also became an important factor and argument in the crisis of the Church and Christianity in relation to the Church's involvement in issues of the State. In an article for the *Nineteenth Century*, Charles Lindley Wood, the second Viscount Halifax, who was a leading figure in the promotion of Catholicism and the adoption of Catholic rites in the Church of England, observed that in addition to denouncing the practices and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church “the Church of England has no history, no principles, no rules, no traditions, except those which date from the sixteenth century”. Halifax argues that losing the long tradition of Roman Catholicism and redefining key doctrines had irreversible effects on religion in Britain. There was a sense of loss of history, tradition, continuity and purpose. In addition, Halifax observed, “the character of this brand new establishment was determined by parliament” (Halifax, 1899: 176).

The fact that the Church influenced the Victorian social structure meant that its position in society was unique as it had a spiritual, institutional and political body. The merging of spirituality and politics put Christianity in an awkward position. The Victorian consensus was that the State could never maintain the same Christian ideals and function according to the same Christian doctrine which it imposed upon the Victorian individual. William Connor Magee, who was the Bishop of Peterborough from 1868 until 1891 produced an article for the *Fortnightly Review* in 1890 in which he comments:

the State is bound – first: to preserve its own existence; and secondly: to resist, restrain, and [...] destroy whatever and whomsoever assails its authority or attacks the interests

committed to its charge. Self-preservation, therefore, and the preservation of all that is entrusted to it are the *moral* obligations of every state. (Magee, 1890: 35)

Magee's article, "The State and the Sermon on the Mount" essentially suggests that the State is unable to function according to Christian law, as it would be weakened and left vulnerable financially and politically and thus open to abuse. He further argues that since it is impossible for the State to obey the fundamental Christian precepts as described in the Sermon on the Mount, it is also impossible for Victorian individuals to live their lives according to such impossible standards and morally wrong to expect them to do this (Magee, 1890: 33). It was unfair that the State was able to ignore fundamental Christian principles in the name of self-preservation and at the same time enforce such standards on all aspects of Victorian society. This had major consequences for the argument for disestablishment. The first was that the Church's role in society had to be reassessed and both the Church and the State had to remain separate. Magee concludes: "The Church cannot become the State; the State cannot become the Church. These words stand for two wholly distinct and different societies; having different aims, different laws, and different methods of government" (1880: 42).

With the Church losing its authority over the State, the influence of Christianity began to decline. In comparison to the figures of the 1851 Religious Census, the 1890s witnessed a significant decrease in the number of people attending all forms of Christian worship, Church or Chapel. There had been a gradual decline in numbers of both Anglican and Non-conformist service attendance from 1851 onwards. This had dramatically increased in the later 1880s and continued in this way until the outbreak of the First World War. The 1890s, although much more liberal in terms of alternative religions, was a period of great doubt for Christianity, with terms such as atheism and agnosticism used much more frequently than in previous decades. The lineage of Christianity was also questioned, most notably in an article written by Grant Allen entitled "Immortality and Resurrection", which was published in the *Fortnightly Review*. Allen argues that Christianity, with its Judaic roots, endorsed outmoded concepts which prohibited progress and resulted in repression:

[Christianity] brought with it into Europe various ideas properly belonging to a lower and Asiatic stage of culture. [...] It brought with it the hateful notions of asceticism and repression, in place of the graceful and artistic Greek ideals of happiness, beauty and equal development, by means of these false notions it has retarded the progress of the world for at least half-a-dozen centuries; and it is still doing its best to retard the progress of the world in the future. But the forces which tend towards civilisation are growing at last too strong for it, and reason and common-sense are beginning to overthrow the domination of the ascetic oriental creed of unwholesome restraint and unnatural repression. (Allen, 1893: 328)

There is another, more controversial argument that is evident in reading Allen's article. There is a strong undertone of the Victorian anti-semitic feeling that is also connected to Christianity's loss of favour in the late nineteenth century. Anti-semitism was prevalent in Victorian society. *Punch* even endeavoured to promote anti-semitism and make it fashionable. A notorious illustration is "The Other View of the Picture" (*Punch*, June 19, 1875). Christianity retained many aspects of Judaism, primarily because Christians believed that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah whose coming the Jewish scriptures had foretold. The close relationship between Christianity and Judaism was problematic for some anti-semitic Victorians as Christianity was tightly structured around fundamental Jewish doctrines, teachings and practices. Allen, for example, criticizes "the ugly practice of burial, in place of the sane and wholesome practice of cremation. It [Christianity] brought with it the vulgar Jewish conception of Resurrection, in place of the elevated though erroneous Platonic idea of Immortality" (1893: 328). Gale concludes that Christianity's retention of the "old God" of Judaism in the Old Testament clashed with the new doctrines of the New Testament. For the intellectual Victorian, "It made the theology even more difficult to

comprehend by introducing the divinity of Jesus Christ and [...] the concept of the Holy Ghost” (Gale, 1988: 14).

Although scientific positivism and new scientific-historical techniques of studying the Bible were challenging the authority of Christianity in Victorian society, they were not entirely responsible for the diminishing Christian force. Gilmour argues:

It has become increasingly clear that [...] objections to Christianity were overwhelmingly moral rather than scientific, objections to certain key doctrines of evangelical religion in which some had been reared but all had experienced in the religious culture of the time. The Atonement, chiefly, hell, everlasting punishment, original sin – a God who required the obedience of his creatures on those terms was a God who did not deserve worshipping. (Gilmour, 1993: 87)

For this reason, arguments for universalism, a belief held by some individual including Tennyson, sought to tackle this issue of Hell and eternal punishment. Jonathan L. Kvanvig suggests that “the affirmation of universalism” is to do with the need to solve the moral problem of Hell” (Kvanvig, 2011: 44). The following passage taken from Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) certainly suggests that all of mankind will ultimately be saved according to the belief in universal salvation:

How could I endure to think that that poor trembling soul was hurried away to everlasting torment? It would drive me mad! But thank God I have hope – not only from a vague dependence on the possibility that patience and pardon might have reached him at the last, but from the blessed confidence that, through whatever purging fires the erring spirit may be doomed to pass – whatever fate awaits it, still, it is not lost, and God, who hateth nothing that he hath made, will bless it in the end! (Brontë, 1848; 1859: 339).

In *The Brontës and Religion*, Marianne Thormählen observes: “Scholarly comments on [...] passages from the novels and letters of the eldest and youngest Brontë sister usually summarise the belief they express as ‘Universalism, or universal salvation’” (Thormählen, 2004: 86). Charlotte and Anne believed that “even the vilest sinner will eventually, by God’s grace, be purified and made fit for Heaven” (Thormählen, 2004: 88). According to Kvanvig, belief in universalism conflicts with the existence of Hell, as “all will in the end be saved, according to universalism, and once we accept their viewpoint, universalists maintain, the problem of Hell disappears” (Kvanvig, 2011: 42).

John Stuart Mill addressed the place of religion in social and individual life in three essays including “The Utility of Religion” which tackled the usefulness of religion in terms of social and political contexts, and “Nature” and “Theism” which aimed to address ideas concerning the truth of religion. In Mill’s second essay “The Utility of Religion”, written in the period between 1850 and 1858, he raised several arguments, including the role religion plays in society, how it affects the individual and what benefits or influence it has in terms of improving society and the individual’s human nature (1874: 77). According to Alan Ryan, the two main aims of this essay were “to explain the hold of religious belief, and thus to explain why so many nineteenth-century thinkers felt anxious at the prospect of secularisation; the second was to ask what real good traditional religions have done either for society or for individuals, and whether a non-supernatural creed might do as much” (Ryan, 1974: 237). In order to answer these questions, Mill determined it was essential to differentiate between what we understand by the word “religion” and the concept of acquired human morality. Mill suggests:

Since almost all who are taught any morality whatever, have it taught to them as religion, and inculcated in them through life principally in that character; the effect which the teaching produces as teaching, it is supposed to produce as religious teaching, and religion receives the credit of all the influence in human affairs which belongs to any generally accepted system of rules for the guidance and government of human life. (Mill, 1874: 77 - 78)

Mill therefore concludes that this concept of religion, which is in fact a gradually acquired code of morality presented to us from an early age in the guise of a religious doctrine, is perpetuated and taught by “early education”, “authority” and also “public opinion” (1874: 84). He does recognise that the teachings of Christ are, naturally, teachings of morality and “carry some goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before, though much even of what is supposed to be peculiar to them is equalled in the Meditations of Marcus Antonius, which we have no ground for believing to have been in any way indebted to Christianity.” Mill calls this “ascribing a supernatural origin to the received maxims of morality” (1874: 98 - 99). He also recognises the inherent dangers of this:

If among the moral doctrines received as a part of religion, there be any which are imperfect – which were either erroneous from the first, or not properly limited and guarded in the expression, or which, unexceptionable once, are no longer suited to the changes that have taken place in human relations (and it is my firm belief that in so-called christian [sic] morality, instances of all these kinds are to be found) these doctrines are considered equally binding on the conscience with the noblest, most permanent and most universal precepts of Christ. (Mill, 1874: 98 - 99)

The Victorian “Crisis of Faith” also led to the development of agnosticism. Victorian agnosticism appealed to certain individuals who did not want to commit to atheism. For some, it was the middle ground between Christian belief and denial, as it claims only not to know. The term agnosticism was coined in 1869 by T. H. Huxley to avoid committing himself to a specific viewpoint in terms of faith. Huxley describes the etymology of agnosticism in an article published twenty years later in the *Nineteenth Century*:

When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist, or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; a Christian or a freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready was the answer; until, at last, I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last. The one thing in which most of these good people agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure they had attained a certain 'gnosis'. (Huxley, 1889: 183)

Huxley further comments that this "gnosis" was a definitive sense of purpose, belonging and existence. To him existence could not be explained; it was an insoluble question and the term agnostic "came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the 'gnostic' of Church history" (1889: 183). Huxley proposed that the existence of God would not be scientifically proven but at the same time there was no concrete logical evidence to disprove the theory of a deity. In actuality, Agnosticism laid down the foundations for several alternative religions which attempted to combine religious belief with scientific study. To illustrate this point, Huxley comments in his essay "Agnosticism and Christianity":

Agnosticism is not properly described as a "negative" creed, nor indeed as a creed of any kind, except in so far as it expresses absolute faith in the validity of a principle, which is as much ethical as intellectual. This principle may be stated in various ways, but they all amount to this: that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty. (Huxley, 1889; 2005: 310)

In 1879 a German student wrote to Darwin. Unable to answer the student's letter in person, Darwin asked a family member to write on his behalf and the reply

simply stated: “He considers that the theory of Evolution is quite compatible with the belief in a God; but that you must remember that different persons have different definitions of what they mean by God” (Darwin, 1892; 1958: 61). Darwin had essentially identified the fundamental issues and the void which esoteric spiritual groups could fill: it was impossible to deny the theory of evolution, but it was also extremely difficult for the individual to abandon a sense of religious faith. It was not necessarily the issue of abandoning the Christian God and an Orthodox Christian image of the divine, but rather a religious code. Darwin had recognised that man needed religion for psychological, moral and emotional stability. For this reason and in spite of his own theories and discoveries, Darwin even acknowledged: “I was very unwilling to give up my belief” (Darwin, 1892; 1958: 62).

This idea of personalized religion is approached in an article examining the Theosophical society entitled “The Origin of Modern Occultism” for the *National Review* in 1889. The author F. Legge suggests that the Theosophical Society’s central belief is: “Religion is most strictly a personal affair; every man makes his own religion and his own god” (Colonel Olcott cited by Legge, 1889: 20; Colonel Henry Steel Olcott was co-founder and first president of the Theosophical Society in 1875). The *Fortnightly Review* of September 1897 features a poem entitled “The Unknown God” in which the author William Watson speaks of a God that is personal to him, not the anthropomorphic God of the scriptures or the fashioned image of God according to the Church, but a God who is indefinite and has no need of orthodox worship: “The God I know of, I shall ne’er Know, though he dwells exceeding high / *Raise thou the stone and find me there, Cleave the wood and there am I / Yea, in my flesh his spirit doth flow, Too near, too far, for me to know*” (Watson, 1897: 322).

The “unknown God” or rather the personalized God became important to alternative esoteric spiritual and occult societies, as the deity could be made compatible with modern materialistic science. Divinity could be refashioned into a new image, one that was compatible with changing views regarding gender roles and sexuality. As the Victorian era was a period of enormous social and political change, the idea of a personalized deity and self-fashioned creed rather than the biblical God who had designed a universe that was *for* man rather than one that had been engineered *by* man appealed to the Victorian idea of human effort, progress and

achievement. In *Evidences Against Christianity* (Volume II), John S. Hittell argues that these advances were not a result of an anthropomorphic Christian deity:

The Bible indirectly asserts or is said to assert the existence of an anthropomorphic deity called Jehova, who is personal, conscious, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, self-existent, and independent of all other existence – who has or is a mind with thoughts and feelings similar to those of mankind – who created the material universe out of nothing by an act of his volition, and who now governs it by his will. [...] I deny the existence of such an anthropomorphism, and shall endeavour to show that the belief in it is contradicted by many well-known principles of philosophy and science, and that its alleged evidences are mere assumptions. (Hittell, 1857: 198)

Yet, without God, who or what will be at the centre of the universe? The answer is the promotion of man, or the move from an anthropomorphic deity to the “sovereignty of man” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002:1). Corey argues this is a direct result of Darwinism and the theory of evolution (1994: 366). Moreover it is a link to Herbert Spencer, who coined the term “the survival of the fittest.” The phrase was used to describe the survival of individual variants within species. Spencer’s theories thus came to be termed “social Darwinism”, with the idea that “if left to compete among themselves, the most intelligent, ambitious and productive people will inevitably win out” (Macionis and Plummer, 2008: 30). What Darwin’s and Spencer’s evolutionist theories suggest is that “we and all the other forms of life on this planet are [...] the structural “center” of the universe, insofar as the entire universe possesses the same underlying structural values that have enabled life to evolve on this planet” (Corey 1994: 366). Corey observes that depending upon the individual, the anthropocentric view is that “humans are the source of importance in the universe, though not necessarily the only source of importance” (1994: 365). K.L. Kalla suggests that anthropocentrism results in the divinity of man in contrast to the Bible

which states that man is a mere mortal (1989: 45). “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?” (Job 4: 17). The move away from an anthropomorphic deity to anthropocentrism suggesting that man undergoes some kind of metamorphosis was central to the development of occultism in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In “Occultism and the ‘Modern’ Self in the *Fin-de-siècle*” Owen argues that this metamorphosis is due to a new understanding of the meaning of the “self”: “The Golden Dawn taught its senior Adepts how to achieve what the Order called knowledge of or ‘conversation’ with the Higher Self, and underlined the importance of a complete awareness of the implications of self as a prelude to approaching not only ‘the God within’ but divinity itself” (2001: 77 - 78). For esoteric groups such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn an understanding of the higher self and, more importantly, discarding limitations previously imposed by orthodox religion led to a mental and spiritual enlightenment. Victorian occultism and spiritualism promoted human advancement and progress. In *fin de siècle* literature such spiritual evolution and connection with the higher spiritual self is also marked by a physical differentiation or even transformation and the ability to metamorphose. In addition to Bram Stoker’s *Count Dracula*, Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897), introduces the “Woman of Songs”, or rather “the Beetle”, who is a liminal figure of Eastern mysticism. Divinity and advanced being is also illustrated by Nietzsche’s main idea of the “Übermensch” or “Superman”. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, composed in four parts between 1883 and 1885, Nietzsche observes that the will to power leads to the enlightenment of man and elevates him above all others who do not possess the knowledge or refuse to accept the new concept. Nietzsche’s emphasis is, however, on worldly as opposed to other-worldly achievement. In the introduction to the 1961 Penguin edition of the text, Hollingdale summarises the meaning of the Superman: “God as creator and ‘highest being’, the ‘Son of Man’ as God, man as the receptacle of divine grace, who rejoices at the idea of eternity: the embodiment and actualization of everything regarded as desirable” (1961: 29).

The move away from scientific positivism, a diminishing Christian belief and the move towards mysticism, neo-paganism and other esoteric faiths was, as Gilmour suggests, the result of “an elevated conscience and humanitarianism [that]

met the optimism of an age of reform to create a new mood of possibility. The [...] Victorian crisis of faith cannot be separated from a wider cultural conviction that the world could be improved and individual human beings with it" (Gilmour, 1993: 88). This links to John Start Mill's beliefs that were directed more towards a "religion of humanity" like Comtism, or as Ryan suggests "how the personal allegiance to Christ [...] could be replicated in the form of allegiance to examples of human excellence" (Ryan, 1974: 219).

Evidence of higher esoteric or occult knowledge and the will to gain power and divinity can be seen in *fin de siècle* social changes, notably with regard to gender roles and sexual equality. One of the appealing factors of the occult and alternative esoteric spiritual groups was the challenge that they represented traditional male and female roles, and biblical notions of gender differentiation and heterosexuality. Such groups confronted "traditional" views of gender roles and relations, with a clear focus on a balance of power that introduced a theoretical idea of equality. Certainly, "spiritualism" with its many female mediums "prided itself on its democratic appeal and practice, emphasizing that a talent for communicating with the spirits was the prerogative of all" (Owen, 2004: 18). The "New Woman" was not in any sense an "avatar of occultism", but rather the emergence of the "New Woman" coincided with the growing centrality of women in esoteric groups. The challenges facing the New Woman were not solely a result of certain links to mysticism, occultism and neo-paganism but some involvement in other esoteric faiths helped to fashion her into a sign of the disorder and the degenerative tendencies in the period.

In *The Darkened Room* (1989) Alex Owen investigates the role of the female medium in spiritualism and suggests that due to their key and often unique role in that they appear to be able to communicate with the dead, spiritualist women (and later other occult female figures) acquired a form of emancipation: they had some independence, power and authority which was in direct contrast to Victorian views concerning women and their sole purpose which was to fulfil the "traditional" and Christian roles of wife and mother. In direct contrast to the male-dominated Christian Church, alternative religious groups actively encouraged the participation of women and promoted the equality of the sexes. Sometimes this even led to an imbalance of female power within the groups. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn attracted

well-known female artists and writers including Florence Farr and the author Edith Bland (E. Nesbit) and other notable members such as Annie Horniman and Mina Bergson. In particular, Horniman and Bergson had great authority and held senior ranks within the Golden Dawn. With regard to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn at least it would seem that there was some imbalance of power: “None opposed the admission of women to the Order, although some chafed beneath their authority” (Owen, 2004: 3).

Another characteristic of certain occult groups was the way in which they regarded sexuality (particularly female sexuality) and sex as a means of power. For instance, Owen acknowledges that the American branch of spiritualism became associated with what was viewed as “free love”. This had its roots in Emanuel Swedenborg’s theory that “every man and woman had a soul mate, or spiritual affinity” (1989; 2004: 35). In terms of *fin de siècle* literature, Marie Corelli also adopted such principles in *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886). As a result, the belief in a true spiritual partner was the perfect excuse for an individual to abandon a husband or wife, and as Owen concludes: “Certainly in most cases the appropriation of Swedenborgian principles allowed for unorthodox sexual relationships outside of marriage” (1989; 2004: 35).

Other religious or mystical figures also came to represent free love and unorthodox sexual relationships. In terms of the nineteenth-century pagan revival, Pan the Pagan god of nature and a liminal figure, represented the wild, the untamed and the impulsive. Unlike Eros, in Greek mythology Pan represents sex not love. Pan also came to represent a different form of male divinity as Davy explains: “Pan thus served as a challenge to Victorian prudery, providing an alternative vision of male divinity to the nonsexual Christian God” (2007: 21). This new idea of male divinity appealed to Oscar Wilde and one-time member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn Aleister Crowley, as Pan also came to symbolize bisexuality and homosexuality.

When Aleister Crowley went on to become the leader of the British branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis, he “came to believe that magical rites and invocations performed in conjunction with specific sexual acts [...] produce unsurpassed results” (Owen, 2004: 218). Such Occult orders popularised sex magic (*magica sexualis*) and The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn certainly became linked to sex magic and

sexual rites. In the introduction to *Revelations of the Golden Dawn*, R. A. Gilbert describes the case of American couple Frank and Editha Jackson (real names Theo and Laura Horos) who were charged with fraud and Theo Horos who was further charged with the rape of a sixteen year old girl Daisy Adams. The event, which happened in 1901, became notorious as Theo and Laura Horos had been involved in The Order of Theocratic Unity, an off-shoot of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The *Sun* asked the question "Religion or Lust?" (Gilbert, 1997: 7). Another witness, Vera Croysdale, described her initiation into the society. According to rituals practised by the Golden Dawn, Croysdale describes how she was led into a room, blindfolded and was approached by a man: "The man, she added, subsequently made to her the impious suggestion that he was Christ Himself, and "the only perfect man in the world." He also told her that sin committed with him would be an act of piety, and that offspring born as the result of their intimacy would be Divine" (Gilbert, 1997: 12).

In conclusion, in 1893 Arthur Symons produced an article for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, entitled "The Decadent Movement in Literature." In describing the Decadents, he refers to a quotation by Ernest Hello: "Having desire without light, curiosity without wisdom, seeking God by strange ways, by ways traced by the hands of men; offering rash incense upon the high places to an unknown God, who is the God of darkness" (Symons citing Hello, 1893: 859). The image presented is that the alternative religion is a pathway to degeneration, decadence and all things condemned by a Christian civilisation as evil. The Holy Bible similarly denounces mediums and alternative esoteric spiritual groups. In Leviticus 19:31, it is written: "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them." In a modern day translation, this is written: "Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God." Interestingly, Stoker uses the same phraseology in *Dracula* (1897). After Mina's initiation into the Count's sorority, she declares herself to be: "Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have cause to fear" (*Dracula*: 248 - 249).

However, Alex Owen remarks that alternative esoteric spiritual and occult groups sought the exact opposite: "It was the 'supernormal' and 'superhuman' to

which advanced occultists aspired [...] and the cultivation of imagination, the honing of the Will, and the successive refinement of a particular understanding of self were the means by which that might be achieved” (2001: 82). While this is true, the important fact is that in order to further evolve in human terms, the *fin de siècle* occultist had to discard the limitations that had been imposed by a Christian Church, Christian State and materialistic science. The following chapters argue that it was believed that human advancement could only be achieved by moving away from the anthropomorphic Christian deity to anthropocentrism, or “the sovereignty of man” with a new understanding of the spiritual and physical self, while a new emphasis on human will and determination endeavoured to break through barriers imposed by Christianity and materialistic science. A personalized religion and prime mover was needed. As separate entities from the Victorian Church and State, the esoteric and alternative spiritual movements discussed in this thesis (including spiritualism, paganism, Rosicrucianism and Satanism) and the occult groups (including The Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn) had different attitudes to the human condition, with an emphasis on divinity, free will, desire, determination, equality (sexual and racial), sexuality and sex. There was also an acceptance of the East as the source of esoteric knowledge and occult scientific power. Oppenheim notes:

The East ever exotic, mysterious, alien, was an escape from and an alternative to the shallow, externally-oriented culture of the West. Western scientists might examine the outsides of things [...] but Eastern sages looked inward where, in the realm of essence, eternal truth resided. The members of Britain’s “counterculture” in this period created the East, if not exactly in their own image, then as a reflection of their discontent with their own society. (Oppenheim, 1985: 162)

Fin de siècle occultism and esoteric spirituality was based on the conclusion that social and political change and advancement could only be achieved through “seeking God by strange ways” and by being “more than human”. The promotion of

the new esoteric spiritual doctrine of the *fin de siècle* was achieved in popular literature, as Legge concludes: "An even better testimony to the wide extension of the new faith may perhaps be found in the frequency with which it is made to play a part in current fiction" (1889: 13).

CHAPTER TWO: Christianity versus the “Unveiling of Isis” in *The Beetle* (1897) and *Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle* (1892)

Nineteenth-century Egyptomania spawned novels and stories about Egypt and the East. There was a notable increase in “mummy” fiction, which started with Jane C. Webb Loudon’s *The Mummy!: Or a Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, published in 1827, which was followed by other authors and works, including Edgar Allan Poe’s satirical *Some Words with a Mummy* (1845); Théophile Gautier’s *The Romance of a Mummy* (1857) and *The Mummy’s Foot* (1863). Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published *The Ring of Thoth* in 1890 followed by *Lot No. 249* in 1892 and Bram Stoker published *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* in 1903. Paula Guran suggests the real fear of mummies is that they “defy what we see as a natural cycle. And if the mummy defies the natural order, then it slips into the supernatural realm” (2007: 376). This defiance of the natural in favour of the supernatural is intrinsically linked to the spirituality of Egypt – its Eastern mysticism and occultism. In *The Beetle* (1897) the conclusion is similar as the narrator says “there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, and I am quite prepared to believe that the so-called Beetle [...] was – or is, [...] a creature born neither of God nor man” (*The Beetle*, 1897; 1985: 715).

Appearing the same year as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897) introduces a foreign threat from the Eastern world (in this case Egypt) that like Count Dracula embodies religious and cultural otherness. The Beetle symbolizes degeneracy, as Sydney Atherton remarks:

The fellow was Oriental to the finger-tips – that much was certain; [...]. He was hardly an Arab, he was not a fellah – he was not, unless I erred, a Mohammedan at all. There was something about him which was distinctly not Mussulmanic. So far as looks were concerned, he was not a flattering example of his race, whatever his race might be. (*The Beetle*: 537)

The novel introduces a specific Egyptian religious goddess who, in reality, was central to the establishment of several of the main alternative religious cults and societies at the *fin de siècle*. The deity in question, the Egyptian goddess Isis, was the inspiration for Madame Blavatsky's philosophies on which the Theosophical Society was structured and the founding of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Isis was such a prominent figure in the nineteenth century occult and "mystic revival" that she proved to be one of the main adversaries of orthodox Christianity. The "unveiling of Isis", as Blavatsky first envisioned it in 1887, incurred difficulties for the Church as it seemed that Isis and Isiac philosophies could be adapted to the teachings of almost any alternative cult or society. Anna Kingsford used the figure of Isis in the teachings of "Esoteric Christianity" and, as Isis used magic in the resurrection of her brother-husband Osiris in classical mythology, the goddess also became important for neopagan societies including the Wiccans. *The Beetle* describes the conflict between the cult of Isis and a band of men evoking "muscular Christianity". Like the Christian Fraternity in *Dracula* the orthodox quest is to destroy the religious 'other' that threatens Western Christendom. *The Beetle* introduces anxieties concerning the rise of occultism and mysticism, particularly fears of religious imperialism and religious and cultural otherness. The cult of Isis is personified as blasphemous, diabolic and evil. Isis is a deity who epitomizes the worst sadism and cruelty imaginable. *The Beetle's* Marjorie Lindon describes a painting in which:

On the right was the majestic seated figure of a goddess. Her hands were crossed upon her knees, and she was naked from the waist upwards. I fancied it was meant for Isis. [...] In front of the idol was an enormous fiery furnace. In the very heart of the flames was an altar. On the altar was a naked white woman being burned alive. There could be no doubt as to her being alive, for she was secured by chains in such a fashion that she was permitted a certain amount of freedom, of which she was availing herself to contort and twist her body into shapes which were horribly suggestive of the

agony which she was enduring – the artist, indeed seemed to have exhausted his powers in his efforts to convey a vivid impression of the pains which were tormenting her. (*The Beetle*: 624)

The real horror in *The Beetle* is that this Oriental goddess is no longer confined to the Eastern world, but has infiltrated Victorian society. Marsh describes a case of “revenge of empire” or as Stephen Arata (1990 ; 1997) calls it “reverse colonization”. Marsh also introduces what could be described as “reverse Christianisation.” As missionary explorers were sent to Africa to Christianise the continent, or to “veil Isis”, the Beetle’s Gnostic quest is the reverse: to “unveil Isis” to the Western world. Paul Lessingham, the first victim of the Beetle, also referred to in the novel as “the Woman of the Songs”, eventually goes to seek advice from an acquaintance and a scientist named Sydney Atherton, who is described as “a specialist on questions of ancient superstitions and extinct religions” (*The Beetle*: 507). The irony in Marsh’s novel is that the cult of Isis is not an extinct religion but one that still thrives and is literally feeding like a vampire on the blood of the Western world, as the victims of the cult have all been Western, usually English women. Marsh concludes:

Presently, tales began to be whispered, about some idolatrous sect, which was stated to have its headquarters somewhere in the interior of the country [...] which was stated to still practise, and to always have practised, in unbroken historical continuity, the debased, unclean, mystic, and bloody rites, of a form of idolatry which had had its birth in a period of the world’s story which was so remote, that to all intents and purposes it might be described as prehistoric. (*The Beetle*: 690)

Antonia Tripolitis recounts the classical myth of Isis and Osiris based on Plutarch’s *Isis and Osiris*. When he meets with his twin brother Seth Osiris is killed,

his body is dismembered and the pieces are thrown into the Nile. Mourning his death, Isis searches for her brother-husband Osiris with her sister Nephtys. They eventually find the individual pieces of his body, they re-assemble them and then they perform an embalming rite, which results in the resurrection of Osiris (2002: 26 - 27). Tripolitis also notes that there are references to Isis, “the goddess of life” in the *Pyramid Texts*, the oldest collection of Egyptian religious texts, which dates back to the 3rd millennium B.C.E. These texts “represent Isis as the goddess of the earth and of fertility. Osiris was identified with the stagnant Nile, which was reborn yearly as the living water Horus that rose to inundate the land and restore it to new life” (2002: 26).

M. Isidora Forrest also observes that Isis was actually “the archetypal good mother – loving, nurturing, protective, loyal” (2001; 2004: 33). As the “Divine Mother” Isis is the protector, effectively she is the equivalent of the Virgin Mary. This in itself suggests that Marsh’s version of Isis is an attempt to re-fashion the Egyptian goddess for a specific purpose. This is unsurprising as in Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, which appeared in twelve volumes between 1890 and 1915, the similarities between the two female deities, with Isis pre-dating Mary, have always been difficult for some Christians as Frazer notes: “certainly in art the figure of Isis suckling the infant Horus is so like that of the Madonna and child that it has sometimes received the adoration of ignorant Christians” (1993: 383). The religious symbolism of the goddess suckling her baby, also suggests that Isis is a deity who gives life. Forrest suggests that there is reference in *The Beetle* to the symbol of Isis which was known as the “Knot of Isis”. In amulet form it was buried with mummies in order to provide power and protection in the afterlife. It also represents eternal life or resurrection (2001; 2004: 66). Furthermore given that this symbol also became known as the “Blood of Isis”, Isis’s role as the giver of life sounds vampiric. This is a theme that occurs in Clara Lanza’s *Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle* (1892) which will be discussed later in this chapter.

According to Richard A. Gabriel the cult and worship of Isis and Osiris had existed for more than three millennia before the arrival of Christianity and the birth of Jesus Christ. Gabriel comments that the myth “was alive and thriving as a theological system with a wide following inside Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean world including the Palestine into which Jesus was born and raised.” Gabriel also suggests

that as a result of this, Jesus in forming his doctrine, would have been perfectly aware of the cult of Isis and Osiris and in order for Christianity to establish a stronghold, it was perhaps necessary to absorb some of the traditions of the “old religion.” As Gabriel concludes: “the theological similarities between the cult of Osiris-Isis and Christianity may be reasonably explained as a consequence of Jesus adopting basic tenets of the Osiris-Isis theology into his belief system which later developed into Christianity” (2005: 80).

Therefore, since the very beginnings of the “new” religion, there has been an ambivalent relationship between the already established cult of Isis and Osiris and Christianity. This is translated into *The Beetle*, as Marsh describes how the cult of Isis has been a constant threat to Christianity throughout the centuries. Indeed Robert Holt notices that the Beetle-woman creature “had been living through the ages” (*The Beetle*: 454). Similarly, when Paul Lessingham visits Sydney Atherton he asks: “I presume that her cult is long since extinct – that none of the worshippers of Isis exist today.” Sydney’s reply affirms the continual belief in the goddess and suggests: “I think it is possible, even probable, that, here and there, in Africa [...] homage is paid to Isis, quite in the good old way” (*The Beetle*: 508).

John Antony West observes that scholars are still divided in their opinion with regard to Isis-Osiris and Christianity. Either individuals choose to “regard the simplified Judaeo-Christian monotheism as an evolved version of the Egyptian system” or rather they “are convinced that Christ’s teaching is absolutely original, unprecedented, and a sign of divine revelation designed to sweep away the millennia of error and ignorance that preceded it” (1985; 1995: 82). The “unveiling” of the truth of Isis by these cults brought Isis and Osiris to the knowledge of some Victorians who were able to see the parallels between Christianity and its predecessor. This became a problem for Christianity, as the way it had always been presented to its followers was as the one religion that was founded in truth and on historical fact. The cult of Isis and Osiris had never made such claims. Therefore, as West notes: “early Christians in their ignorance had taken the great spiritual teaching of Egypt and turned it into a spurious historical event which, because undemonstrable, could not but eventually arouse opposition and generate its own demise” (1985; 1995: 83).

Historically Isis as an influential force in the creation of alternative religious groups actually pre-dates the nineteenth century. M. Isidora Forrest suggests that the figure of Isis first became attractive to some alternative orders and societies as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The goddess was notably used in initiation ceremonies: “speculative Masons and the members of other secret and semisecret societies [...] sought essential, mystical experiences through initiatory rituals they were developing in their lodges. In addition to Christian and Hebrew myths, some masons looked to Egypt, and particularly the Isis-Osiris myth” (2001: 211). Thus Isis became synonymous with alternative religious orders. This coincided with a renewed interest in Egyptology, originating with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 and the first translation by Jean François Champollion in 1822, enabling the reading of Egypt’s vast written records, in which mysticism played a significant role. As Henrik Bogdan concludes: “The use of Egyptian symbolism was very much in vogue during the last decades of the nineteenth century, especially in occultist circles, since Ancient Egypt was considered to be the birthplace of not only alchemy and magic, but of “true initiation” as well” (2007: 139).

According to Bogdan, with the establishment of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1888, the first temple called the Isis-Urania Temple No. 3 was officially opened in London. Other temples were opened soon afterwards, again drawing on Egypt and the myth of Isis and Osiris for their names. As a result, the Osiris Temple in Weston-super-Mare, the Horus Temple in Bradford and the Amen-Ra Temple of Edinburgh were all established in 1893. When one of the main founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, moved with his wife Moina to Paris in 1892 they also established the Ahathoor Temple, which was founded in 1894 (2007: 125). As Bogdan further notes, Egyptology formed much of the basis for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, especially in the initiation ceremonies and other rituals, where “officers in the Neophyte grade were considered to be symbolic of certain Egyptian gods” (2007: 139). Alex Owen also observes that “MacGregor Mathers had developed an “Isis Movement” in Paris during the 1890s that bore no relation to the Golden Dawn but drew instead on the mystery religion of Egypt. Moina MacGregor Mathers was central to the performance of his Rite of Isis,

which became something of a sensation in the Parisian occult underworld and about 1899 and 1900 attracted the notice of the fashionable world” (2004: 81).

Another notable Isis event came with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the publication of her study *Isis Unveiled* in 1887. According to Forrest Blavatsky aimed to “enhance Isis’ already strong position as Hermetic Goddess” (2001: 212). Forrest analyses the importance of *Isis Unveiled* and concludes that for Blavatsky Isis became “the keeper of Hermetic tradition and, indeed, the Tradition itself. By revealing Isis, Blavatsky hoped to reveal Hermetic philosophy to the modern world. Isis would serve once again as the initiator to the Ancient Wisdom Tradition” (2001: 212). Thus, in *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky comments:

In our studies, mysteries were shown to be no mysteries. Names and places that to the Western mind have only a significance derived from Eastern fable, were shown to be realities. Reverently we stepped in spirit within the temple of Isis; to lift aside the veil of “the one that is and was and shall be”. (Blavatsky, 1887; 1994, vol 1: vi)

Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled* was essentially a comparison of Eastern mysticism, hermeticism, occultism and Western science and orthodox religion. It was divided into two parts. The first volume was an attack on modern science, including the evolutionary theories of Darwin, Huxley and others, while the second volume criticised orthodox religions, notably aiming its attack at orthodox Christianity. Blavatsky observed:

The Folia Vocis – the daughter of the divine voice – responded from the mercy-seat within the veil and science, theology, every human hypothesis and conception born of imperfect knowledge lost forever their authoritative character in our sight. (Blavatsky, 1887; 1994, vol 1: vii)

Even more damning was Blavatsky's declaration: "The God of every exoteric religion, including Christianity, notwithstanding its pretensions to mystery, is an idol, a fiction, and cannot be anything else" (1887; 1994 vol 1: 307). Furthermore, Blavatsky believed:

The light of Christianity has only served to show how much more hypocrisy and vice its teachings have begotten in the world since its advent, and how immensely superior were the ancients over us in every point of honour. The clergy, by teaching the helplessness of man, his utter dependence on Providence, and the doctrine of atonement, have crushed in their faithful followers every atom of self-reliance and self-respect. So true is this, that it is becoming an axiom that the most honorable men are to be found among atheists and the so-called "infidels". (Blavatsky, 1887; 1994, vol 2: 374)

Isis also played a central role in the teachings of another one-time member of the Theosophical Society and the co-founder of "Esoteric Christianity" Anna Kingsford, who believed the goddess was not only important with regard to the emancipated role of women in Victorian society but was also the key, through the promotion of women, to rediscovering the truth of religion. Forrest comments: "The key was to return to women the power they (supposedly) held in antiquity." Forrest also explains that Kingsford's philosophy was based on the theory that Isis was of a higher position than her brother-husband as it was Isis, a woman, who had been endowed with esoteric knowledge and power. Thus, "Kingsford insisted that this ancient Golden Age was part of the Eden state, the unfallen state of humankind. Only by returning to woman her power could humankind return to a state of grace" (2001: 212). In *Clothed With the Sun*, published in 1889, Kingsford along with her collaborator Edward Maitland observed: "The genius of a man is his satellite. Man is a planet. God – the God of the man – is his sun, and the moon of this planet is Isis, its initiator, or genius. The genius is made to minister to the man, and to give him light" (Kingsford and Maitland, 1889; 1999: 59-60).

As Marsh's Beetle-woman is a member of the cult of Isis, she follows Kingsford's Isiac philosophy with regard to the "equalized" role of men and women. For this reason, Isis was linked to the New Woman. Indeed, as Forrest notes: "Declaring women's power equal to that of men, Isis provided women with a feminist as well as a feminine model" (2000: 123). For Marsh, who portrays the Beetle-woman as an Eastern priestess of Isis and a feminist ideal, the Beetle-woman ultimately leads to the emasculation of male characters in the novel, including Robert Holt and Paul Lessingham. On his encounter with the Beetle, Holt notices "For the time I was no longer a man; my manhood was merged in his. I was, in the extremist sense, an example of passive obedience" (*The Beetle*: 454). In a similar fashion, when Paul Lessingham is imprisoned by the cult of Isis in Egypt, the Beetle or rather as he refers to her "the Woman of the Songs" tells him: "You are with the children of Isis [...]. You are in the hands of the great goddess – of the mother of men" (*The Beetle*: 632). Even more disturbing are Lessingham's references to rape: "The most dreadful part of it was that I was wholly incapable of offering even the faintest resistance to her caresses. I lay there like a log. She did with me as she would, and in dumb agony I endured" (*The Beetle*: 634). Similarly, Robert Holt also describes how he has his masculinity stripped away, as like the vampire, the Beetle is a threat to established Victorian and orthodox Christian codes of sexuality and represents the breaking of sexual boundaries. Robert Holt is mortified as he realises "horror of horrors! – the blubber lips were pressed to mine – the soul of something evil entered into me in the guise of a kiss" (*The Beetle*: 458).

Thus, like Lucy Westernra in *Dracula* (1897) and Helen Vaughan in *The Great God Pan* (1894) who are sexually emancipated or rather "equalized" through their respective religions, the Beetle or the Woman of the Songs similarly metamorphoses into the traditionalist idea of a "monstrous female." Kelly Hurley provides an in-depth analysis of what she terms "abhuman-ness" in *The Gothic Body* and suggests:

While Marsh indulges his fascination with Oriental occultism, he depicts a consistently savage Egypt whose ancient history is an inchoate and abject "prehistory." In their practice of magic, in their superstition, in their primitive and animalistic

religious rituals, Orientals both ancient and modern, are abhuman. (Hurley, 1996; 2004: 127)

This is evocative of the Victorian New Woman stereotype. In *The Beetle* the traditionalist males and orthodox Christians, essentially a band of men embodying “muscular Christianity,” fail to comprehend the philosophy of the Isis cult. This philosophy is, as Marie Corelli emphasizes throughout the “Heliobas” novels, the equalization of men and women, which is only achievable by giving more power to women to raise them to equal status and the avoidance of a hierarchy of gender.

So, when Paul Lessingham finally regains consciousness during his imprisonment by the cult of Isis in Egypt, he finds himself in an unfamiliar apartment and undressed. The behaviour of his female captor reverses the traditional Victorian perceived male and female roles in terms of sexual behaviour:

By my side knelt the Woman of the Songs. Leaning over, she wooed my mouth with kisses. I cannot describe to you the sense of horror and of loathing with which the contact of her lips oppressed me. There was about her something so unnatural, so inhuman, that I believe even then I could have destroyed her with as little sense of moral turpitude as if she had been some noxious insect. (*The Beetle*: 632).

Similarly, after Paul Lessingham witnesses a sacrifice he then notes: “The worshippers had departed. I was left alone with the woman of the songs, who apparently acted as the guardian of that worse than slaughterhouse. She was, as usual after such an orgie, rather a devil than a human being, drunk with an insensate frenzy, delirious with inhuman longings” (*The Beetle*: 635). Paul Lessingham condemns her behaviour as animalistic and predatory. In *Degeneration* (1895) Nordau dedicates book two to mysticism and suggests that in extreme cases of mystic belief, the individual will experience stages of “sense-impressions”, namely sensual experiences usually characterized by hallucination, delirium but also ecstasy. Nordau observes: “The ecstatic state is associated with extremely intense emotions, in which

the highest bliss is mixed with pain. [...] The feeling of voluptuousness is an example of the phenomena accompanying extraordinary decompositions in a nerve-cell" (1895; 2007: 63).

In *The Beetle*, Robert Holt is the first person to come into contact with the Beetle-woman and he describes the scene: "I saw someone in front of me lying in a bed. I could not decide if it was a man or a woman. Indeed at first I doubted if it was anything human. But, afterwards, I knew it to be a man – for this reason, if for no other, that it was impossible such a creature could be feminine" (*The Beetle*: 453). As the Beetle is an alternative religious figure, like other occult or non-Christian subjects such as Stoker's vampire and Machen's Helen Vaughan, daughter of the Pagan god Pan, it has a liminal or abhuman body. Alex Owen refers to this as "psychic androgyny" (2004: 109). Later Holt notices this, and comments: "about the face there was something which was essentially feminine; so feminine, indeed, that I wondered if I could by any possibility have blundered, and mistaken a woman for a man; some ghoulish example of her sex, who had so yielded to her depraved instincts to have become nothing but a ghostly reminiscence of womanhood" (*The Beetle*: 462). Sydney Atherton similarly comments: "there stood in front of me, naked from top to toes, my truly versatile Oriental friend. One startling fact nudity revealed – that I had been egregiously mistaken on the question of sex. My visitor was not a man, but a woman" (*The Beetle*: 547). While androgyny was viewed as the ultimate form of spiritual equalization in many alternative religions, the concept opposed fundamental orthodox Christian values, as exoteric as opposed to esoteric Christianity is essentially a pro-male religion. Rosemary Radford Ruether observes:

The anti-gnostic church fathers of the late second century [...] made a forceful effort to separate from and eject gnostic Christians. [...] Those early Christian writings [...] enshrined the views of what was then becoming the established church. The feminine aspects of God, as well as the leadership of female disciples, became greatly eclipsed in these dominant forms of Christianity. (Radford Ruether, 2006: 127)

For these reasons, the cult of Isis is portrayed as diabolical. Robert Holt asserts: "Then, whether I was dead or living, I said to myself that this could be nothing human – nothing fashioned in God's image could wear such a shape as that" (*The Beetle*: 458). This is an example of antifeminism in addition to the fact that the cult is further demonised when The Beetle is portrayed as a Satanic figure. When The Beetle visits Sydney Atherton to offer him help to get revenge on Paul Lessingham, Sydney Atherton recalls:

There was that in the fellow's manner which, for the moment, had for me an unwholesome fascination. Memories flashed through my mind of stupid stories which had been told of compacts made with the devil. I almost felt as if I was standing in the actual presence of one of the powers of evil.
(*The Beetle*: 540)

Later Marjorie Lindon even asks Sydney Atherton: "don't you feel as if you were in the presence of evil? Don't you want to get away from it, back into the presence of God?" (*The Beetle*: 564). Marjorie and Sydney then pray to God. Notably later in the novel, when the Beetle visits Marjorie, she remarks: "Flinging myself on my knees, I tried to pray. [...] I all at once became conscious, as I struggled to ask help of God, that I was wrestling with some evil – that if I only could ask help of Him, evil would flee. But I could not. I was helpless – overmastered" (*The Beetle*: 598). Marjorie infers that God's power cannot withstand the occult powers of the Beetle or its sensual erotic power over herself.

As Paul Lessingham is imprisoned in Egypt for two months he witnesses the practices of the cult and he comments:

And the whole time there were comings and goings, a phantasmagoric array of eerie figures continually passed to and fro before my hazy eyes. What I judge to have been religious services took place; in which the altar, the bronze image, and the beetle on its brow, figure largely. Not only

were they conducted with a bewildering confusion of mysterious rites, but, if my memory is in the least degree trustworthy, they were orgies of nameless horrors. (*The Beetle*: 634)

Marsh emphasizes that the cult of Isis is notably anathema to followers of the Christian faith. For the members of the cult “it was their constant practice to offer young women as sacrifices – preferably white Christian women, with a special preference, if they could get them, for young English women” (*The Beetle*: 690).

As in *Dracula*, *The Beetle* introduces the theme of what Stephen Arata (1990; 1997) calls “reverse colonization”. Paul Lessingham recalls how he met the Beetle for the first time on a trip to Egypt when he was eighteen years old. He was looking for entertainment in the town, found himself in the native quarter on a French street, the Rue de Rabagas, where he heard a woman singing. Like Count Dracula, the Beetle personifies the threat of the Orient, and again like the Count, the Beetle’s cultural otherness is marked by its speech: “When he spoke his accent was markedly foreign; the words rushed from his lips in an inarticulate torrent” (*The Beetle*: 462). When Robert Holt undresses in front of the Beetle, Marsh suggests that the Beetle, like Dracula, threatens the “purity” of Victorian England: “What a white skin you have – how white! What would I not give for a skin as white as that” (*The Beetle*: 456). Paul Lessingham comments that the cult members resemble cannibals: “A woman – a young and lovely English woman [...] had been outraged [raped], and burnt alive, while I lay there helpless, looking on. The business was concluded. The ashes of the victim had been consumed by the participants” (*The Beetle*: 635). This epitomises the fear of racial and cultural contamination of English society.

Nordau suggests that belief in mysticism, in this case the occult and alternative religions, was characteristic of degeneration and indicated that believers in mysticism in their “religious delirium” displayed signs of hysteria and ecstasy (1895; 2007: 45). The Beetle is portrayed as an atavistic and primitive being, such as when it reads the letters Robert Holt has stolen from Paul Lessingham’s house: “All the time he was reading he kept emitting sounds, more resembling yelps and snarls than

anything more human – like some savage beast nursing its pent-up rage” (*The Beetle*: 488).

Marsh uses the word “outrage”, usually a euphemism for sexual assault, to imply that there are elements of sexual sadism:

I saw, on more than one occasion, a human sacrifice offered on that stone altar, presumably to the grim image which looked down on it. And, unless I err, in each case the sacrificial object was a woman, stripped to the skin, as white as you or I – and before they burned her they subjected her to every variety of outrage of which even the minds of demons could conceive. More than once since then I have seemed to hear the shrieks of the victim ringing through the air, mingled with the triumphant cries of her frenzied murderers, and the music of their harps. (*The Beetle*: 635)

When Paul Lessingham meets the Woman of the Songs, she implores him to stay:

It is the simple truth that her touch had on me what I can only describe as a magnetic influence. As her fingers closed upon my wrist, I felt powerless in her grasp as if she held me with bands of steel. What seemed an invitation was virtually a command. [...] And while she talked, she kept her eyes fixed on my face. Those eyes of hers! They were a devil's. I can positively affirm that they had on me a diabolical effect. They robbed me of my consciousness, of my power of volition, of my capacity to think – they made me as wax in her hands. (*The Beetle*: 631)

This not only affirms the emasculation of men within the cult of Isis, but also illustrates that the Beetle is capable of mesmerism, which in the novel amounts to cult

“brain washing.” Robert Holt suggests that the Beetle possesses “unhallowed, unlawful powers” (*The Beetle*: 469). In fact, he observes in the Beetle “hypnotic powers with which nature had to such a dangerous degree endowed him” (*The Beetle*: 467). When he is hypnotised by the Beetle, Holt notes: “I looked him in the face – and immediately became conscious, as I did so, that something was going from me – the capacity, as it were, to be myself. His eyes grew larger and larger till they seemed to fill all space – till I became lost in their immensity” (*The Beetle*: 456). Moreover, Holt comments: “As I stood there waiting for the word of command, it came. It was as if some strong magnetic current had been switched on to me through the window to draw me into the room” (*The Beetle*: 485). Hypnotic powers in the Beetle are not only regarded as demonic and primitive, but also they corrupt the body and soul of the victims, as Holt admits he loses control: “I had been taken out of the corporeal body to be plunged into the inner chambers of all nameless sin” (*The Beetle*: 485). If Holt is attracted to the “male” Beetle this also suggests the creeping influence of homosexuality and the “love that dare not speak its name.”

Roger Luckhurst comments on the success of Sydney Atherton in stopping the Beetle’s mesmeric force through electricity, recognising Victorian electro magnetic power as superseding occult and mystical forces. In a way, this is the triumph of Victorian faith in Western materialistic science over Eastern mysticism, as Luckhurst concludes: “Marsh is operating in this scene within a generically ‘comic’ colonial encounter, in which the native’s primitive superstition is exploited by the westerner” (2000: 160-161). In the hands of the Beetle, mesmerism is a dangerous supernatural and occult weapon, as Julian Wolfreys concludes:

[Mesmerism] is appropriated by a non-European monstrous other for clearly criminal and sexual purposes, all of which are aimed at undermining any self-reflective certainties about the stability of identity, whether one is speaking of class-position, masculinity, femininity, national identity, or secure belief in one’s own position as a subject of empire. (Wolfreys, 2004: 13)

Paul Lessingham asks Sydney Atherton: “Hadn’t the followers of Isis a [...] sacred emblem?” (*The Beetle*: 508). Sydney replies to him: “You mean *Scarabaeus sacer* – according to Latreille, *Scarabaeus Egyptiorum*? Undoubtedly – the scarab was venerated throughout Egypt” (*The Beetle*: 509). In Ancient Egypt, the scarab beetle was considered to be sacred and it was common for jewellery, particularly amulets to be made in its likeness, to protect its owner from evil. Scarab amulets carried special significance regarding funerary beliefs and customs. According to Rosalie David:

Between the layers of linen, the embalmers inserted sacred jewellery (amulets), which were intended to provide magical and spiritual protection for the owner during his passage to the next world. The shapes, designs and materials of these pieces all had important symbolism: they represented gods, sacred signs, and parts of the human body which would attract good influences to help the deceased ward off evil influences. The scarab also represented eternal life as David (2002: 175) observes: “The life cycle of the dung beetle inspired the idea that the creature was symbolic of regeneration and rebirth: when the beetles has laid its eggs, well hidden in the sand, the newly hatched beetles emerge as if from nowhere, inspiring the myth that they were the result of constant self-generation.” In a religious context, William A. Ward (2003: 218) also observes that the scarab beetle is linked to the Egyptian sun god Re and another deity Atum, “the divine force of the primeval hill of creation, both deities being concerned with rebirth and resurrection”. (David, 2002: 22)

Forrest discusses “Kheperu”, a technique used in magical ritual. He observes that the Egyptian word “kheper” is depicted in hieroglyphics as a scarab beetle, as the word “kheper” represents, like the scarab beetle, “an image of both Being and Becoming in ancient Egypt” (2001: 411). As Forrest notes the symbol of eternal life –

the scarab beetle – was also “a symbol of transformational change.” Therefore, as he concludes, the term “Kheperu” was associated with a religious practice that came to be used in the rites of the House of Isis. Forrest observes: “If you undertook the Rite of Becoming a Priest/ess of Isis, you used a similar technique when your Higher Self “became Isis” in order to initiate your human self. Kheperu is used to [...] transform oneself into a particular Goddess or God for a specific period of time” (2001: 412). Marsh includes this link between the scarab beetle and the cult of Isis, Paul Lessingham asks: “Weren’t the priests of Isis – or some of them – supposed to assume, after death, the form of a – scarabaeus?” (*The Beetle*: 509). Indeed, Sydney Atherton witnesses the apotheosis of the Beetle: “His loose draperies all fell off him, and, as they were in the very act of falling, there issued, or there seemed to issue out of them, a monstrous creature of the beetle tribe – the man himself was gone” (*The Beetle*: 546). However, apotheosis here is regarded as a “travesty of manhood” (*The Beetle*: 458).

The link between the scarab beetle and Isis is also used in Clara Lanza’s *Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle* (1892) which addresses similar themes to those found in Marsh’s novel, including “muscular Christianity” set against Lanza’s idea of primitive and barbaric Eastern mysticism. According to an article published in the *New York Times* Clara Lanza was born in 1859 and was the wife of the Marquis Manfredi Lanza of Palermo, whom she married in 1878. She was the daughter of William Alexander Hammond, the American neurologist and Surgeon General of the United States Army (1862-1864). Hammond founded the National Museum of Health and Medicine, co-founded the American Neurological Association, and gave his name to Hammond’s disease. In addition to his medical career, William Hammond was also a playwright and novelist. He co-wrote a collection of stories with his daughter, published in 1886 entitled *Tales of Eccentric Life* (*New York Times*, September 14th 1916: 7).

The reaffirmation of Christianity and the attempt to convert the African natives to Christianity reflects Lanza’s own life. Three years after the publication of the novel in 1895, Lanza’s husband died and she announced her intention to settle in Naples. Lanza had maintained a close epistolary relationship with George Moore, who had always hoped that Lanza and himself would meet. Moore was notably distressed at

her decision and the friendship ultimately came to an end through Lanza's conversion to Catholicism. Lanza had sent him a criticism of *The Lake*, which she had viewed from a Catholic standpoint. Moore wrote to her:

The intellect of the world, you see, has drifted away from Catholicism; intellectually it is a desert. Since the Reformation Catholics have not produced a book [...]. How can you feel an interest in a religion that degrades the human mind? The only Catholics who produce books are all converts, for they retain something of their original liberty. Clara, Clara, Clara, for shame. (Moore cited by Joseph Hone, 1936: 273)

In Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, the men who come into contact with the cult of Isis are emasculated, losing their manliness through a cult that is established for women, for the purpose of worshipping a female deity. The opposite occurs in *Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle*. This novel is an example of the nineteenth century fascination with missionary explorers. In this respect, Marsh's novel is an effort to regain "muscular Christianity" through the banishment of occult groups that promote a wild, primitive and aggressive form of femininity.

Missionary explorers partly led to the development of the term "muscular Christianity". According to A. N. Wilson the mid 1880s witnessed "the scramble for Africa", a phrase coined by the *Times* in September 1884 (2003: 488). Wilson notes: "In a speech in May 1886, [Lord] Salisbury stated that when he left the Foreign Office in 1880 'nobody thought about Africa', but when he returned to it five years later 'the nations of Europe were almost quarrelling with each other as to the various portions of Africa which they could obtain. I do not exactly know the cause of this sudden revolution'" (Lord Salisbury cited by Wilson, 2003: 487). One reason for the sudden interest in Africa was the opportunity to bring "enlightenment" to the continent through Christianisation. Wilson recounts James Hannington's journey to Africa as part of the Church Missionary Society. A young priest, who was killed on his expedition by the African natives, Hannington "imagined himself to be bringing to the Africans salvation

and the Word of God with their inestimable concomitants, commerce and what he would have imagined to be civilization” (2003: 487). Missionary explorers, for example David Livingstone, were raised to celebrity status and revered for their expeditions. They were almost a cult in their own right, undergoing an apotheosis of sorts, as Wilson suggests: “The extraordinary significance, for the Victorians, of David Livingstone, patron saint of missionary explorers, and of his St. Paul, the American journalist Henry Morton Stanley, is that they had been where no white man had trod, and done it in a *scientific* spirit” (2003: 488).

The purpose of the missionary expeditions in Africa was to declare war against eastern mysticism and, as Annie E. Coombes observes, to bring the message that “salvation was freely available and potentially efficacious for all sinners, including the ‘heathen’” (1994: 162). Similarly, Lanza introduces Dr Laird, noting: “There was a large reclining chair on deck, wrapped about with the American Stars and Stripes, and occupied by the clerical figure of Dr. Laird himself, who apparently was taking life as easily as though educating and possibly Christianizing several millions of souls had never been dreamt of in his philosophy” (*Scarabaeus*, 1892: 19). On a Sunday, Dr. Laird delivers his sermons for his fellow worshipers, who listen “patiently to the pastor’s words of wisdom” (*Scarabaeus*: 17).

According to Clifford Putney, “muscular Christianity” is a term used to define the blend of devoutness and commitment to the Christian faith, combined with the health and “manliness” of the individual. Putney also suggests that the muscular Christianity movement is derived from the Bible, notably two main sources in the New Testament. The New Testament “sanctions manly exertion (Mark 11:15) and physical health (1 Cor. 6: 19-20)” (Putney, 2001; 2003: 11). The origin of the term is not definite, however Putney believes that it probably originated in a review of the Charles Kingsley novel *Two Years Ago*. Both novel and review appeared in the same year, 1857. The term was also used in 1858 to describe Thomas Hughes’s novel *Tom Brown’s School Days*, which was published in 1857. Lanza uses the very term to describe the main character in *Scarabaeus*, Dr. Laird who is also a Reverend with a “reputation for vigorous manhood, and on the whole, he was a superb example of muscular Christianity to which was added the interest of a marked mental superiority” (*Scarabaeus*: 25 – 26). Similarly, Harold Davidge is described as “fair and ruddy of

complexion, though he too was a splendid specimen of health and robust vigor. He was a trifle over six feet in height, his head was well-shaped, and his hair waved above his forehead in blond curls" (*Scarabaeus*: 26). Davidge's innocent, pure and virtuous character accompanies his angelic appearance: "in his whole countenance was reflected a buoyancy that beamed from within as though the sunshine of his temperament must perforce find an outlet. Melancholy played no part in his disposition, and wherever he went, depression took to itself wings and a sustained geniality came in its stead" (*Scarabaeus*: 26).

Lanza's own Christian mission in writing *Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle* was to establish Christianity as the one true faith, through the creation of her own missionary explorer character Dr Laird, who comments: that "a veil of superstition, like a poisonous miasma, has hung over the African Continent for centuries, and were it not for the encroachments of European influence and enterprise, it would have endured forever" (*Scarabaeus*: 45). Though while Lanza implies that this mission is merely the Christianisation of Africa, the real message is that Christianity will counter any other forms of worship world-wide. In short, Lanza's novel, like Marsh's *The Beetle*, asserts that the cult and worship of Isis in particular will never take the place of Christianity, as Dr Laird specifically observes: "The glories of Egypt's antiquities are everlasting [...]. The pyramids stand as evidence of past grandeur, but Isis and Osiris have been forced from their thrones to make way for Mahomet, and now Mahomet is yielding to the Christ, not through force of numbers, but through the power of intellect" (*Scarabaeus*: 82).

Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle is an American novel. As such the novel is an example of American "muscular Christianity", portraying the response to other religious cults arising in America in the nineteenth century (for example Mormonism, originating with the publication of *The Book of Mormon* in 1830) and America's affirmation of orthodox Christianity as the true faith. According to Elaine Showalter's theory the muscular Christian and explorer Fraternity in *Scarabaeus*, resembles the Crew of Light in *Dracula*. The Fraternity explores "the masculine and homosocial "romance" of adventure and quest, descended from Arthurian epic" The men exemplify chivalry and the passion for adventure that we associate with the legend of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table and the quest for the Holy Grail.

As Arthurian Romance was revived in the nineteenth century, effectively spawning its own cult and literary genre, (mostly due to Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the theme occurred in other works of the literary period. Showalter suggests that "male bonding and quest romance" was prominent in the latter years of the nineteenth century, as from the 1880s onwards "a men's literary revolution intended to reclaim the kingdom of the English novel for male writers, male readers, and men's stories" (2001: 79).

Showalter also notes other *fin de siècle* texts, that she classes as "masculine quest romances", including "H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886), Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King* (1888), and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which show how themes of [...] male bonding, and the exclusion of women came together in a complicated response to female literary dominance, as well as to British imperialism and fears of manly decline in the face of female power" (2001: 83). As *Scarabaeus* falls into the same category of the male quest romance, it embraces similar themes that are familiar to this genre. Showalter explains:

Quest narratives all involve a penetration into the imagined center of an exotic civilization, [...] the heart of darkness which is a blank place on the map, a realm of the unexplored and unknown. For fin-de-siècle writers, this free space is usually Africa, the "dark continent", or a mysterious district of the East, a place inhabited by another and darker race. (Showalter, 2001: 81)

As the novel is set in Africa, this enables Lanza to portray the continent as socially regressive, not least through the preservation and continuance of ancient cults and religions, as Dr Laird notes:

This country [...] is the home of ignorance and mysticism. Half of our fables and romances originated with the ancient mystics whose sway was well-nigh absolute over the tribes that lived and multiplied here so rapidly that a beneficent

Providence deemed an occasional devastating flood an absolute necessity. (*Scarabaeus*: 44)

Thus any form of non-Christian mysticism or ritual is derided in the novel. For example, when Harold Davidge is injured he is taken to a medicine woman. The unnamed narrator remarks:

The moment she saw Harold she insisted upon sending us away while she wove the mystic spell which was to effect the cure. Of course the doctor and I had no faith in this weird mummery, but we thought the old hag might be familiar with the poison and its antidote, so we let her have her way. (*Scarabaeus*: 139)

Alex Owen notes that reincarnation figured in the teachings of the Theosophical society, as the society based its ideas of evolution and religion on Hinduism and Buddhism: “Theosophy draws on Neoplatonic emanationism, in particular the concept of separation from and return to the Absolute, and reworks the Eastern concepts of karma and reincarnation to provide an evolutionary theory of both humankind and the universe” (2004: 34). Owen also notes that Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland believed in reincarnation and karma and developed “Esoteric Christianity”, to include these concepts, with Kingsford undertaking a series of lectures in 1881 to publicize her theories and publishing her thoughts in her study *The Perfect Way* in 1882 (2004: 41). Marie Corelli also wrote about reincarnation, including the “Heliobas” novel *Ardath The Story of a Dead Self* (1891) and *Ziska The Problem of a Wicked Soul*, published in the same year as *The Beetle* in 1897. Joel Bjorling notes, “Rosicrucianism originated in Egypt about 1500 B.C.” and observes that theosophy and Rosicrucianism are the two main “occult traditions which have been especially prominent in promulgating reincarnation and karma” (1996: 67).

Reincarnation is introduced into *Scarabaeus*, through the character of the African dragoman Gwynyara, who believes he has once held a position of power and possessed the scarabaeus ring, as he tells Dr. Laird: “This ring, the sacred

scarabaeus, was once my own. It was the symbol of a power that has fled” (*Scarabaeus*: 98). His memories of his previous incarnation as a king are vivid: “I see a vision of regal splendor rising and growing momentarily clearer and brighter, until every detail stands out in a burst of radiance” (*Scarabaeus*: 99). Gwynyara asks Dr. Laird, “have not your gods, your stars, your wise men, revealed to you what lies before birth and beyond the grave?” (*Scarabaeus*: 100). Dr. Laird tells him: “What lies beyond the grave or before birth, we cannot know [...]. Whence cometh the soul and whither it goeth are matters beyond the reach of mortal knowledge. Live for the good of your fellow-men, and a future far, far happier than the present, is assured” (*Scarabaeus*: 101). The orthodox Christian Dr Laird clearly does not believe: “Had Gwnyara been guilty of some terrible deed in mystic ages, and had his soul come back for expiation? “Pshaw!” exclaimed the doctor aloud. He knew that he was treading on dangerous ground for an orthodox clergyman” (*Scarabaeus*: 101-102).

When Harold Davidge is poisoned, the African dragoman Gwynyara tells Dr. Laird: “A life must be sacrificed to save his. It must be *my* life” (*Scarabaeus*: 141). When Dr. Laird asks Gwynyara to explain further, Gywnyara tells him: “That poison is made to kill Africans, not to kill the white man. Had I been wounded in his place I should not be alive now. The blood of the white race has kept him alive all through the day, and I hoped he would be saved. [...] Now I must save him” (*Scarabaeus*: 141). Gwynyara’s plan to save Harold involves a rudimentary blood transfusion, taking a knife and gashing his leg so that it can be bound to the cut on Harold’s leg, as Gwynyara believes: “The poison will leave his blood for mine” (*Scarabaeus*: 141).

The episode is strangely vampiric and evocative of *Dracula* particularly as Gwynyara cries “Lay the flesh open on my leg, and bind us together where the blood flows reddest. Bind us, and he shall live!” (*Scarabaeus*: 142). This declaration almost sounds as if Gwynara is giving eternal life to Harold. Interestingly, this vampiric scene has religious overtones, not least as Gwynyara tells Dr. Laird that he cannot sacrifice himself for Harold: “You could not save him, master. Your blood and his are the same, and besides your faith is not strong” (*Scarabaeus*: 143). Here, vampirism is an act of faith, a concept Bram Stoker developed five years later in *Dracula* (1897), with the inverted imagery of the Eucharist. Thus in *Scarabaeus*, as in *Dracula*, vampirism is synonymous with Eastern mysticism and more importantly esoteric knowledge. In fact

Gwynara's beliefs seem almost Rosicrucian and similar to Marie Corelli's Electric Creed which she establishes in a *Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), as Gwynara believes in the cultivation of "will": "The poison will flow from his veins to mine because I will it so, because I believe it will, and because I command and control it. The spark we cannot call by name but which controls all things and dwells within us, tells me the material element must yield to higher powers" (*Scarabaeus*: 143). Lanza's inclusion of "reverse" vampirism (Gwynara is not taking, but cleaning and giving), is not only suggestive of the goddess Isis (the giver of life, represented in symbol form by the "Knot" or the "Blood of Isis"), but also may be a reference to Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*. Blavatsky investigates the vampire (in part one, chapter twelve), under the section "Vampirism – its phenomena explained." Blavatsky firmly establishes the vampire as originating in the East, as a part of Eastern mysticism as she observes: "The Hindus believe, as firmly as the Serbians or Hungarians, in vampires" (1887; 1994 vol 1: 449).

For Blavatsky who condemns Christianity in *Isis Unveiled*, the use of Isis in the title was an open attack on the Church. The return to Isis or rather what Isis embodied - Eastern mysticism and occultism - was presented by alternative cults as the return to an enlightened religion that had been suppressed and derided. The real threat to orthodox Christianity was, however, that Isis symbolized power that was comparable to Victorian imperialism and appealed to Victorian sensibilities. As Wolfreys suggests embracing Egypt's "pre-Christian antiquity" meant embracing "an antiquity suggestive of empire, a civilization, and a culture comparable with modern imperial identity" (2004: 23).

The two novels discussed in this chapter portray the conflict between orthodox Christianity and Isis in two ways. Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* aims to denounce the goddess and individuals who actively seek to worship her in cult form. Paul Lessingham describes Isis as "the obscene deity to whom these wretched creatures paid their scandalous vows that my most awful memories seem to have been associated." (*The Beetle*: 634). Clara Lanza does not overtly refer to Isis in *Scarabaeus: The Story of an African Beetle*. With the publication of Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, the name Isis actually became synonymous with the revival of occultism and Eastern mysticism. In her novel, Lanza subsequently portrays a band of American Christian men, embodying "muscular Christianity" with the aim to Christianise Africa or

rather to “veil Isis”, so that Christianity can be brought to the continent and be established as the one true faith once and for all. Lanza achieves her veiling of Isis or Christianisation of Africa through the demonisation of the scarab beetle, a holy symbol to the Egyptians and linked to religious rites of the goddess Isis. In the novel, the scarab beetle is acknowledged as a holy symbol, yet at the same time it is a symbol of malevolence. Dr Laird concludes:

A curious superstition connected with the beetle has reference to the *Scarab*, a Singhalese demon in the shape of the insect. This diabolical imp appears in houses after nightfall for the purpose of destroying one or more of the inmates. The only means of averting the catastrophe is by performing a counter-charm, the effect of which is to send back the horrible beetle-fiend to destroy the imp who originally effected his destruction; for in such a case the death of one or the other is essential to appease the evil one whose aid has been invoked. (*Scarabaeus*: 46).

Similarly, Marsh implies that any individual who follows Eastern mysticism and occultism, embarking upon the journey to unveil Isis is degenerate. For Marsh, the Isis worshipper is guilty of the worst diabolism and evil crimes against humanity. So, when the Beetle reveals “I am a child of Isis!” (*The Beetle*: 545), Sydney Atherton merely comments: “Are you? – Then in that case, I regret that I am unable to congratulate the lady on her offspring” (*The Beetle*: 545).

CHAPTER THREE: The Rosicrucian Order, Marie Corelli and the “Heliobas” Novels

In *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) Marie Corelli describes the chapel, before the narrator undertakes her soul transmigration and Gnostic quest: “At the Foot of the Large Crucifix, which occupied a somewhat shadowy corner, lay a wreath of magnificent crimson roses” (*Romance* vol2: 6). The theme of the “Rose and Cross” occurs throughout the “Heliobas” novels and will be discussed in this chapter. Reflecting on six of her novels in the prologue to *The Life Everlasting* (1911) Marie Corelli observed that *A Romance of Two Worlds*, *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self* (1891), *Barabbas* (1893), *The Soul of Lilith* (1894), *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895) and *The Master Christian* (1900) were “the result of a deliberately conceived plan and intention, and are all linked together by the one theory. They have not been written solely as pieces of fiction [...] they are the outcome of what I myself have learned, practised and proved in the daily experiences, both small and great, of daily life” (*The Life Everlasting*: 26).

In the period of time from the publication of *A Romance of Two Worlds* to *The Life Everlasting*, Corelli’s doctrine essentially remained the same except for the substitution of the word “electricity”, which she uses to compare the scientific processes of her spirituality to that of “radium”. Reflecting on *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Corelli thought her first novel to be a “crude attempt” to explain the nature of her Cult of the “Electric Creed” (*The Life Everlasting*: 13). In particular the scientific theory in this novel, was not fully expressed as Corelli suggests she was limited in what she could divulge: “I was forbidden for example, to write of radium, that wonderful “discovery” of the immediate hour, though it was then, and had been for a long period, perfectly well known to my instructors, who had all the means of extracting it from substances as yet undreamed of by latter-day scientists” (*The Life Everlasting*: 14). Although she does not specify any particular societies or other influences in an introduction to *A Romance of Two Worlds* Corelli does attack spiritualism and hypnotism. Her comments are enough to eliminate both as possible

sources for her foundation of her “Electric Creed” and “The Electric Principle of Christianity”, as she comments:

I find that the majority of persons who profess eagerness to know something of the higher forms of spiritual progress, would rather believe in anything but the too-familiar doctrine of Christianity. They will pin their faith on table-turning, magnetic slate-writing, and other illusive phenomena; but when it is suggested that, instead of all these things, they shall try to live such a careful, self-denying life as shall successfully foster the germ of Divinity within them, *thus making it capable of the highest clairvoyance and spiritual ability*, they are vaguely vexed and bewildered Hypnotism, which is merely animal magnetism called by a new name . . . has nothing whatever in common with what I may designate spiritual electric force. (Corelli cited by Ransom, 1999: 32)

In a scientific context, Corelli’s theories of electricity are evocative of Herbert Spencer and his *First Principles*, first published in 1862. Several critics of Corelli’s novels and other works and her biographers have endeavoured to trace the spiritual influence on Corelli’s creation of the “Electric Creed” and her conception of her own personal doctrine of the “Electric Principle of Christianity”. In spite of Corelli’s very public remarks and criticisms of various alternative late Victorian religious groups and several spiritual, paranormal and occult movements and philosophies, her work is still interpreted in spiritualist or Theosophical contexts, due to its own occult content and references to, amongst other things, Hermetic Qabalah, alchemy and Mesmerism. Recently, Mark Knight and Emma Mason suggest that her novels contain aspects of theosophy (2006: 206). Yet, in her prologue to *The Life Everlasting*, Corelli notes that after the publication of *The Master Christian*, “I decided [...] to change my own line of work to lighter themes, lest I should be set down as ‘spiritualist’ or ‘theosophist,’ both of which terms have been brought into contempt by tricksters” (*The Life Everlasting*:

25). In fact, Corelli's critics seem to disregard the fact that Corelli constantly criticizes many alternative religions, notably spiritualism in her novels. Indeed, in *A Romance of Two Worlds*, the main character Heliobas, who possesses esoteric knowledge and who later in *The Soul of Lilith* is described in Rosicrucian terms as the "Supreme Head of the Brethren of the Cross" (*Lilith*: 137), comments to the unnamed narrator, a semi-autobiographical Corelli figure, that "disembodied spirits never become so undignified as to upset furniture or rap on tables" (*Romance* vol1: 264). For Corelli, this was an opportunity to condemn the growing trend of spiritualist séances, where late Victorian parlour games of spirit rapping and table turning were used as definite, material scientific proof of spirit manifestation and contact with the spirit realm.

We only have to examine the very doctrine, which Corelli personally believes and presents in the Heliobas novels, namely the "Electric Creed" and the "Electric Principle of Christianity", to which she dedicates the entirety of chapter five, volume two of *A Romance of Two Worlds* (pp.121-155) and study her belief in the immortality of the soul through spiritual reincarnation to realize that this conflicts with the fundamental elements of spiritualism. According to Corelli, death does not exist in a spiritual sense, but in its place are reincarnation and spiritual immortality. Corelli explains the process thus: "the so-called 'dead' are *not* dead – they have merely been removed to fresh life and new spheres of action, under which circumstances they cannot possibly hold communication with us in any way, unless they again assume the human form and human existence" (*The Life Everlasting*: 27). For Corelli, therefore, there could be no possibility of the existence of spiritualist mediumship, as there were no dead spirits in existence, which could be contacted as "life is not and never can be death, but only constant change and reinvestment of Spirit into Form" (*The Life Everlasting*: 27).

It is easy to conclude as Knight and Mason do that there is no definite influence on Corelli's novels, rather that there are "different expressions of spirituality [that] are present throughout Corelli's work" (2006: 207). They give two examples to illustrate this point, actually using the first two Heliobas novels. Knight and Mason suggest that *A Romance of Two Worlds* is simply constructed around the occult and *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self* merely seeks to explore the theory of reincarnation, a vague analysis considering the detail that Corelli includes in her writing (2006: 207).

Annette R. Federico believes Corelli's religion to be a "creative blend of science, paganism, the Hebrew God, and quasitheosophical mysticism" (2000: 131). It is understandable why Federico interpreted Corelli's religion as being influenced by Paganism. There is a sense of the connection with nature in Corelli's doctrine that is mentioned in the prologue to *The Life Everlasting*. Corelli observes: "My creed is drawn from Nature [...] who shows us that Life, as we know it now, at this very time and in this very world, is a blessing so rich in its as yet unused powers and possibilities" (*The Life Everlasting*: 7). In addition to this Corelli asserts that "Nature [...] is the reflection of the working-mind of the Creator – and any opposition to that working-mind on the part of any living organism it has created cannot but result in disaster" (*The Life Everlasting*: 13). As God and the divine manifests itself in nature, Corelli believed that to become closer to God man had to work with nature, rather than against it. Notably, Corelli refers to nature as though it were the pagan Mother Nature, capitalising the word and referring to it as a female entity. The pagan idea of spiritual harmonization with Mother Nature and balance through the union of male and female is expressed, as Corelli notes:

I was able to perceive how the sorrows and despairs of the world are caused by this one simple fact – Man working *against* Nature – while Nature, ever divine and invincible, pursues her God-appointed course, sweeping her puny opponents aside and inflexibly carrying out her will to the end. And I learned how true it is that if Man went with her instead of against her, there would be no more misunderstanding of the laws of the Universe, and that where there is now nothing but discord, all would be divinest harmony. (*The Life Everlasting*: 13)

Paganism is further expressed in her article "The Advance of Woman", Corelli observes: "The divine spirit of Nature itself, called "Egeria" is always depicted by a man as a woman" (1905: 173).

Alisha Siebers in her study on Mesmerism and Magnetism in Corelli's works argues that "Corelli's theory could be described as an amalgamation of Eastern religion, spiritualism, and evolutionary theory, but while it does combine these elements, it is above all a rather tame attempt to make Christianity more scientific by reframing it in mesmeric terms" (2006: 185). This in itself is contradictory to what Heliobas emphatically states in *A Romance of Two Worlds*: "I never magnetized Raffaello [Cellini] [...] I simply set him free for a time, knowing that his was a genius which would find things for itself or perish in the effort. I let him go on a voyage of discovery, and he came back perfectly satisfied" (*Romance* vol1: 156-157). For Corelli this was a major element of the characterization of Heliobas and she reiterates the point that there is no connection to Mesmerism in *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*. When Theos Alwyn mentions Heliobas's "marvellous achievements as a mesmerist" Heliobas responds and declares, "Excuse me!" [...] I never was a mesmerist" (*Ardath*: 12).

This does not mean that Corelli's Heliobas novels do not contain elements of the occult and mesmeric episodes. There are aspects of Heliobas's character that reflect mesmeric techniques, such as his ability to heal through touching others, psychic communication, mind reading and mind control and as Siebers concludes these abilities do "mirror traditional mesmeric claims for healing and rapport" (2006: 186). However, Mesmerism is not the only theory on which Corelli bases her doctrine and fraternity, but rather these are abilities that the advanced members with esoteric knowledge come to possess as a result of their membership of Corelli's obscure and secret order.

The only aspect of her work which is universally acknowledged is the retention of Christianity or rather a form of Catholicism in her novels. As Knight and Mason suggest, Corelli's main desire was to "rework central aspects of the Christian narrative" (2006: 207). Throughout her novels, there is a sense of a Gnostic quest and a rite of passage to discover the real or inner meaning of Christianity, a meaning that has been veiled and concealed from mankind but, with the desire and dedication to learn, esoteric knowledge can be achieved. In reality, Corelli believed that orthodox Christianity had lost its true message and real purpose, blaming the clergy and laity for being guilty of being "tainted with this worst of all hypocrisies – that of calling God to

witness their faith when they know they are faithless" (*The Life Everlasting*: 5). In a modern society, Corelli believed it was impossible that the Victorian individual could profess himself or herself to be a true, selfless Christian and honestly follow the Christian doctrine while at the same time insisting on maintaining and living a modern, comfortable and essentially selfish lifestyle. In her prologue to *The Life Everlasting*, Corelli said that she was "moved by a strong conviction that men and women are hindered from attaining their full heritage of life by the obstinate interposition of their merely material Selves" (*The Life Everlasting*: 19). Corelli concluded:

Their lives give the lie to their avowed religion, and it is the daily spectacle of the daily life of governments, trades, professions, and society which causes me to feel that the general aspect of Christendom at the present day, with all its Churches and solemn observances, is one of the most painful and profound hypocrisy. (*The Life Everlasting*: 6)

For Corelli, Christianity had not just lost its way due to the advancement and modernization of Victorian society and culture. She believed that the crisis of Christianity could be traced further back still to its very origins and conception. Fundamentally, major sources of contempt for Corelli were key Christian figures responsible for shaping the Christian Church and its teachings. In her biography of Corelli, Eileen Bigland suggests that Corelli's second Heliobas novel *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self* was intended to be an illustration of this point and "a spiritual argument against atheism, materialism and what she [Corelli] called Paulism" (1953: 93). In chapter two part three of *Ardath*, entitled "Zabâstesism and Paulism", Corelli launches an attack on the teachings of Saint Paul:

It was St. Paul's preaching that upset all the beautiful, pristine simplicity of the faith, - it is very evident he had no 'calling or election' such as he pretended, [...]. Paul's sermonizing gave rise to a thousand different shades of opinion and argument, - and for a mere hair's breadth of

needless discussion, nation has fought nation, and man against man, till the very name of religion has been made a ghastly mockery. That, however, is not the fault of Christianity, but the fault of those who profess to follow it, like Paul, while merely following a scheme of their own personal advantage or convenience. (*Ardath*: 396)

Thus, Corelli asserted that we have to find the true prophets of Christianity. For this reason, Corelli describes Heliobas in *A Romance of Two Worlds* as being a Chaldean. Heliobas immediately draws us to the inaccuracy of the Bible, as he notes: "I am descended directly from one of those "wise men of the East" (and, by the way, there were more than three, and they were not all kings)" (*Romance* vol1: 127). Heliobas notes that it was the Chaldeans who "being wide awake, happened to notice the birth-star of Christ on the horizon before the rest of the world's inhabitants had so much as rubbed their sleepy eyes" (*Romance* vol1: 127). Thus, Corelli professes Heliobas to be a teacher of true Christianity, a fact that Cellini affirms: "I gained through Heliobas two estimable things – a full comprehension of the truth of religion, and the secret of human destiny" (*Romance* vol1: 133). The need to discover the truth is so great that it is worth the ultimate sacrifice, as the narrator affirms: "I would give my life, if it were worth anything, to be certain of the truth of Christianity" (*Romance* vol2: 16). Corelli constantly asserts the hypocrisy of modern Christianity throughout the novel, not least as Zara observes: "One always doubts when one sees the dissensions, the hypocrisies, the false pretences and wickedness of many professing Christians" (*Romance* vol1: 217). The quest for truth and the growing hypocrisy of Christianity raises the question, however, if Corelli meant all Christians here or whether she was attacking denominations other than Catholicism. Throughout her novels it is Catholicism which forms the basis for truth and meaning. In *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Corelli specifically highlights the Catholic foundations of the cult of the Electric Creed. She describes, for example, how "the chapel was fitted up with the rites of the Catholic religion" (*Romance* vol1: 216).

When Corelli asks her readers in her prologue to *The Life Everlasting*, whether they are true Christians, it is possible to begin to trace the origins of the

“Electric Creed”, as it becomes evident that her Christian beliefs are not orthodox. She asks her readers: “Do you truly think that when death shall come to you it is really not death, but the simple transition into another and better life? Do you believe in the actual immortality of your soul?” (*The Life Everlasting*: 6). For Corelli, Christianity is therefore not so much distinguished by its various denominations, but rather by the choice by its followers of either the orthodox “false” faith or the unorthodox “true” faith. Corelli’s unorthodox, scientific and psychic variant is thus indicative of “Esoteric Christianity”. For example, she laments that the “soul of the Divine, or psychic element, animating and inspiring all visible and invisible Nature [...] is entirely absent from the teaching of the Christian creed to-day, with the result that the creed itself is losing its power” (*The Life Everlasting*: 5). Esoteric Christianity became associated with Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland who founded the Hermetic Society in 1884. According to Alex Owen, Maitland and Kingsford “emphasized what they called “Esoteric Christianity” and looked to Western occult tradition rather than the East for spiritual inspiration” (2004: 41). Esoteric Christianity has no resemblance to orthodox Christianity in its beliefs and worship. It teaches its followers that the Bible and Christian theology should not be taken in a literal sense or that Biblical events actually happened. Instead, there are hidden, inner meanings within the Christian teachings that if studied lead to enlightenment and esoteric knowledge. After Kingsford’s death in 1888, Maitland went on to form The Esoteric Christian Union in 1891.

In tracing the origins of Corelli’s own Esoteric Christian beliefs, it is necessary to briefly mention her family background. According to Theresa Ransom her father Charles Mackay had similar beliefs to his daughter. An example she gives is the transcripts of Mackay’s conversations with Thomas De Quincey and Professor John Pringle Nichol, published in Mackay’s *Recollections* (1877) where they speak of the heavens and the form of the universe and the divinity of the human soul. Thomas De Quincey also wrote an essay entitled “Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and the Free-Masons” originally published in the *London Magazine*, 1824. These conversations are evocative of Corelli’s own doctrine and as Ransom concludes: “Marie had read the books in Mackay’s study, and they became an endless source of material for her plots” (1999: 35). The similarities between father’s and daughter’s style and subject matter can be noted again in their respective

publications, for example in Mackay's *The Twin Soul*, *The Strange Experiences of Mr Rameses*, which was published anonymously in two volumes in 1887, a year after *A Romance of Two Worlds* appeared.

Corelli's father had much more influence on Corelli and her novels than Ransom previously suggests. Charles Mackay was linked to the Rosicrucian society "the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis" or "the Brotherhood of the Rosie Cross". There are several Rosicrucian sources that mention his name and involvement in the Order. His name appears in the prologue to *Ravalette: The Rosicrucian's Story*, first published in 1863, where Paschal Beverley Randolph and R. Swinburne Clymer note that present at a meeting of eminent Rosicrucians were "among others [...] Charles Mackay" (1939; 2005: 21). According to Christopher McIntosh, Paschal Beverly Randolph was the first man to promote Rosicrucianism in America and discovered (before Aleister Crowley) the principles of sexual magic (1998: 120-122). R. Swinburne Clymer was, as McIntosh states, the driving force behind the American Rosicrucian Order, "The Fraternitas Rosae Crucis" (1998: 125-126). Later in a footnote in the same work Randolph and Clymer list Mackay as "belonging to the inner or esoteric Order of England, now known as the Order of the Rose" and presided over by Sidney H. Beard (1939; 2005: 125). The same Order also counted among its members King Edward, who joined in 1904 and author Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who wrote the Rosicrucian novel *Zanoni* (1842). In another publication, *Dr. Paschal Beverly Randolph and the Supreme Grand Dome of the Rosicrucians in France*, there is a reference to Mackay that crucially links Corelli to the same Order. Clymer, who originally published the work in the years 1928-1929 writes: "Charles Mackay was the author of the Rosicrucian Romance *The Salamandrine*, published in 1852. He also wrote *Egeria* and the *Legends of The Isles*. It was he who first recognised the genius slumbering in the child Marie Corelli and gave her the greater portion of her training" (2003: 11).

There are many overt and covert references to the Rosicrucian Order in Corelli's Heliobas novels, particularly as the Rosicrucian Order forms the basis of Corelli's "Electric Creed" and her doctrine of the "Electric Principle of Christianity". However, the best reference to the Rosicrucian Order is found in Corelli's later novel *The Young Diana: An Experiment of the Future* (1918) where she writes: "The Rosicrucians have come nearer than any other religious sect in the world to the

comprehension of things divine” (*Diana*, 1918: 134). In addition, there are a number of Rosicrucian sources which specifically state that Corelli was a member of a Rosicrucian Order. She is mentioned in several editions of *The Rosicrucian Digest*, the official international magazine of the Rosicrucian Order, and *The Rosicrucian Forum*, a private publication for members of AMORC or the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis. In fact recently, Chevalier Emerys suggests that Corelli was actually a member of the AMORC (2007: 164). Emerys also states that “the AMORC teaches subjects related to alchemy and ancient traditions, the Kabalah, Gnosticism and hermeticism” all principles central to Corelli’s doctrine and fraternity (2007: 163 – 164). “The Rosicrucian Digest” gives an account of Corelli’s deep involvement in various Rosicrucian orders. According to the article she first joined an Italian Rosicrucian order and before her eighteenth birthday had already been admitted to the higher and regular grades of the society and also visited other lodges in Italy and France (July edition, 1930: 178-179).

In the second Heliobas novel *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, Theos Alwyn arrives at the monastery of a “peculiar Community devoted to some peculiar form of worship” (*Ardath*: 4). As he looks about him he notices a fiery cross that gradually “took the shape of a seven-pointed Star which sparkled through the gloom like a suspended ruby” (*Ardath*: 8). Alwyn, loathing Christianity, muses “Cross and Star!” (*Ardath*: 9). In the same July edition of “The Rosicrucian Digest” this symbolism is explained. According to the article, for her sixteenth birthday Corelli asked for a carved chest with an emblem to be designed by a Rosicrucian artist for the centre of the lid of the chest. The design was a rose within a cross. As the artist also wanted to give the rose a Rosicrucian mystical number in his design he drew seven petals which were equally spaced and pointed at the ends. The result was that the final design resembled a seven-pointed star and “Miss Corelli was pleased, however, over the fact that whenever strangers saw the casket [...] they always referred to the emblem on the lid as the “Cross and the Star” and did not suspect that it was a rose and consequently did not associate it with the Rosicrucian emblem” (1930: 179). Corelli took this and subsequently used it for her own cult, her readers being unaware they were reading about a Rosicrucian inspired, secretive order.

This is understandable as the publication of the three *fin de siècle* Heliobas novels (*A Romance of Two Worlds*, *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self* and *The Soul of Lilith*) did take place before Corelli publicly admitted that she was herself a member of a secret order. Nevertheless, Corelli still declined to give the name of the particular order. In his reference to Corelli, Philip J. Waller includes an extract from a letter that Corelli wrote to the Reverend Arbuthnot, the vicar of Stratford upon Avon, dated 28th April, 1900 (2006: 778). In it, she outlined her religious beliefs, stating that she had not conceived or established her own alternative religious order in reality, but she did admit that she had joined an unnamed group, which supported her unorthodox beliefs:

I am one of a very numerous 'fraternity' (we are perhaps between 50,000 and 100,000 altogether) – who are bound to try our best to follow the teachings of Christ as enunciated by Himself – and we are not, by the rules of our Order, allowed to attend public worship, 'That we may be seen of men' . . . We are all at one in our Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ and His Message, as being the only way to truth and life; of final salvation, so far as this earth and its inhabitants are concerned, and any doubter of this first grand principle would be requested to resign his or her membership. But we do not accept any of the Church forms. We simply, as far as it is humanly possible to do, obey the *words of Christ* as spoken by Himself – even at all risk of inconvenience to ourselves and misjudgement by our friends. (Waller citing Vyer 2006 : 778)

Before analysing Corelli's Heliobas novels in a Rosicrucian context, a brief history of the Order is necessary. Rosicrucianism is complex, as there are many different orders, variants and offshoots that have been established and there are also many individuals who profess that they are Rosicrucians yet choose not to belong to any specific fraternity. All branches and members of the various orders are united under the term the Rosicrucian Order and by the fact that they follow the same beliefs

and have the same desire to achieve esoteric knowledge through occult study. In his introduction to his study on the Rosicrucians Christopher McIntosh suggests that when the Order started in Germany in the 1600s, the Order “shunned worldly satisfactions in favour of spiritual ones and was said to have conquered death through the elixir of life,” two explicit concepts that are found at the core of Corelli’s Heliobas novels (1998: xvii).

Rosicrucianism as a philosophical and spiritual society dates back to the seventeenth century. There were rumours of a fraternity that had been established and was commonly referred to as The Brothers of the Rosy Cross, which met with the opposition of the orthodox Catholic Church. Since this time, there have been many different Rosicrucian societies which have been established worldwide with the only unifying factor being the doctrine that they follow. Rosicrucianism has influenced several other societies, notably Freemasonry, as some Rosicrucian teachings are used in several of the higher degrees of the Freemason Order. Indeed to become a member of the Rosicrucian Order, it is usual to have been a Freemason and have achieved Master Mason status either of the Scottish or York Rite.

In the seventeenth century two Rosicrucian manifestos were published: the *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614), and soon afterwards the *Confessio Fraternitatis* (1615). These are the oldest documents which pertain to the Order, inviting members to join, and as McIntosh concludes they promised a “reformed world and the overthrow of papal tyranny” (1998: xix). According to the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the Rosicrucian Order was allegedly founded much earlier in the 13th and 14th century. According to Rosicrucian legend and the manifesto, a young man went travelling to the East, where he learned from among others the Chaldean Magi, another concept that Corelli adopted for the character of Heliobas. When the young man returned, he went to Germany and assumed the name Christian Rosenkreuz (there are many variants of the spelling), and gave the Order its identity. *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*, which was published as the third official Rosicrucian document in 1616, is supposedly another account of his life.

Little was known about the Order, until Arthur Edward Waite published his book *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* in 1887. It was Waite who traced the origins of the Order, and included a translation of the manifestos in his study.

According to Raymond Buckland there was actually another book published before this, detailing the Order, its beliefs, initiation secrets and Order symbolism (2003: 178). This book, which appeared in 1785, was entitled *The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. This demonstrates that the Rosicrucian Order has at least been active from this period, with new organizations, branches and variants constantly developing. Rosicrucianism is not just connected to Freemasonry, but other *fin de siècle* groups such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society were influenced by its teachings, as Rosicrucianism embraces Hermeticism and Qabalistic tradition.

The writer of *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* is Magus Incognito, which is a pseudonym of American William Walker Atkinson. According to John Michael Greer, along with Paul Foster Case and Michael Whitty, Walker Atkinson was also partly responsible for writing *The Kybalion*, a study of Hermeticism and occultism, originally published anonymously as the work of 'Three Initiates' in America in 1912 (2004: 262). The beliefs and philosophies outlined in this work are so similar to those of Corelli, that she was suggested, and still is credited by some sources, to have been one of the anonymous writers. The Victorian Web has a bibliography of Corelli's works listed in chronological order. She is named as one of the authors of *The Kybalion* (written anonymously).

In the introduction to Incognito's / Walker's *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* the writer explains the origin of the Rosicrucian Order and the process of teaching esoteric knowledge to initiates:

What is known as "The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians" is an extensive body of esoteric teaching and occult lore which has been transmitted from Master to Student, from Hierophant to the new Initiate, for countless generations. Seldom has any part of the Secret Doctrine been committed to writing, or exposed to public view on the printed page, until the present generation. (1918: 16).

According to “Incognito”, the Rosicrucian doctrine is constructed of several Aphorisms and Cosmic Principles. There are several concepts that Corelli adopted from the doctrine of Rosicrucianism in order to form her “Electric Principle of Christianity” and the “Electric Creed”. According to *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians*, the First Aphorism details the Aphorism of Creation by God, or the divine being that the Rosicrucians refer to as “the Eternal Parent”:

I. The Eternal Parent was wrapped in the Sleep of the Cosmic Night. Light there was not: for the Flame of Spirit was not yet rekindled. Time there was not: for Change had not re-begun. Things there were not: for Form had not re-presented itself. Action there was not: for there were no Things to act. The Pairs of Opposites there were not: for there were no Things to manifest Polarity. The Eternal Parent, causeless, indivisible, changeless, infinite, rested in unconscious, dreamless sleep. Other than the Eternal Parent there was Naught, either Real or Apparent. (Incognito, 1918: 23)

According to *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* the Eternal Parent is the “Infinite Source of All Things” symbolically represented by a circle (*Rosicrucian*, 1918: 23). Corelli also imagined a God and creator, who takes a different form from that of the orthodox Abrahamic, Hebrew God and similarly she proposes that this being is at the centre of the universe, which is constructed of circles of “defensive, protective and ever re-creative power” that surround us. If the individual possesses the esoteric knowledge of the form of the universe and understands the importance of the emanating power of the spheres and circles, it is possible for the individual to use and control this power (*The Life Everlasting*: 3). Siebers argues that this is merely “a Mesmer-like cosmology that assumes that electrically charged rings emanate from God” (2006: 185). Although this may resemble mesmeric theory, its parallels to Rosicrucianism become more evident in the First Aphorism of Creation of Rosicrucianism, which also speaks of the “Flame of Spirit” that is described further:

But the best ancient wisdom, as voiced by the most careful teachers, have ever taught those qualified to know the whole truth that not only back of Matter, but also back of Spirit, there abides an Eternal and Infinite Essence, which is neither Spirit nor Matter, but which is the unconditioned root and source of both Spirit and Matter. Light and Flame—the two universally recognized esoteric and occult symbols of Spirit—have back of them the "lightless and heatless" Essence of Light and Heat. (Incognito, 1918: 29)

Similarly Corelli uses this belief in her "Electric Principle of Christianity", which opens with the following statement that "From all Eternity God, or the *Supreme Spirit of Light*, existed, and to all Eternity He will continue to exist" (*Romance* vol2: 121). Corelli asserts that in The New Testament, God is described as a spirit and thus he must be worshipped "*in spirit* and in truth" (*Romance*, vol2: 121). Corelli's use of italics throughout this passage in the words light and spirit, underlines the Rosicrucian beliefs, as outlined in the First Aphorism. For Corelli, the soul was a piece of God and so also created in a similar fashion. As *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* recognises that light and flame are the two esoteric and occult symbols of spirit, it is interesting that Corelli describes the soul in *A Romance of Two Worlds* using the same symbolism. Cellini explains: "all are born with a small portion of Divinity within them, which we call the Soul. It is a mere spark smouldering in the centre of the weight of clay with which we are encumbered" (*Romance*, vol1: 102). Corelli believed the soul could also be explained in terms of science, as a form of "eternal radio-activity, - capable of exhaustless energy and of readjustment to varying conditions" (*The Life Everlasting*: 9). Cellini recognises that if a person has the will, the electric soul can be educated. Again, Rosicrucian symbolism is used as Cellini tells the narrator: "I have only to speak of the rare few with whom the Soul is everything – those who, perceiving and admitting its existence within them, devote all their powers to fanning up their spark of light till it becomes a radiant, burning, inextinguishable flame" (*Romance*, vol1: 102).

The First Aphorism of Creation also speaks of the “Flame of Spirit” which is described further:

Every Thing manifests a combination of qualities, properties, or attributes. Each quality, property, or attribute, is one of a Pair of Opposites—one Pole of the Two Poles of Qualities which are ever found present. Given one quality, property, or attribute of Thingness, it necessarily follows that there is in existence in other Things an Opposite, or "Other Pole"—its antithesis. There is no exception to this rule, and though the Opposite may at first appear to be absent, diligent search will surely reveal it, and its necessary existence must be logically predicated. (Incognito, 1918: 34)

Notably, *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* describes how all things in existence must have an opposite, which is also defined in the seven Cosmic Principles as the sixth Cosmic Principle of “Polarity” (Incognito, 1918: 239). Corelli introduces the theme of polarity or what she refers to as “duality” in her doctrine. As in *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Heliobas reflects on a line of poetry by Shelley and comments that the poet “speaks of the duality of existence” (*Romance*, vol1: 255). Heliobas asserts that everything in the universe depends on a natural balance, which creates order and harmony. In particular this “duality of existence” is found in Nature: “Cold and heat, storm and sunshine, good and evil, joy and sorrow – all go in pairs. This double life extends to all the spheres and above the spheres” (*Romance*, vol1: 255). Corelli’s “theory of duality of existence” also appears in the Second Aphorism in *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians*:

II. The Germ within the Cosmic Egg takes unto itself Form. The Flame is re-kindled. Time begins. A Thing exists. Action begins. The Pairs of Opposites spring into being. The World Soul is born, and awakens into manifestation. The first rays of the new Cosmic Day break over the horizon. (Incognito, 1918: 42)

In this Aphorism, a sphere within a circle also symbolically represents the Germ within the Cosmic Egg. For Corelli, this idea was translated into her vision of the universe, as in her “Electric Principle of Christianity”, she describes her version of God or the “Supreme Spirit of Light”. Corelli’s God created “the vast Central Sphere in which He dwells, and peopled it with the pure creations of His glorious fancy” (*Romance* vol2: 122). Corelli also writes: “*For those who have once become aware of the existence of the Central Sphere and of the Electric Ring surrounding it, and who are able to realize to the full the gigantic as well as minute work performed by the electric waves around us and within us, there can no longer be any doubt as to all the facts of Christianity*” (*Romance* vol2: 142).

One aspect of Corelli’s doctrine that resembles other alternative groups and societies in this study, including The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, spiritualism, theosophy, paganism and various esoteric Christian groups is the equality of gender and the balance of masculine and feminine in all things throughout the universe. In previous chapters, this has been explained by Alex Owen’s concept of “psychic androgyny” and while that term still applies to Corelli’s beliefs, her notion of gender equality was by no means an original concept. In the search for equality, Owen comments that many alternative theologies sought to achieve “psychic androgyny” (2004: 109). The connection between androgyny and religion derives from the belief that an individual can become closer to enlightenment through the unity of male and female in worship, essentially becoming one. The Great Rite of Wicca, for example, introduces the union of male and female as one, through the symbolic or actual act of sexual intercourse. In fact, in *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians*, the Third Aphorism describes “the Universal Androgyne” or what is also referred to as “The Universal Hermaphrodite”:

III. The One became Two. The Neuter became Bi-Sexual.
Male and Female—the Two in One—evolved from the
Neuter. And the work of Generation began. (Incognito, 1918:
52)

In the “Electric Principle of Christianity” Corelli reflects upon the scriptures and the creation of man: “And God said, Let us make man in our image.’ The word ‘our’ here implies an idea that God was never alone” (*Romance* vol2: 123). The similarity between the Rosicrucian doctrine and Corelli’s “Electric Principle of Christianity” is again evident through the nature of androgyny. Corelli’s version of God as a balance of male and female supported her views on sexual equality, as Corelli also contributed to the New Woman debate. In an article entitled “The Advance of Woman”, reflecting on representations of The Muses, Faith Hope and Charity, the Three Graces and the Fates Corelli argued “as all the virtues, morals, arts, and sciences are shown by the highest masculine skill as wearing woman’s form and possessing woman’s attributes, it is easy to see that man has always been perfectly aware in his inward intelligence of Woman’s true worth and right place in creation” (1905: 173).

According to Corelli, the spiritual union of male and female through soul transmigration, angel magic or astral projection leads to spiritual balance. The soul can only be complete when it finds its counterpart. As such, Heliobas comments that the soul cannot be alone, as it is incomplete: “It is like half a flame that seeks the other half, and is dissatisfied and restless till it attains its object” (*Romance* vol1: 256). The object of every soul is thus to find their “Twin-Flame or companion Spirit” (*Romance* vol1: 257). For Corelli, this spiritual balance based on Plato essentially means gender equality. In *The Soul of Lilith*, Corelli writes: “There are two governing forces of the Universe, [...] One, the masculine is Love, the other, the feminine, is Beauty. These two, reigning together, are GOD; just as man and wife are One” (*Lilith*: 185).

The idea of the union of male and female describes “the conception of the World Soul—the First Manifestation of the Eternal Parent” (Incognito, 1918: 52). Interestingly, *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* also speaks of electricity and magnetism as an example of male and female: “This is in perfect accord with the old Rosicrucian doctrine that the “positive” pole of magnetism and electricity (for both were well known to the ancient alchemists) was “masculine,” and that the “negative” pole of the same was “feminine” (Incognito, 1918: 58). In a similar fashion Corelli wanted to unite science and religion, a fact she expressed in correspondence with her publisher George Bentley. In a letter dated 15th November 1886, she stated the whole purpose of *A Romance of Two Worlds* to be “to try and attach scientific possibility to

the perfect doctrines of the New Testament, in order to appeal to those whose minds refused to accept anything but that which could be presented to them as a *possible scientific fact*" (Corelli cited by Federico 2000: 130). Both doctrines therefore use science to explain the theory of the real attraction of souls, as Corelli's notion of the duality of male and female amounts to magnetic or electric polarity. Cellini observes that "Electricity, mademoiselle, is, as you are aware, the wonder of our age. [...] But one of the most important branches of this great science is ignorantly derided just now by the larger portion of society – I mean the use of human electricity" (*Romance*, vol1: 135). *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* similarly asserts that attraction and affinity in people can be explained by the science of attraction repulsion, as Corelli asserts, each individual has human electricity within them:

In the same way, the varied phenomena of "chemical attraction" and "chemical affinity" arise from the manifestation of Sex on the atomic plane, though science has not as yet perceived this to be the truth. Science teaches that there are "marriages, divorces, and re-marriages" among the atoms, but it hesitates to go further and assert that this is a part of the universal Sex manifestation—but this announcement must come in time for the evidence is overwhelmingly convincing. The explosive properties of certain substances really result from a "divorce". (Incognito, 1918: 59)

The polarity or duality of all things is also linked to the theory of diversity in unity that exists in both the Rosicrucian and Corelli's doctrine. For example in *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians*, the Fourth Aphorism states:

IV. The One becomes Many. The Unity becomes Diversity. The Identical becomes Variety. Yet the Many remains One; the Diversity remains Unity; and the Variety remains Identical. (Incognito, 1918: 62)

This essentially means that the "World Soul" manifests itself through "Manifoldness, Diversity, and Variety, yet ever remaining One, Unity, and Identical".

Again, this is symbolically represented by numerous spheres (Incognito, 1918: 62). More importantly, 'the Unity of the World Soul' is described in the Fifth Aphorism as "the Universal Flame of Life", with many individual sparks forming the one flame, which is symbolically represented by a flame within a circle. In writing *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, Corelli used practically the same terminology. In fact, reflecting on this novel later in her prologue to *The Life Everlasting*, Corelli specifically noted that her readership had not understood one of the main messages of the novel, namely that no two souls are identical. She writes: "each human soul is a germ of *separate* and *individual* spiritual existence [...] so no two souls resemble each other, but are wholly different, endowed with different gifts and different capacities" (*The Life Everlasting*: 21). However, while Corelli italicises the words "separate" and "individual" thus emphasizing the individuality and diversity of every soul, she maintains there is still a sense of unity as each one emanates from God and is part of God (*The Life Everlasting*: 21). Individuality was also another concept that Corelli used in her argument for the New Woman. In "The Advance of Woman" in contrasting male and female, Corelli concludes: "let woman herself continue to emphasize the difference by bringing out her original and individual qualities in all she does or attempts to do" (1905: 184).

The Sixth Aphorism of Rosicrucianism denotes the various planes of consciousness. According to the doctrine, one of these is "The Plane of the Consciousness of the Demi-Gods":

The individual who attains these heights, and is able to be "conscious" on this plane is so much higher than mere Man that he seems to be "almost as the gods." The Rosicrucians teach that on this high plane of being dwell certain very advanced souls—once men, but now almost as gods when compared to men—who aid in the great work of the advancement of the race of men in the general course of spiritual evolution. (Incognito, 1918: 129-130)

This was a major point for Corelli, as she portrays her principal character Heliobas in this exact manner. In *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Cellini describes Heliobas as a “physical electrician” (*Romance*, vol1: 136). The thought of entrusting herself to Heliobas does not alarm the narrator, as she views the entire procedure in purely scientific terms. For Corelli, cultivating the human electric force or the soul had nothing to do with mysticism or the occult, but rather contemporary materialistic science:

I was in no means alarmed at the idea of trusting myself to the hands of a physical electrician such as Heliobas professed to be. I knew that there were many cases of serious illnesses being cured by means of electricity [...]; and I saw no reason to be surprised at the fact of a man being in existence who had cultivated electric force within himself to such an extent that he was able to use it as a healing power.
(*Romance*, vol1: 138-139)

According to The Seventh Aphorism, “The Sevenfold Soul of Man”, every individual is unaware of his or her true origins and self (the soul) as there are “seven veils which conceal from (yet reveal to) Man his real Self” (Incognito, 1918: 144). At the centre of Corelli’s philosophy is the Christian, Abrahamic God, as she notes in her prologue to *The Life Everlasting*, “for it is His Will and Law that each human soul shall shape its own eternal future. No one mortal can make the happiness or salvation of another” (*The Life Everlasting*: 2). Religion is one that must be studied to reach enlightenment and the individual must have the passion to learn or as Corelli asserts, usually with capital letters to emphasize the message, a person must have the WILL to learn in order to gain esoteric knowledge. For Corelli, the soul of an individual is: “‘Infinite in faculty’ – that is to say – Able to do all it shall WILL to do” (*The Life Everlasting*: 7). Corelli includes this in her “Electric Principle of Christianity”: “Like all flames, this electric spark can be either fanned into a fire or it can be allowed to escape in air – *it can never be destroyed*. It can be fostered and educated till it becomes a living Spiritual Form of absolute beauty – an immortal creature of thought,

memory, emotion, and working intelligence” (*Romance*, vol 2: 124). This is Thermodynamics as also expressed by Herbert Spencer.

In addition to the Seven Major Aphorisms, *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians* also describes a major belief of the order:

The Rosicrucians hold as a very important part of the teaching the occult doctrine of Metempsychosis, Reincarnation, or Transmigration of Souls, the essence of which doctrine is the survival of the individual soul after it passes from the physical body in death, and its reembodiment in a physical body by rebirth after a sojourn in the resting place of the souls. (Incognito, 1918: 165)

Similarly, before her own journey into the universe, the narrator admits that she is sceptical of “soul-transmigration” (*Romance* vol1: 139). However, when the narrator realises it can be explained in purely scientific terms, her opinion changes. Zara explains the process:

You will experience an *internal* electric shock, which, like a sword, will separate in twain body and spirit. The spiritual part of you will be lifted up above material forces; the bodily part will remain inert and useless, till the life, which is actually *you*, returns to put its machinery in motion once more. (*Romance*, vol1: 268).

In writing *The Soul of Lilith*, Corelli aimed to demonstrate “how impossible it is and ever must be that any ‘Soul’ should visibly manifest itself where there is undue attachment to the body” (*The Life Everlasting*: 22). The novel describes how Lilith’s soul is unable to progress to higher planes, as if it is denied “spiritual evolution”. In *The Secret Doctrine of the Rosicrucians*, the progress of the soul also depends on the similar Rosicrucian interpretation of evolution, which involves higher planes in the universe and the movement away from Earth to other advanced planets:

A very important point in the Rosicrucian teaching is that in which we are informed that the evolution of man is not confined to this planet, the earth, but rather is extended to a chain of seven planets. The Rosicrucians teach that the evolutionary processes of this planet are linked with and blended into the evolutionary processes of six other planets; and that life on this planet is likewise linked with and blended into the life on the six other planets of our planetary chain. (Incognito, 1918: 188)

In accordance with these beliefs, Corelli writes in the “Electric Principle of Christianity”: “If, [the soul] is neglected or forgotten, and its companion Will is drawn by the weight of Earth to work for earthly aims alone, then it escapes and seeks other chances of development in *other forms on other planets*” (*Romance*, vol2: 125). Indeed, her concept of evolution and the existence of a chain of planets mirrors the Rosicrucian doctrine: “Earth is one of the smallest planets; and not only this, but, from its position in the Universe, receives a less amount of direct influence from the Electric Circle than other worlds more happily situated” (*Romance*, vol2: 125).

Philip J Waller notes: “As a child she [Corelli] believed passionately in angels, was privileged to have visitations from them, heard voices and had visions” (2006: 778). Angel guides were a major part of Corelli’s religion and she introduces them in *A Romance of Two Worlds*. During her soul transmigration and spiritual journey throughout the universe, the narrator comments that she meets an angel, who speaks to her: “I am thy guardian [...] I have been with thee always. I can never leave thee so long as thy soul seeks spiritual things. Asleep or awake on the Earth, wherever thou art, I also am” (*Romance*, vol2: 49). This is a spiritual belief of the Rosicrucian Order. In another guide to Rosicrucianism, first published in 1870, the writer Hargrave Jennings states that there are good angels and spirits, which defend and protect man from evil spirits and malignant angels. Interestingly, Jennings also notes that when the angel appears it should neither be male or female, but androgynous, as a male or female angel is likely to be a malignant spirit, as “sex is an emblem of weakness and a means of seduction” (1870; 1996: 312). The narrator in *A Romance of Two Worlds*, is attracted to Cellini’s picture of “The Lords of Life and

Death”, depicting the personification of life, the face of “Life Immortal and Love Triumphant” (*Romance*, vol1: 20). When asked about the face of “the Angel of Life” and if it is that of a female, Cellini replies: “Actual Beauty is sexless” (*Romance*, vol1: 21).

In *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Corelli also introduces alchemy, through a theme that recurs throughout the Heliobas texts, namely the elixir vitae. The elixir vitae not only appears in the “Heliobas” novels, but also in other works, notably her Parisian novel *Wormwood* (1890). After drinking absinthe, *Wormwood*’s main character Gaston Beauvais announces: “Elixir Vitae! – the secret so ardently sought for by philosophers and alchemists! – I had found it, even I! – I was as a god in the power I had obtained to create and enjoy the creations of my own fertile brain” (*Wormwood*: 185). Leonard R. N. Ashley explains that alchemy was “to make or discover the philosopher’s stone, sometimes called the elixir” (1996: 147). The philosopher’s stone, also known as the elixir vitae, was according to Ashley the search for immortality and eternal youth (1996: 151). Indeed, when the narrator meets Heliobas’s sister Zara, she believes her to be seventeen or at least no more than twenty years old. She cannot believe that Zara actually is thirty-eight years old (*Romance*, vol1: 218-219). Heliobas tells the narrator that the elixir vitae “will keep you in health, strength, and intellectual vigour, while it will preserve your youth and enjoyment of life to a very much longer extent than that usually experienced by the majority” (*Romance*, vol2: 70). The elixir vitae for Corelli is purely scientific and is merely another form of electricity, as Cellini observes: “That elixir is a powerful vivifying tonic, acting with great rapidity on the entire system, and rushing through the veins with the swiftness of *electricity*. [...] its actual use is to vivify and strengthen human life” (*Romance* vol1: 34-35). In his study of the Rosicrucian Order, McIntosh dedicates the entirety of chapter six, entitled “The Search for the Philosopher’s Stone”, where he discusses the Order’s links, to alchemical study and practices to find the “Elixir of Life” (1998: 51-63).

After having examined Corelli’s doctrine and its links to Rosicrucianism, it is possible to interpret this as Corelli’s response to the Woman Question, at least allegorically. Her anti-Pauline stance certainly supports this theory, as the teachings of St. Paul are notoriously conservative with regard to the advance of women in society. Corelli promotes a Gnostic quest in the “Heliobas” novels, where the main

protagonists with the “WILL” set out to discover esoteric knowledge. This gnosis is the divinity that exists within every human being, namely the soul. In this respect Corelli’s “Heliobas” novels and her “Electric Creed” and “Electric Principle of Christianity” epitomize the occult notion to be “more than human”. This introduces apotheosis in the novels, which can only be achieved by understanding the true nature and form of the universe, or as Corelli terms it, “the duality of existence” (*Romance*, vol1: 225). This is the natural balance that exists in the universe and is symbolized most of all by the equalization of male and female, and signified by the ultimate supreme being: the “Universal Androgyne” or the “Universal Hermaphrodite”.

In *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, Corelli concludes the novel with Alwyn’s spirit-love, the angel Edris, joining him to live in “tangible human guise of flesh and blood” (*Ardath*: 495). Therefore, Edris is the personification of angelic divinity and humanity as one, or rather Corelli’s concept of perfect and idealized womanhood:

Nothing but a *Woman, most pure womanly*; a woman whose influence on all is strangely sweet and lasting, - whose spirit overflows with tenderest sympathy for the many wants and sorrows of mankind, - whose voice charms away care, - whose smile engenders peace; - whose eyes, lustrous and thoughtful, are unclouded by any shadow of sin, - and on whose serene beauty the passing of years leaves no visible trace. That she is fair and wise, joyous, radiant and holy is apparent to all, - but only the poet, her lover and lord, her subject and servant, can tell how truly his Edris is not so much sweet woman as most perfect Angel! A Dream of Heaven made human! – Let some of us hesitate ere we doubt the Miracle; for we are sleepers and dreamers all, - and the hour is close at hand – when we shall Wake.
(*Ardath*: 497)

To conclude, Corelli’s Rosicrucian theory that she adopts for her “Electric Principle of Christianity” states that the universe is constructed of spheres and rings,

so it is also ironic that Corelli would metaphorically come full circle, from student to master. As Kirsten MacLeod acknowledges in her introduction to Corelli's Parisian novel *Wormwood* at the height of her fame and literary impact: "not only did her admirers voraciously devour her books, they also looked to her for guidance on religious and spiritual matters, [...] they fought to get near her, trying to kiss the hem of her dress; in America they founded religions based on her writings" (2004: 9).

The fact is, however, that Corelli has not enjoyed the same success and notoriety as some of her contemporaries. According to Federico at the height of her fame in the late Victorian period and early Edwardian period Corelli's novels were widely appreciated by men and women. Corelli was even a favourite of Queen Victoria (2000: 1). Nevertheless, Corelli's beliefs did estrange her readers and critics on many occasions. Ransom notes that when she died in 1924, the news headlines asked the question "Who was Marie Corelli?" Ransom further suggests that it was an impossible question to answer as her life and "her past was obscured by such a fog of lies and deceit", essentially a life that had been dictated by her secret membership of the Rosicrucian Order (1999: 5). In *A Romance of Two Worlds*, the narrator observes that her landlady was "an example of the common multitude, who are more ready to believe in vulgar spirit-rapping and mesmerism than to accept an established scientific fact" (*Romance*, vol1: 228). In *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, Corelli's favourite novel, and the least successful of all her publications, Corelli's promotion of her own beliefs, which the public and critics failed to identify, coupled with her attacks on other alternative groups confused and alienated her audience further still. Corelli's biographer Eileen Bigland observes:

The public, [...] considered there was a deal too much "preaching" in the book. Since spiritualistic séances were immensely popular at the time many people failed to appreciate a thundering denunciation of spiritualism declaimed by Heliobas and as for the critics – they took one look at certain pages and decided that in the future they would ignore the works of Miss Corelli altogether. (Bigland, 1953: 105)

It is ironic that the number of Corelli's readers decreased after the publication of *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, as they essentially saw her as a pro-Catholic, anti-alternative religious writer, whose only goal was to denounce the new trend for anything paranormal, when in truth Corelli was an active member of one of the most ancient alternative and anti-Catholic secret fraternities. Indeed, according to the July edition of "The Rosicrucian Digest": "Up to the time of her transition, approximately six years ago, Miss Corelli retained her position as an officer, an honor officer, of the Italian branch of the Rosicrucian Order as well as active membership in the French and English branches" (1930: 179). It is therefore understandable that Corelli was disappointed with the reception of *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, noting that the public had failed to understand the novel's true message. The fact that this second "Heliobas" novel was inspired by a passage from the Second Apocryphal Book of Esdras, with a quotation from it on the novel's title page, did not even lead its readers to suspect that it was unorthodox. Esdras is a book from the Septuagint (otherwise known as the Koine Greek version) translation of the Old Testament. It is regarded as an apocryphal book in Eastern and Oriental Orthodox religions but not in Judaism, Catholicism or Protestantism. It is almost identical to the Book of Ezra but with some variations. On the title page of *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, Corelli includes a small quotation, taken from Esdras: "So I went my way into the Field which is called 'ARDATH,' and sat among the flowers." Notably, it is also linked to Rosicrucianism, which was one of the few Orders to fully accept the Apocryphal Book of Esdras.

The "Heliobas" novels, nevertheless, remain an excellent example and source of Esoteric Christianity and they are immersed in Rosicrucian teachings and symbolism. While the Order is one of the less researched alternative esoteric spiritual, mystical and occult groups of the *fin de siècle*, in comparison to The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the Theosophical Society and spiritualism, it is crucial in this study, as it forms the basis for many of the teachings of numerous cults and societies, not least the Western esoteric tradition.

CHAPTER FOUR: “An Isolated Phenomenon”: Spiritualism, Apotheosis and the Religion of Detection

I have taken the title of this chapter from the Sherlock Holmes’ story “The Greek Interpreter” (1893) and from Watson, who comments: “During my long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Sherlock Holmes I had never heard him refer to his relations, and hardly ever to his own early life. This reticence upon his part had increased the somewhat inhuman effect which he produced upon me, until sometimes I found myself regarding him as an isolated phenomenon” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* 1930; 1981: 435). This quotation describes the character and nature of Holmes and introduces the concept of Holmes as a higher being, in possession of superhuman or god-like powers in the narratives.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was raised a strict Catholic, but he rejected his orthodox faith early in his life to pursue spiritualism. He attended his first spiritualist séance in 1887, the same year he published *A Study in Scarlet*. There were several contributory factors to Conan Doyle’s rejection of Christianity. He had an extremely unhappy childhood due to the alcoholism of his father, which resulted in Conan Doyle being sent to a strict Jesuit boarding school. He also experienced the deaths of several family members, including three siblings and later his first wife, who was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1893. Conan Doyle’s loss of orthodox faith, combined with his university education in medicine, meant that he needed to adopt a “modern” religion which was compatible with nineteenth-century culture and society. Conan Doyle commented in his memoirs: “My mind fell out continually into the various religions of the world. I could no more get into the old ones, as commonly received, than a man could get into his boy’s suit” (1924; 1989: 146). He also needed a faith that reflected his scientific background and as Conan Doyle concluded: “It was then, all Christianity, and not Roman Catholicism alone, which had alienated my mind and driven me to an agnosticism, which never for an instant degenerated into atheism” (1924; 1989: 32).

Organized spiritualism was originally a working-class and lower middle-class movement, its stronghold being in Yorkshire and the Northern industrial towns. The movement had strong links with political radicalism and members of the Independent Labour Party. From the 1870s onwards, another form of spiritualism emerged, which was adopted and developed by the middle-classes and the Victorian aristocracy. It was to this branch of spiritualism that Conan Doyle belonged. According to McLeod this “bourgeois” spiritualism never developed into an organised society and lacked the social-political radicalism of the lower working-class spiritualism. Instead, the new vein promoted intellectual reason and scientific investigation of psychic phenomena, independent of orthodox Christianity and the constraints of orthodox and materialistic science. As the central pillar of belief was the possibility of communicating with the spirits of the dead, it built up a strong membership because of its obvious attraction to those people suffering from bereavement. There was a dramatic increase of the numbers of members joining the society during and following the First World War (McLeod, 1996: 53-54).

There was a significant increase of belief in the supernatural and the desire to dedicate scientific study to the investigation of the occult and paranormal phenomena in the late Victorian period. As psychologist John Beloff suggests: “The scientific study of the paranormal [...] is historically speaking the product of the conflict between science and religion that came to a head in Victorian England” (Beloff cited by Norman, 2007: 81). Spiritualists, along with other members of similar groups such as the Theosophical Society, refused to abandon a sense of religion. At the same time they also felt they had the right to be able to ask questions and seek answers concerning the nature of man’s existence, resulting in a form of agnosticism. Theosophy, like spiritualism, claims to be a scientific study of spiritual matters. Out of the two religions, spiritualism predates theosophy. Spiritualism actually originated in America during the 1840s and was well-established and flourishing when the Theosophical society was founded in New York City in 1875 by H.P. Blavatsky, her American partner Henry Steel Olcott and various others. Theosophy is similar to spiritualism in that it is dedicated to the investigation, study and explanation of mediumship and psychic and paranormal phenomena. One major difference between the two religions is the belief in spirits of the dead and communication with the spirit

world. Spiritualism is founded on the conviction that communication with the spirit world is possible and promotes belief in mediumistic phenomena. Indeed this is the central doctrine of the religion. On the other hand, theosophy asserts that spirits cannot return to Earth or communicate with the living, except on very rare and exceptional occasions. Blavatsky only practised mediumship to gain esoteric knowledge from higher, powerful spirits, but she never believed these spirits were actually dead human beings. Although the Theosophical society drew many of its members from spiritualism in the early years, Janet Oppenheim suggests relations between the two groups were strained, particularly as Blavatsky rejected spiritualist theories and “repeatedly expressed her hostility toward spiritualism” (1985: 164).

According to Oppenheim a nickname that was given to E. R. Dodds, a Professor at Oxford and active member of the S.P.R (The Society for Psychical Research which was founded in 1882 to scientifically investigate the paranormal, including mesmerism and other spiritual and “psychical” phenomena) was “the Universal Question Mark” (1985: 119). Conan Doyle joined the society in 1894 and remained a member until his death in 1930. This label best describes those members of scientific-religious groups in their quest for truth, meaning and existence. It also aptly describes the character of Sherlock Holmes and the very nature of detection in the Holmes stories.

Hugh McLeod notes that spiritualism “fitted in well with the ethos of experimentation and of moral intellectual individualism that was particularly characteristic of the 1890s” (1996: 53-54). With regard to the characterization of Holmes, Conan Doyle created a character in possession of these very same qualities, a “true heroic figure in command of an agile and logically cool analytical mind which he used to fight evil and injustice” (Booth, 1998: 146). Holmes also needed to adopt a faith, which supported his work, experimental methods and “moral intellectual individualism”. Conan Doyle’s extensive knowledge of spiritualism, as demonstrated by the amount of research and works he published on the subject, enabled him to bring spiritualist principles to his character and the Holmes texts. Conan Doyle’s many works on spiritualism include, “The Wanderings of a Spiritualist” (1921); “Spiritualism – Some Straight Questions and Direct Answers” (1922) and *The History of Spiritualism* (published in two volumes, 1926).

Certainly from his memoirs, both Conan Doyle and Holmes share one fundamental belief in an unorthodox and scientific religious approach, as Conan Doyle observed:

I found that the foundations not only of Roman Catholicism but of the whole of the Christian faith, as presented to me in nineteenth century theology, were so weak that my mind could not build upon them. [...] Never will I accept anything which cannot be proved to me. The evils of religion have all come from accepting things which cannot be proved. (1924; 1989: 31-33)

Holmes, like Doyle, did not believe in faith without scientific rationalism. This is presented in the stories in two ways. The first is through the combination of Holmes's own scientific rationalism and deductive reasoning that he employs along with religious morals, the second is Conan Doyle's continuous warning against absolute faith without the individual asking questions. In part two of *A Study in Scarlet*, Conan Doyle discusses the implications of extreme faith without rationalization. The result of this is a religious cult that practises fear techniques to enforce worship and adherence to religious doctrines. As the cult described in the novel decrees: "you should embrace the true faith, and conform in every way to its usages" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 63). The cult in question is an extremist Christian cult, where the men outnumber the women, creating an almost Masonic fraternity. "The Avenging Angels", linked to the Mormons, are described in the novel as an: "organization which produced such terrible results, served to increase rather than to lessen the horror which it inspired in the minds of men" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 63). Conan Doyle made a reference to another extremist cult, raising questions of faith without question, brainwashing and using fear as a device to ensure adherence to doctrines and the order. In "The Five Orange Pips" (1891) the society in question is the Ku Klux Klan.

Although the detective genre was already established by the time Conan Doyle created Holmes, it did become more popular due to the appearance of his great

detective. On the surface, it is understandable that detective fiction flourished in the nineteenth century, as Ian Ousby observes: "Holmes's approach to detection participates intimately in that spirit of scientific rationalism which had come to dominate the intellectual climate of the Victorian period" (1976: 153). While detection does reflect the nineteenth-century interest in materialistic science, there is the spiritual and theological nature of detection, causing it to function as a pseudo-religion, which combines faith and science in a similar fashion to spiritualism.

Daniel Stashower concludes that Conan Doyle "would never have countenanced Holmes as a spiritualist mouthpiece" (2001: 408). However, there is evidence in the canon that Holmes, like Conan Doyle, adopted a faith in which scientific study, questioning and rationalism played a key role. Holmes's approach to justice certainly suggests that he believes in some form of God and faith, as he refers to the Christian doctrine of The Final Judgement in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (1891). He comments to John Turner: "You are yourself aware that you will soon have to answer for your deed at a higher court than the Assizes" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 217).

This combination of theology and scientific rationalism produces an alternative scientific faith, which for Holmes is embodied in detection. In this respect, there is a direct link between the author and his character as detection and spiritualism function in the same way. At first, it appears unlikely that any form of religion and detection could be compatible, yet the ultimate goal of detection is to protect and maintain the interests of humanity and promote the advancement of mankind. This, as Robert S. Paul suggests, means that detective fiction is not based on any specific religious doctrine, such as Christianity (1991: 48). Interestingly, Conan Doyle describes spiritualism in exactly the same way as Paul describes detection, namely as "a system of thought and knowledge which can be reconciled with any religion" (1926; 2007: 247). Instead it embodies a universal religious code, which does amount to humanism, although there is no evidence to confirm Conan Doyle was familiar with the philosophy of Auguste Comte and positivism.

Paul further argues that detection and religion are two compatible concepts, as there are many elements of detection, which are fundamentally theological in their nature, including:

(1) a belief that our universe is structured on the basis of rational laws; (2) the conviction that 'truth' is real and can be discovered rationally by weighing the evidence; (3) the assumption that if all the facts are known, we can discover meaning in them; (4) the perception that there is real distinction between right and wrong conduct; (5) the assumption that human life is of very great, even supreme value; (6) the recognition that although people are always capable of goodness, there is also within them an innate capacity for evil; (7) the conviction that we must strive to achieve justice for the sake of society. (1991: 14)

Unitarian minister Stephen Kendrick observes other parallels between religion and detective fiction. He interprets the Sherlock Holmes stories in a uniquely Christian context and also arrives at the conclusion that detective fiction and religion are compatible, particularly as he suggests the Holmes narratives appeal to us because they "are more than detective stories – they are humble parables for our instruction, the clarifying of our inner vision" (Kendrick, 1999: 20). As we shall see, in addition to investigation, one aim of detective fiction is to focus on human psychology and to present and contrast good and evil in human nature.

Paul's theory that detective fiction promotes religious concepts that are common to many theologies is, nevertheless, very general. Although some religions may share similar doctrines and principles, there are still elements which are individual and particular to every belief system. In terms of the Holmes texts, there is evidence in the stories to suggest that Conan Doyle took certain elements which were specific to spiritualism and moulded the character of Holmes and the stories using the guiding principles of spiritualism.

The central pillar of belief for spiritualism was the possibility of communicating with spirits and spiritualists dedicated themselves to scientific research to prove this. Thus it appealed to those who wanted to find a middle path between Christian orthodoxy and scientific reason. Indeed John Stephen Farmer, the editor of the

Victorian occult periodical *Light*, wrote about spiritualism's relationship to "materialistic science" and "popular faith". He suggested:

Spiritualism is the handmaid of both – that standing midway between the opposing schools, it gives to the one a scientific basis for the divine things of old, whilst it restores to the other the much needed evidence of its expressed faith in the duality and continuity of life. (Farmer, 1880; 2005: v-vi)

Paul's theory of the seven principles of detection is interesting, as many of them correspond directly to the seven guiding principles of spiritualism. In his history of the religion, Conan Doyle discusses these seven central guiding principles. They include: 1. The Fatherhood of God, 2. The Brotherhood of Man, 3. The Communion of Saints and the Ministry of Angels, 4. Human survival of physical death, 5. Personal responsibility, 6. Compensation for good or evil deeds, 7. Eternal progress open to every soul (1926 ; 2007: 260). Conan Doyle refers to the third guiding principle of spiritualism, which he describes as "The Communion of Saints and the Ministry of Angels". At least five of the principles relate directly to the Holmes texts.

Kendrick suggests that Holmes's "vision of God is somehow peculiarly applicable to the modern sensibility, in which God somehow seems missing in action, a void, a shadow, a presence evoked by the whiff of retreating incense" (1999: 55). Perhaps the Christian Abrahamic God is not present in the stories, but Holmes does believe in some higher, creative force. The first guiding principle of spiritualism, which is "The Fatherhood of God" is the acceptance of science as proof of a divine creative force. This principle states that in trying to understand the laws of nature and in particular the law of cause and effect, the spiritualist accepts that there is a creative force in the universe. The effect of the creator is evident in everything and this proves that 'God' or the Creative Force manifests itself directly and indirectly in all things. Holmes comments to Watson in "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box" (1893): "What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable" (*The Penguin*

Complete Sherlock Holmes: 901). Holmes displays similar beliefs in “The Musgrave Ritual” (1893):

There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion [...]. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But the rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers. (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 455-456)

The second guiding principle of spiritualism, which is “The Brotherhood of Man” states that all mankind is part of one brotherhood, which means we need to strive to achieve a sense of community through mutual trust, respect, comfort and support. This notion of bonding together and the concept of brotherhood is also evident in the Holmes texts through homosocial bonding and Masonic fraternities, which I will discuss later in this study. Most importantly, it is personified through the Holmes and Watson relationship. As Stephen Arata suggests: “To point out the homosocial elements of the Holmes-Watson relationship, for instance, is not to be perverse but simply to do justice to the intensity of ties uniting these two men” (1996: 145-146).

Conan Doyle’s spiritualist belief that the spirit lives on can certainly be applied to Holmes’s remarkable return from the dead. The fourth guiding spiritualist principle of “Human survival of physical death” or the continuous existence of the human soul means that matter, as part of the creative force, cannot be destroyed, it merely changes its form. Perhaps nowhere is Holmes’s “supernatural” immortality more evident than in “The Final Problem” (1893). After a trip to Switzerland in 1893 and a visit to the Reichenbach Falls, Conan Doyle decided to “kill” his detective. “The Final

Problem” appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in the December 1893 edition. The public’s reaction was unprecedented. In London, black mourning bands were seen and his death was discussed in language usually reserved for state funerals. Even members of the Royal Family were reported to be distressed. Clearly Conan Doyle ‘resurrected’ Holmes for public and commercial reasons. Yet, Holmes’s return from the Reichenbach Falls is incredible, bordering on the fantastic, as is his ‘rational’ explanation. Conan Doyle gives a ‘plausible’, materialist explanation for Holmes’s survival. The detective used his powers and remarkable knowledge of baritsu, a Japanese system of wrestling, to avoid falling over the ledge. Although he does not literally come back from the dead, the result of Holmes’s re-appearance in “The Adventure of the Empty House” (1903) is that he is portrayed as infallible and the detective finally achieves immortal status, as though his readers had willed him or rather summoned him back to life.

Spiritualists believe in the fifth guiding principle, which is “Personal responsibility”. This principle states that every individual is personally accountable for wrongful thoughts and deeds and must accept responsibility for every aspect of his or her life. This principle highlights self-control, in that no other person can influence a person to act in a particular way, unless the individual is willing to allow this to happen and freely complies. Every person is given freedom of choice (free will) with the ability to recognise right from wrong. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), Sir Henry reminds us of this and remarks on the consequences of not taking personal responsibility. When Barrymore goes to see Sir Henry about his grievance (he is angry about the attempt to hunt down the convict Selden) Sir Henry reminds him of his prior reluctance to speak about his brother in law: “If you had told us of your own free will it would have been a different thing [...] you only told us, or rather your wife only told us, when it was forced from you and you could not help yourself” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 728). Of all the principles, Conan Doyle particularly draws our attention to the fifth:

It will be seen that all of these are compatible with ordinary Christianity, with the exception perhaps of the fifth. The Spiritualists look upon Christ’s earth life and death as an

example rather than a redemption. Every man answers for his own sins and none can shuffle out of that atonement by an appeal to some vicarious sacrifice. (1926; 2007: 260)

The sixth guiding spiritualist principle of “Compensation for good or evil deeds” relies on the natural law of cause and effect, or in Christian terms “a person will reap exactly what he sows” (Galatians 6:7). Spiritualism claims that individuals must undergo trial and retribution for their deeds on Earth in their physical life and they do not wait until their entrance to the spirit world, unlike Christianity. One example of retribution is the murderer Jim Browner who at the end of “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” (1893) is “haunted” by the those he has killed: “You can hang me, or do what you like with me, but you cannot punish me as I have been punished already. [...] I killed them quick but they are killing me slow; and if I have another night of it I shall be either mad or dead before morning” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 901). In a similar way, in “The Speckled Band,” Holmes sends the swamp adder back up the rope where it attacks and kills its owner Dr. Grimesby Roylott, who has committed murder. Holmes observes that: “Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 272). Kendrick believes this to be a reference to the Old Testament book Ecclesiastes 10:8. The passage reads: “If you dig a pit, you fall in it; if you break through a wall, a snake bites you” (Kendrick, 1999: 21-22).

Holmes’s religious faith is also exemplified by the fact that in occult terms the detective does become “more than human”, as he actually achieves a higher status and possesses god-like powers at certain points in the narratives. His Nietzschean superhuman powers are coupled with the ability to recognize good and evil, as his client Helen Stoner remarks in “The Speckled Band” (1892): “I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 259). Ousby similarly observes: “This power, which seems like that of the presiding judge in a court, can also take on religious overtones” (1976: 170).

Stephen Knight addresses Holmes’s elevation to a higher status and comments on what he terms the “detective apotheosis” of Sherlock Holmes:

Doyle's creation is unquestionably an apotheosis, a conveying of quasi-divine status on the figure that had slowly emerged through the nineteenth century: a detective who is highly intelligent, essentially moral, somewhat elitist, all-knowing, disciplinary in knowledge and skills, energetic, eccentric, yet also in touch with the ordinary people who populate the stories .(2004: 55)

This apotheosis is displayed in several ways. Holmes feels he is able to undertake the role of judge, because he is able to recognize virtues in his client. For example, in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (1891) he comments: "The self-reproach and contrition which are displayed [...] appear to me to be the signs of a healthy mind rather than a guilty one" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 205). This is contrasted with Holmes's portrayal of the criminal characters as evil biblical figures, usually as "devils" or "demons". Holmes remarks: "They must be cunning devils" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 228). In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) Holmes makes light of Mortimer's account of the Baskerville curse, and says "To take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task" but does admit that "In a modest way I have combated evil" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 681).

Holmes's clients and even Watson are content to put their absolute faith in the great detective. In "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" Lestrade asks Holmes the question "Why should you raise up hopes which you are bound to disappoint?" Watson replies: "I did not wonder at Lestrade's opinion, and yet I had so much faith in Sherlock Holmes's insight that I could not lose hope" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 209). Holmes himself is scientific proof that faith in him produces very real and tangible results. He literally answers the prayers of his clients and Watson's accounts of the cases act as a record of Holmes's miraculous achievements. For Holmes, this is perhaps the reason why Watson's should be scientific accounts rather than works of fiction. He tells Watson: "Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might

have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 636).

As Holmes has been raised to God-like status, it is interesting that there is some reference to idolatry in *The Sign of Four* (1890). Holmes tells Watson that he has been involved with matters on the Continent. He has received a note from a François le Villard of the French detection service. Watson reads the note and comments that le Villard “speaks as a pupil to his master” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 91). Ousby suggests a similar relationship exists between Holmes and Watson, one that amounts to hero-worship: “Watson has a function [...] to record and publicize the exploits of his hero. In return he is rewarded with an invigorating contact with greatness” (1976: 150).

Finally, Holmes readily assumes the role of redeemer and saviour and often acts as final judge and arbiter. The statements he takes from the criminals, such as Ryder in “The Blue Carbuncle” (1892), act as confessions with Holmes fulfilling the role of the priest and granting absolution. He observes this quality in himself in the story “The Blue Carbuncle”, which is appropriately set at Christmas. On hearing the confession of Ryder, he lets him go and tells Watson: “I suppose that I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 257).

As Holmes is elevated to a higher status, he displays god-like powers and abilities that, in occult terms, are esoteric and characterize him as “more than human”. In a recent article in *The Times*, entitled “The spirited beginning of Sherlock Holmes,” Dalya Alberge surmises that Sherlock Holmes was the “epitome of scientific reason” and “dismissive of the paranormal” (Alberge: the *Times*, September 15, 2007). As far as the supernatural is concerned, Holmes is a confirmed non-believer and approaches the subject with his characteristic scientific rationalism and scepticism. Holmes, for example, dismisses Mortimer’s account of the Hound of the Baskerville family as only interesting to “a collector of fairy tales” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* : 676). An example of this is found in the late Holmes story, “The Sussex Vampire” (1924) where the detective comments: “This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply” (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 1034).

Holmes may not have believed in the possibility of the supernatural, but that does not mean that the Holmes stories or indeed Holmes's characterization omit any references to the paranormal. Booth contrasts the characters of Holmes and Watson and notes: "[Watson] was the commonsensical mortal to Holmes's immortal, the human to his eccentric superhuman" (1998: 153). In this part of the study, I wish to discuss the presence of the paranormal in the Holmes stories and the construction of Holmes himself as the supernatural detective, with his preternatural powers of observation and deductive reasoning. This relates to another spiritualist principle, the third principle of the "Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels". In addition to the possibility of mediumship and communion with the spirits of relatives and friends, the third principle also denotes that there are elevated spirit people or teachers (they are also referred to as spirit guides) who are dedicated to helping and guiding the individual. In many respects this higher intellectual being dedicated to serving mankind is reminiscent of Holmes.

As Martin Booth suggests to the readers of the stories, "Sherlock Holmes seemed to have almost magical powers and yet they were always readily understood when the explanation came" (1998: 158). For example, in "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891), Watson speaks of Holmes's "extraordinary powers" and remarks to his friend: "You would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 161 - 162). Holmes himself is aware that he has faculties that surpass ordinary human capacities. He comments: "The work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers, is my highest reward" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 90).

In 1889, Conan Doyle welcomed a visitor, Professor Milo de Meyer from Italy. The visit had great significance for Doyle. It was through de Meyer that he became aware of the writings of Franz Anton Mesmer, the Austrian physician famous for being the founder of mesmerism and his theories of magnetism. Holmes was also given abilities suggestive of mind control. Spiritualism actually built on mesmerism and the theory of magnetism. Indeed according to Amanda Porterfield:

Mesmer's theories about "animal magnetism" influenced thinking in several different religious and scientific arenas.

Perhaps most famously, his theories contributed to new ideas and experiences associated with occult phenomena, such as spirit rapping, messages from the dead, and extrasensory perception. The esoteric religion of Theosophy [...] derived in part from Mesmer's beliefs about animal magnetism, as did later forms of esoteric spirituality and alternative forms of healing associated with New Age religions and various forms of neopaganism. (2005: 175)

It is also interesting that theosophy, as a scientific-religion, promoted Oriental wisdom through a great attraction to Tibet. In explaining his disappearance after the Reichenbach Falls, Holmes tells Watson in "The Adventure of the Empty House": I travelled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhasa, and spending some days with the head lama" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 488).

Stephen Knight suggests that Holmes's powers of deduction, amount to "mind-reading [and] many of the stories begin with this interpretative magic as Holmes decodes a hat, a watch, a stick, even just the appearance or clothing of a visitor" (2004: 56). This in turn equates him with other supernatural literary figures endowed with the power of mesmerism and psychometry. Even Watson recounts in "The Red Circle" (1911) how: "Holmes leaned forward and laid his long, thin fingers upon the woman's shoulder. He had an almost hypnotic power of soothing when he wished" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 902).

Like other supernatural figures and representatives of unorthodox religions, including Bram Stoker's Count Dracula and Arthur Machen's Helen Vaughan, Holmes has the ability to metamorphose. Holmes is able to change his form, assuming alternative identities and characters through his expertise in costume and acting. As Watson observes in "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891): "Accustomed as I was to my friend's amazing powers in the use of disguises, I had to look three times before I was certain that it was indeed he" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 167). It is not only a physical transformation through a change of costume, but one that affects Holmes's very soul. In "A Scandal in Bohemia" Watson observes that Holmes:

disappeared into his bedroom and returned in a few minutes in the character of an amiable and simple-minded Nonconformist clergyman. [...] It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 170)

Holmes's abilities to change his form, his preternatural powers of mind-reading and psychometry, underlined by an almost immortal existence, present him as a vampiric figure, at least in terms of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), to his readers. In his biography of Bram Stoker, Paul Murray comments that Stoker knew Conan Doyle through the Lyceum Theatre and because they were both members of the Irish Literary Society. He further comments: "Doyle's personal relationship with Stoker was close. When Irving died, he wrote a letter of condolence to Stoker, and both Florence and Stoker attended Doyle's wedding in 1907" (2004: 132). In "The Sussex Vampire" Holmes remarks: "Rubbish, Watson, Rubbish! What have we to do with walking corpses who can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their hearts? It's pure lunacy." To this Watson replies, "But surely [...] the vampire was not necessarily a dead man? A living person might have the habit. I have read, for example, of the old sucking the blood of the young in order to retain their youth" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 1034).

James B. Twitchell further comments on Watson's theory:

[Watson] hints that his knowledge may be extensive. For he knows that vampires are not always foamy-mouthed fiends with blood dripping from their incisors, but rather the participants in some ghastly process of energy transfer in which one partner gains vitality at the expense of another. (1981: 3)

Holmes is vampiric in two respects. The first is the energy or rather mental stimulation that he takes from Watson. Holmes acknowledges this himself in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, as he remarks to Watson: "It may not be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 669). The second piece of evidence for Holmes's vampirism is his dependence on the mental stimulation he receives from his criminal cases. This is presented early in the second novel *The Sign of Four* (1890). The novel begins with Holmes taking his hypodermic syringe and injecting himself with a seven per cent solution of cocaine. Watson asks Holmes why he abuses himself with the drug to which Holmes replies:

My mind [...] rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world. (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 89 – 90)

The above quotation tells us two things about the character of Holmes. The first is, like the vampire, he receives his energy from other sources of stimulation that enable him to function and thrive. Holmes himself reiterates this in the text. When Watson asks him if he currently has a case, Holmes replies: "None. Hence the cocaine. I cannot live without brainwork. What else is there to live for? [...] What is the use of having powers, Doctor, when one has no field upon which to exert them?" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 93).

Kelvin I. Jones published a monograph in 1984 entitled *The Carfax Syndrome. Being A Study in Vampirism in the Canon*. Jones proposes that there are many cases of vampirism in the stories, in addition to the story "The Sussex Vampire." Jones believes that the numerous stories that include tomb despoliation, for example in "The

Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" (1927), and underground chambers and old Houses, are all evocative of the Gothic genre and vampire stories, particularly *Dracula*. Jones further argues that there are many resemblances to Stoker's novel. In the section "The Physical Resemblances" Jones makes a connection between the villains of the Holmes stories, particularly Moriarty, and the vampire appearance of Count Dracula (1984; 1997: 11-13). Jones does not apply any theories of vampirism to Holmes himself, despite the detective having the same physical vampire features, according to Jones's definitions. Jones argues: "All these Holmesian villains [...] have certain features in common. They are tall, possessed of great strength, pale and ascetic with deep-set, penetrating eyes. They are also all highly intelligent. They are indeed, versions of the Byronic vampire" (1984 ; 1997: 13). Jones does not apply this theory to Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* where Watson observes: "His very person and appearance were such to strike the attention of the most casual observer. In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those intervals of torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 20).

The second central principle of spiritualism is "The Brotherhood of Man." Conan Doyle may have taken this literally, as it is interesting that the Holmes texts contain many examples of male dominated environments, clubs and fraternities. The most obvious examples are the numerous gentlemen's clubs mentioned throughout Doyle's oeuvre. Historically, the original gentlemen's clubs were established in the West End of London, the majority along Pall Mall. One of the more famous clubs is the Reform Club, founded for Liberal Radicals in 1836. According to Liza Picard there were notable others, including the Travellers' Club, founded in 1819; the Athenaeum, founded in 1824 for bishops and scholars; the Carlton Club, founded especially for members of the conservative party; the Garrick, named after actor David Garrick and founded in 1831 for actors and other artists and Boodle's. The usual entrance fee for the majority of clubs was about 20 guineas and the annual subscription fee around 10 guineas. They were characterized by the shared interest of the members in politics, sport, literature, and love of games based on cards as gambling was a major activity of the gentlemen's club. Membership was in also dependent on social background, for

example the same branch of the armed forces, or the same university. In all cases, the gentlemen's club came to include professionals, such as doctors and lawyers. The point was, "if you felt like talking, you could find kindred spirits there; if not, you could read in the usually excellent library without having to listen to the domestic tittle-tattle that might assail you at home. You could even live there" (Picard, 2007: 104 - 105).

The importance of the gentlemen's club in Victorian society and its subsequent appearance in some of the literature of the Victorian period cannot be disregarded. The clubs encouraged the homosocial bonding of men and were an intense male domain, a second home that enabled its members to relax and socialize in a non-female environment. As masculinity is central to Conan Doyle's writings, it is understandable that there should be references to such clubs in the Holmes texts. For more information on Conan Doyle and masculinity, see Diana Barsham's *Arthur Conan Doyle and the Meaning of Masculinity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) and Joseph A. Kestner's *Sherlock's Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle, and Cultural History* (Aldershot : Ashgate, 1997). In this respect, there are links to Stoker's *Dracula* and the Christian Fraternity, as discussed in chapter six. There are a number of gentlemen's clubs in the stories. For example, in "The Adventure of the Empty House," the character Colonel Sebastian Moran attends The Bagatelle Club; The Tankerville Club features in two stories – the first is "The Adventure of the Empty House" and the second is "The Five Orange Pips" (1891). In this second story, the character John Openshaw introduces himself to Sherlock Holmes and says that he has heard of Holmes from Major Pendergast, whom Holmes had saved from the Tankerville Club Scandal, where Major Pendergast had been wrongfully accused of cheating at cards. Perhaps the most famous of all the gentlemen's clubs mentioned and more relevant to this part of the study is the Diogenes Club. This particular club features in several stories, most notably in "The Greek Interpreter" (1893). The club was co-founded by Mycroft Holmes, the elder brother of Sherlock Holmes. Mycroft Holmes is described as working for the British government. He audits the books for some government departments. Holmes observes that his brother is "very well known in his own circle" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 435). In "The Greek Interpreter," Sherlock Holmes comments:

There are many men in London, you know, who, some from shyness, some from misanthropy, have no wish for the company of their fellows. Yet they are not averse to comfortable chairs and the latest periodicals. It is for the convenience of these that the Diogenes Club was started, and it now contains the most unsociable and unclubable men in town. No member is permitted to take the least notice of any other one. Save in the Stranger's Room, no talking is, under any circumstances, allowed, and three offences, if brought to the notice of the committee, render the talker liable to expulsion. My brother was one of the founders, and I have myself found it a very soothing atmosphere. (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 436)

The fact that Conan Doyle introduces a secret club for men is interesting and significant with regard to his own attempts to find alternative gatherings to orthodox Christian worship.

Conan Doyle not only found spiritual fulfilment through his belief in spiritualism and interest in the paranormal and the occult, but he also found some support through his brief membership of the Freemasons. In other chapters we will see how authors such as Arthur Machen and Bram Stoker were members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In 1898, Conan Doyle was also asked to join the Order by Dr. Henry Pullen Bury. Conan Doyle wanted to know what benefits he would receive by joining the Order. He was informed by Bury that he would receive supernatural powers, but would first have to undergo an "astral examination". Conan Doyle found the examination "queer and disagreeable" and he later decided not to join the Order. Afterwards, he commented in his "Early Psychic Experiences", which appeared in *Pearson's Magazine* (March 1924: 208-209): "I remain under the impression that I brushed against something which I am not sorry that I avoided. It was not Spiritualism and it was not theosophy, but rather the acquisition of powers latent in the human organization, after the alleged fashion of the old Gnostics or of some modern fakirs in India" (Doyle cited by Gilbert, 1983: 59).

Conan Doyle's membership of the Freemasons was erratic. On the 26th January 1887, he was initiated into Freemasonry at the Phoenix Lodge No. 257 in Southsea, Hampshire. At the time, he was 27 years old. He quickly rose through the degrees and in 1887 he was made a Master Mason, following the Scottish Rite. According to Andrew Lycett his decision to join the order suggests that Conan Doyle "was hoping to tap into the store of occult knowledge that traditionally stood at the heart of Freemasonry" (2007: 139). In 1889 he made the decision to resign from the lodge and to take no further part in lodge affairs, presumably in order to dedicate himself to his spiritual interests. In spite of his resignation, Conan Doyle did continue Freemasonry, although his attendance at meetings was infrequent. He attended various lodges as an unattached mason, finally withdrawing and severing all contact with Freemasonry in 1911, as he felt it did not support his spiritualist needs.

In the stories, there are several direct references to Freemasonry. In *The Valley of Fear* (serialised 1914-1915) there is some mention of the Ancient Order of Freeman. In "The Red-Headed League" (1891) Holmes identifies a man as a Freemason: "I won't insult your intelligence by telling you how I read that, especially as, rather against the strict rules of your order, you use an arc and compass breastpin" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holme* : 177). Robert T. Runciman published a minor study entitled "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Freemasonry" in 1993. In addition to the references to the order as described above, he also suggests there are more examples to be found in other stories, including "A Study in Scarlet", "The Yellow Face" (1893), "The Stock-broker's Clerk" (1893), "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" (1903), and "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman" (1927). The most interesting of these is "The Yellow Face." Runciman discusses the theory proposed by William Cochran that there are parts of this story, which may have some connection with Jack the Ripper. He suggests that Cochran "propounds a theory that there are Masonic references in this story. He considers that the story is dated from September to November 1888 and he connects it with Jack the Ripper and the Whitechapel murders." Runciman also suggests that Cochran referred to Stephen Knight's book *Jack the Ripper: The final Solution* (1976). This book has been the centre of much controversy since its publication in the mid-seventies. Moreover Cochran "also refers to Conan Doyle's involvement with the spiritualist movement in

England and the 'fact' that a prominent member of that movement led the police to the Ripper. Thus, he argues, Doyle must have known all the facts surrounding the Ripper case." Runciman's reference to William Cochran's study "Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle and The Yellow Face . . . *The Cryptic Holmes*" in *Beeman's Christmas Annual*, 1986 is one of the minor sources consulted in his study on Sherlock Holmes and Freemasonry. Others include: Donald A. Redmond. "The Masons and the Mormons" in *Baker Street Miscellanea*, (Vol 18, 1968: 229); Raymond L. Holly. "Hiram Abiff and Hall Pycroft: Freemasonry in 'The Stock-broker's Clerk' in *Wheelrightings*, (Vol 10, 1987: 5). Runciman concludes, however, that caution is needed in connecting the story with the Ripper theories and any involvement with Freemasonry.

In an article that appeared in the *Freemason MQ Magazine*, (issue 6, July 2003), the editorial entitled "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Elementary, my dear brother" claims the story "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" is one of the more covert references to Freemasonry in the Sherlock Holmes stories. The author of the article, W. Bro. Yasha Beresiner suggests the catechism that the eldest son of the Musgrave family has to learn, is a direct link to the order:

Whose was it?

His who is gone.

Who shall have it?

He who will come.

Where was the sun?

Over the oak.

Where was the shadow?

Under the elm.

How was it stepped?

North by ten and by ten, east by five and by five, south by two and by two, west by one and by one, and so under.

What shall we give for it?

All that is ours.

Why should we give it?

For the sake of the trust (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 392).

Runciman (1993) also includes this story as an example of Freemasonry in the stories and comments “Professor Jay MacPherson of the University of Toronto is of the opinion that this catechism had its origins in Freemasonry. Barrett G Potter [...] also believes that the ritual has roots in Masonic catechisms used for instruction of members of the Craft.” Runciman cites a letter from Jay MacPherson, dated 12 January 1989 and Barrett G. Potter. “Sherlock Holmes and the Masonic Connection” in *Baker Street Miscellanea*, (Vol 45, 1986, pp.28-32 and p.38). Although Conan Doyle did not mention Freemasonry in his memoirs, there are other articles which have found similar connections between Sherlock Holmes and the order. These include Cecil Ryder’s “A Study in Masonry” published in the *Sherlock Holmes Journal* (1973) and G. Potter Barrett’s “Sherlock and the Masonic Connection,” which appeared in the *Baker Street Miscellanea* (vol. 45, 1986).

Holmes himself has never been identified as a Freemason. Yet the Freemason order as a secretive spiritual brotherhood, which promotes homosocial bonding and masculinity, also describes the very heart of the relationship between Holmes and Watson. It is an inter-dependent relationship, or secretive brotherhood. In one of the last Holmes texts “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs” (1925) we have some insight into how much Watson means to Holmes. When Watson is wounded, the usual unemotional, rational Holmes breaks down at the thought of losing his closest friend. In turn, Watson comments:

It was worth a wound – it was worth many wounds – to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation. (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 1053)

Brotherhoods and fraternities, such as the Freemasons (and as portrayed here by the Holmes-Watson relationship) do provide some insight into the attitude of the middle class Victorian male in terms of re-asserting masculinity. More importantly, from a religious perspective, the rise of Freemasonry and alternative gatherings in Victorian culture highlights the gradual movement away from orthodox Christianity towards alternative universal non-conformist religions and unorthodox societies. Between 1870 and 1912, there were 2,329 new Freemason lodges founded throughout the country. As Harwood in his study on Freemasonry surmises:

Being a Freemason means possessing a belief that there is a divine intelligence that governs the working of the universe. Freemasonry has no doctrines or dogmas as such, or any political religious affiliations. Rather, it is a system of morality, which is veiled heavily in allegory and illustrated by symbols, with implications for a way of living that leads to self-improvement through service to the world. The Masonic argument is that these are the surest ways by which moral and ethical truths may be taught. It is compatible with various world-views and religious and philosophical traditions without being limited to any one of them. (2006: 9)

To conclude, it is interesting that in his memoirs, Conan Doyle simply wrote of Sherlock Holmes:

I do not wish to be ungrateful to Holmes, who has been a good friend to me in many ways. If I have sometimes been inclined to weary of him it is because his character admits no light or shade. He is a calculating machine, and anything you add to that simply weakens the effect (1924; 1989: 108).

To describe Sherlock Holmes as a character who admits no light or shade is unjust on Conan Doyle's part. Actually, the character of Holmes is much more

complex and shares more of Conan Doyle's own personal qualities, making him a semi-autobiographical figure. Further proof of this can be noted in Conan Doyle's personal interest in law and order and his own sense of a "private code of justice [...] based on the genteel code of honour" (Ousby, 1976: 168). Like Holmes, Doyle also maintained a keen sense of what he thought to be good and evil that ultimately led to his own involvement in real-life criminal cases, including George Edalji (convicted in 1903 for suspected animal mutilations) and Oliver Slater (convicted of murder in 1908). It was Conan Doyle's involvement in these cases, that led to the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in England and Scotland.

Author and character are also linked through their rejection of orthodoxy and conformity. Conan Doyle commented in his memoirs: "I was reverent in all my doubts and never ceased to think upon the matter, but the more I thought the more confirmed became my non-conformity" (1924; 1989: 32). Holmes continually surprises Inspector Lestrade with his unorthodox methods and approach to his work, not least in "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" when he sets fire to some damp straw in a house, enlisting the help of some constables to shout 'fire' in order to reveal the hiding place of Mr. Jonas Oldacre. Moreover his non-conformity is also reflected in his tendency to ignore official proceedings and to challenge established methods (similar to how Conan Doyle did through his involvement with the Edalji and Slater cases). In "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" Holmes not only solves the crime, but also takes it upon himself to assume the role of presiding judge, placing himself above the law and effectively making the ultimate decision of life and death. He does not allow the murderer John Turner to be apprehended by the police because he is suffering from a fatal illness. This situation would occur again in other Holmes texts, most notably "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" (1904), where again as the "presiding judge" along with Watson representing a British jury, he acquits Captain Crocker of murder as he was protecting a lady abused by her husband. Not only does this confirm his unorthodoxy and non-conformity, it also helps to portray Holmes as a figure above and beyond the laws to which the rest of humanity must adhere. In this respect he becomes a quasi-divine religious presence in the narratives.

Conan Doyle adopted non-conformist spiritualism as it enabled him to combine religious faith with his interest in scientific study. Sherlock Holmes does

exactly the same thing in that he adopts his own particular unorthodox methods of detection, which enables him to pursue his scientific rationalism and at the same time base moral judgement on religious virtues. In this respect, detection functions as a pseudo-religion, similar to spiritualism. Spiritualism is based on seven guiding principles, which correspond to the nature of detection in the Holmes stories. Indeed, Conan Doyle's assertion that Holmes was a cold, scientific "calculating machine" does not represent the Sherlock Holmes character of the stories. Not only does he fight for the integrity and justice of his clients but also, as he declares himself in "The Blue Carbuncle," he strives to save their very souls (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 257).

As Holmes is representative of the alternative religion and moreover given divine qualities, it is understandable why the great detective is also endowed with superhuman, indeed supernatural powers. His abilities in psychometry and mesmerism reflect the late-Victorian interest in the paranormal, itself a product of the science versus religion debate. In a literary sense, it also links him to other supernatural literary figures, particularly Stoker's vampire, itself a quasi-divine alternative religious presence in *Dracula*. The vampiric Holmes, as Watson observes in "The Sussex Vampire" is not a "conventional vampire", but rather he draws energy from those around him and is stimulated by his criminal cases, as though he thrives and is dependent on the intellectual challenge. When not engaged in a case, he becomes lethargic, only relieved by an artificial and supplementary stimulant of cocaine. Like Stoker's Count Dracula, he also has the ability to change shape, a metamorphosis that not only affects his physical appearance but also his very soul. In *Golden Dawn* terms this evokes the idea of the adepts' quest to "be more than human". Perhaps the final piece of evidence that we have for Holmes's vampiric nature comes from Conan Doyle himself. Stashower describes a sketch that Conan Doyle made not long before his death in 1930. The sketch illustrates the mental and physical drain on Conan Doyle, as though Holmes were a psychic vampire, feeding on Conan Doyle's physical and emotional energies:

It shows a flea-bitten workhorse pulling a heavy baggage cart. A tall pile of packing cases weighs the cart down, and

each case bears the label of a different aspect of Conan Doyle's life and work. [...] Perhaps the heaviest case in the pile is the one sandwiched in between "500 Lectures" and "Australia 1921." It reads: "Sherlock Holmes". (2001: 3-4)

As a final point, Sherlock Holmes's link to the occult seems even more plausible, considering Conan Doyle's background. Peter Haining and Peter Tremayne discuss the nature and influence of Irish Celtic heritage in their study of Bram Stoker and *Dracula*. Their theory may also be applied to Conan Doyle as, although born in Edinburgh, Conan Doyle was the grandson of a dispossessed Irish Catholic family: "Irish writers [...] often choose subjects where there is a tendency to suspend natural laws. They have the enviable ability to present breaks in natural laws as vivid and realistic" (1997: 128). As Holmes himself tells Watson in *The Sign of Four*: "How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth?" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 111).

CHAPTER FIVE: Victorian Paganism and Occult Science in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894)

Reflecting on the *fin de siècle* in his book *The Eighteen Nineties*, which was first published in 1913, Holbrook Jackson suggests:

Every physical excess of the time went hand in hand with spiritual desire. The soul seemed to be trying the way of the flesh with calamitous desperation. Long years of Puritanism and rationalism had proved the folly of salvation by morality and salvation by reason, so in a fit of despair the unsatisfied spirit of the age sought respite in salvation. The recognition of sin was the beginning of the revival of mysticism. (2008: 132)

This chapter will focus on elements of “physical excess”, the “recognition of [Christian] sin” as the start of the “mystical revival” in relation to the *fin de siècle* novella by Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan* (1894), with reference to *The Inmost Light* (1894) and *The Three Impostors* (1895). It will focus on late Victorian Celtic revivalism, paganism, nature, the unnatural and occult science. It will discuss Pan, the pagan god of nature, who is characterized as a wild and primal figure, and anxiety about sin in the Christian sense including sex (even rape), homosexuality, bisexuality and gender inversion.

In the 1923 American edition of another of his novels, *The Hill of Dreams* (first published in 1907), Machen included an introduction. Here he reflected on his three *fin de siècle* works, which were published at the very beginning of his literary career, and concluded that due to the reaction of the critics and the public he “was to start afresh, then, from the beginning, to turn over a new leaf, both as regards matter and manner. No more white powders, [...] no more hanky-panky with the Great God Pan, or the Little People or any people of that dubious sort” (2006: 68). The “little people” is a

reference to Machen's short story "The Shining Pyramid", where a young girl called Annie Trevor is "taken by the fairies" (Machen 1895; 2004 :26).

Contextually, Machen's *fin de siècle* works were produced at the time of the Celtic Revival in literature and poetry, widely known as the Irish Literary Revival. This movement also coincided with a surge of Victorian interest in paganism, later to be recognised as neopaganism, and in particular the re-emergence of the pagan deity Pan in literature throughout the nineteenth century. Tanya M. Luhrmann suggests that modern neopaganism, or the "new paganism" as she refers to it, began to take shape at the same time as Sir James Frazer was writing his study in magic and religion, *The Golden Bough* (appearing in twelve volumes between 1890 and 1915) (1993: 218). According to John Michael Greer, the term neopaganism actually dates back to around the 1890s, when it was used by literary critics such as F. W. Barry to describe writers who were influenced by Celtic and ancient Greek sources rather than Christian ones (2004: 325). The Celtic Revival, which began in the late nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century, embraced Ireland's cultural heritage and identity. It invoked its history and more importantly Irish folklore, myths and legends. John T. Koch notes that the Celtic Revival aimed to present Ireland as "a zone of Celtic spirituality, a territory of the imagination, scenic in the Romantic fashion: rural, primitive, wild and exotic" (2006: 57). There was a Celtic Revival in Wales, particularly with the renewed interest in Celtic Christianity, but compared to Ireland, it was not as profound. The Celtic Revival was closely linked to Irish national identity and as Pittock suggests "Irish nationalism also had a stronger and longer history, which meant that when the Celtic Revival did something to re-establish commonality, its organizations in late nineteenth-century Wales and Scotland [...] were timid in their demands compared to their Irish counterparts" (Pittock 1999: 110).

Although he is not generally considered to be a part of this movement, due to the fact he was born in Wales and not in Ireland, the genre, style and subject matter of Machen's works denotes that it is still possible to include him in the Celtic Revival movement. The elements that made his writing different within the movement were a blend of occultism, paganism and Christianity combined with a focus on Welsh heritage, folklore, myths and legends. Arthur Machen was born and raised in Gwent and as Mark Valentine notes "that borderland between England and Wales [...] was

for him also a borderland between this world and another world of strangeness” (1995: 7). Machen’s “borderland” fiction and his writing about Marcher territory, a ‘liminal’ zone, helped him to create a world with a unique identity that mirrored the individuality of the Welsh borders, a territory that for Machen encapsulated non-conformity and otherness. In his biography of Machen, Mark Valentine cites a review from the *Glasgow Herald* that introduces this term: “Nothing more striking or more skilful than this book has been produced in the way of what one may call Borderland fiction since Mr Stevenson’s . . . *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*” (1995: 27). The setting is also important, as it embodies the theme of liminality that is prevalent in Machen’s novels and will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Although he was the son of a Church of England clergyman and remained a member of the Church all his life, Machen’s writings incorporate a range of elements. He merges several aspects of the occult (he was particularly well versed in alchemy and Hermeticism) with a sense of Christianity and in particular the orthodox rituals of the Church of England. He was also extremely interested in Celtic legends and their connection to Christianity, notably the Celtic origins of the legend of the Holy Grail. Writing on a regular basis for Lord Alfred Douglas’s *The Academy*, Machen believed that the Grail legends were linked to the ancient rites of the Celtic Church and he termed the merging of the two religions “Celtic Christianity.” Ian Bradley notes: “The image of the Celts as a peculiarly spiritual people with a strong feel for the supernatural was confirmed by the publication of a collection of tales about fairies, visitations from the other world and manifestations of the second sight” (1999: 137). Machen adopted this term, which usually describes the early Christian worship among the native British people at the time of the Roman invasion. Celtic Christianity was the fusion of Christian teachings with Celtic pagan culture, with emphasis on the presence of the divine and a strong attachment to the natural world. This is particularly true of Welsh Celtic Christianity, which promoted the belief in the co-existence of a natural and spiritual world. Machen’s Celtic Christian childhood in the Welsh borders shaped his work in that it introduces the theme of losing the demarcation between the material and immaterial; the natural and supernatural; the laws of materialistic science and the existence of a divine creative and destructive force that manifests itself in nature.

Machen's interest in Celtic Christianity connected well with the pagan literature of the Victorian period and especially the *fin de siècle*. Barbara Jane Davy suggests the pagan revival in literature can be traced back at least as far as the German Romantics in the late 1890s and early 1900s. She adds that the early pagan literature produced in this period predates the growth of modern-day paganism (or rather what came to be recognised as neopaganism). In turn, she recognises that the German Romantics, such as Friedrich Schlegel in his 1799 novel *Lucinde* and his references to paganism influenced the English Romantics, who wanted to capture the "typical" English rural idyll. The surge of interest in paganism in British literature, particularly the Romantic poetry of John Keats, Percy Shelley, Algernon Charles Swinburne and later William Butler Yeats, which is filled with images of a Celtic and pagan idea of a natural world and rural landscape, anticipated and is thus linked to the Victorian desire to re-connect with nature (Davy, 2007: 90).

Within the pagan revival, it was the god Pan whom the poets revered more than any other deity, as in Greek mythology he was the lord and the protector of nature. Kenneth Grahame uses similar imagery in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), in chapter seven "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn". Grahame writes that Mole "looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper" (1908; 1983: 129). Although no specific name is given, Grahame's description and his use of capitalized letters suggest the pagan god. Indeed, in his *Pagan Papers*, which was published in 1904, Grahame professed himself to be a pagan.

Robert Louis Stevenson, like Oscar Wilde, popularised Pan and commented that "Pan is not dead, but of all the classic hierarchy alone survives in triumph; goat-footed with a gleeful and an angry look, the type of the shaggy world: and in every wood, if you go with a spirit properly prepared, you shall hear the note of his pipe" (1881; 2006: 125). The Pan revival coincided with the Celtic Revival movement and the birth of neopaganism. As Stevenson (1881; 2006: 126) proposes, nature was seen to be the existence of a spiritual realm. He comments:

What is it the birds sing among the trees in paring-time?
What means the sound of the rain falling far and wide upon
the leafy forest? To what tune does the fisherman whistle, as

he hauls in his net at morning, and the bright fish are heaped inside the boat? These are all airs upon Pan's pipe; he it was who gave them breath in the exultation of his heart, and gleefully modulated their outflow with his lips and fingers. (1881; 2006: 126)

As Matthew Riley suggests: "To call on Pan was in part a nostalgic attempt to reconnect alienated, modern humanity with nature, to 're-enchant' the world and endow nature with personal significance, so that it seems to 'speak' once again" (2007: 88). In writing *The Hill of Dreams*, Machen decided to modify or omit many of the features of his early works. In particular, his style dramatically changed. Machen comments: "no more of the measured, rounded Stevensonian cadence, which I had learned to use with some faculty and more facility" (1923; 2006: 68). In Chapter eleven of his *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers* (1881), which is entitled "Pan's Pipes", Stevenson highlights the need to re-discover nature. Stevenson suggests that the world has been reduced to "formula" and "chemical ingredients" (1881; 2006: 125). He further comments:

There are moments when the mind refuses to be satisfied with evolution, and demands a ruddier presentation of the sum of man's experience. [...] At least, there will always be hours when we refuse to be put off by the feint of explanation, nicknamed science; and demand instead some palpitating image of our estate, that shall represent the troubled and uncertain element in which we dwell, and satisfy reason by the means of art. (1881; 2006: 127)

Nevertheless, the paganism of the English Romantics was not a true representation of the actual paganism practised in the British Isles before the arrival of Christianity, rather a romanticized version of it. As Davy concludes: "It is the original nature religion, but newly imagined after the embracing of reason; it is a new religion

following urbanization and the repression of the Victorian era” (2007: 90 - 91). Understanding the Romantic desire to reconnect and rediscover nature, not only explains the revival of paganism, but also in particular why Pan, of all the pagan gods, became the most predominant pagan figure in the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Ronald Hutton notes he was:

thrust to prominence by the Romantics [...] and continued to attract attention all through the nineteenth century until he became the most frequently cited male deity in the whole canon of English literature. He was the one most intimately associated with the wild, disturbing and exciting aspects of nature. (1999: 22)

There are many texts about Pan that are too numerous to mention in this chapter. For a detailed study of Pan in literature, see Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God His Myth in Modern Times* (Harvard University Press, 1969). Mark Valentine includes some notable references to Pan in his biography of Machen. Valentine observes that the pagan god appears in:

Saki’s ‘The Music on the Hill’ (1911), E. M. Forster’s ‘The Story of a Panic’ (1911) and Lord Dunsany’s ‘The Tomb of Pan’ (1915) prigs pay the price for scorning the goatfoot boy. In Algernon Blackwood’s ‘The Man Who Played Upon the Leaf’ (1910), and ‘The Touch of Pan,’ (1917) and, indirectly, in his collection *Pan’s Garden* (1912), and novel *The Centaur* (1911), the god is a positive force, a wild exultation counterpoised to the stale artificiality of high society. The famous ‘Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ chapter in Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) strikes a fine balance between awe at the god’s presence and adoration of his kinship. Pan in his more cosmic aspect is seen in E. F. Benson’s story ‘The Man Who Went Too Far’ (1912) and his

association with sexual avidity is seen in D. H. Lawrence's strange story 'The Last Laugh' (1928)." (1995: 32)

This reconnection of man with this mysterious, primitive and animalistic image of nature is a major theme that is found in *The Great God Pan*. Indeed, Machen observed: "anything which I may have accomplished in literature is due to the fact that when my eyes were first opened in earliest childhood they had before them the vision of an enchanted land . . . Solitude and woods and deep lanes and wonder; these were the chief elements of my life" (Machen cited by Adcock 1928; 1969: 220). In *The Great God Pan*, Machen describes the landscape before the experiment on Mary takes place. The language he uses portrays the setting as a mythical living entity and a manifestation of the pagan god of nature: "a sweet breath came from the wood on the hillside above" (*The Great God Pan*: 9). In a similar fashion, Machen hints at the untamed nature of Pan as he further emphasizes that the landscape is wild and isolated: "Below, in the long lovely valley, the river wound in and out between the lonely hills, and, as the sun hovered and vanished into the west, a faint mist, pure and white, began to rise from the banks" (*The Great God Pan*: 9).

Machen's interest in the rural landscape serves not merely to introduce Pan and paganism into the text. In the theory of psychogeography, which explores hidden connections between the landscape and the human mind, Machen and his work have been identified as early examples. Mighall suggests: "With Machen the geographic and the somatic are associatively linked, mirroring each other on a number of levels" (1999: 154). This can be found early in the narrative, as Dr. Raymond comments to Clarke: "You see the mountain, and hill following after hill, as wave on wave, you see the woods and orchards, the fields of ripe corn, and the meadows reaching to the reed-beds by the river. [...] I say that all these are but dreams and shadows" (*The Great God Pan*: 10). In terms of Neoplatonism, Dr. Raymond views the landscape as a creation or product of the human mind and wants to discover the truth, as he declares: "There is a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision, beyond these 'chases in Arras, dreams in a career,' beyond them all as beyond a veil" (*The Great God Pan*: 10).

Pan is a figure found in Greek and Roman mythology (his counterpart in Roman mythology is Faunus, one of the oldest Roman deities and like the Greek Pan, he was the spirit of nature and the forest). The Greek mythological Pan is described as a liminal figure with a dual personality: half man and half beast, who is the lord and the protector of nature, while also being able to cause inexplicable fear and terror in people, hence the etymology of the word “panic”. He is the god of shepherds, pastoral farming, hunting and rustic music. He is the god of nature, he is representative of the dual force of creation and destruction. For an increasingly industrialized and modernized Victorian city environment, it is understandable why Pan was attractive. His duality and liminality symbolize impulsiveness and wildness, coupled with the fact that in Greek mythology Pan (unlike Eros who represents love) epitomizes aggressive sexual desire. For the Victorians, it was this aspect of Pan that was most attractive, as Davy concludes: “Pan thus served as a challenge to Victorian prudery, providing an alternative vision of male divinity to the nonsexual Christian God” (2007: 21).

The repression of Victorian society is important, as Machen’s biographer, Mark Valentine also suggests that Pan represented “a sense of youthful allurements and [...] a symbol for sexual freedom and license from the stifling moral climate that still clung from the previous century” (1995: 32). Embracing Pan and paganism was one example of finding spirituality through the expression of sexuality. For example, Davy further suggests that paganism, particularly Wicca, “was inspired in part by the Romantic movement against the Victorian repression of sexuality” (2007: 42). In many later works about Pan, the emphasis is on the expression of sexuality and the ravenous sexual desire of the god. Indeed, Hutton comments that at the *fin de siècle*, Pan “was turned into a more exciting and disturbing deity than the embodiment of rural nostalgia” (1999: 25). Pan characterized the animal and primal aspects of human nature, a figure who symbolized the breaking of social boundaries, moral codes and the fight against sexual repression. An example of this can be found in two poems published by another one-time member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley. Writing with his lover Victor Neuburg, between 1910 and 1914 he produced “The Triumph of Pan” and “Hymn to Pan”. With reference to the poems, which refer to homosexuality and bisexuality, Hutton notes that Pan essentially became “the deity of the forbidden” (1999: 25). Ronald Hutton includes

Crowley's "Hymn to Pan" in his study of paganism, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* and notes that "Crowley actually combines with Pan in the moment of coupling and so takes on his nature, becoming an epitome of ravenous and omnivorous libido" (1999: 49).

In a similar fashion, Oscar Wilde also wrote several poems with reference to Pan. Karl Beckson and Bobby Fong suggest that Wilde's pastoral poetry endeavours to recapture an irretrievable past or "utopia." The mythical past Wilde longed to recall is similar to that espoused by the Romantics. It was a world that contrasted greatly with the Victorian industrial revolution and so according to Beckson and Fong, "to redeem the modern world, Wilde calls upon Pan, the pre-Christian god now fallen into decay" (1997: 59). This is the subject of "Santa Decca", where Wilde laments the death of the pagan god, due to the birth of Christ: "For Pan is dead, and all the wantoning / By secret glade and devious haunt is o'er: / Young Hylas seeks the water-springs no more; / Great Pan is dead, and Mary's Son is King" (Wilde, 1881; 1997: 29).

In truth, Wilde turned away from Christianity and towards a form of paganism not just because he lamented the loss of a rural and pastoral idyll, but rather he felt that paganism did not enforce the same stifling limitations that he associated with Christianity. This, as Rieff suggests, is the real reason why "Wilde put himself entirely on the side of the pagans, against Jerusalem, because he knew that the terms in which our particular God was conceived could exist only so long as they limited the capacity of man to express everything" (1990: 280). His Pan poetry pre-dates that of Aleister Crowley and Victor Neuburg, yet there is still the sense that Wilde views Pan as god of liberation or rather "the deity of the forbidden". This is evident in his early poem "Ravenna" (1878). Wilde's speaker wanders through the greenwood and declaims "O waving trees, O forest liberty! / Within your haunts at least a man is free / And half forgets the weary world of strife: / The blood flows hotter, and a sense of life / Wakes i' the quickening veins, while once again / The woods are filled with gods we fancied slain!" (1997: 35). Other poems by Wilde, which mention Pan include "The Garden of Eros" (1881) "Charmides" (1881) and "Phèdre" (1881). He made the god the entire subject of a poem in "Pan: Double Villanelle" (1881) and lamented the

absence of the god throughout the poem, repeating the line “This modern world hath need of Thee!” (Wilde, 1997: 121-122).

In *The Great God Pan* there are similarities to Wilde’s portrayal of the pagan god. For example, as Dr. Raymond prepares for the alchemical experiment, Clarke feels drowsy and, his mind wandering, he recalls a walk on a summer’s day. Describing the effect of the landscape upon Clarke, Machen comments: “suddenly, in place of the hum and murmur of the summer, an infinite silence seemed to fall on all things, and the wood was hushed, and for a moment of time he stood face to face there with a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither living nor dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form” (*The Great God Pan*: 14). Interestingly, in this early recollection of his meeting with a liminal force of the natural world that can only be Pan, Clarke hints at the loss of staunch, Christian Victorian morality and sexual repression. He observes: “and in that moment, the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved” (*The Great God Pan*: 14).

Wilde looked upon Pan as the “deity of the forbidden” who offered liberation and release from the limitations of a Christian society. Machen retains the idea of the forbidden, but subsequently demonises it in *The Great God Pan*. Pan and his daughter, Helen Vaughan and her many aliases, are the embodiment of evil and although Machen never reveals the nature of this evil, there is enough evidence in the text that Pan and Helen are representative of forbidden sexual desire. The five suicides in the narrative are suggested to be the result of illicit relations. Indeed, Pan is a deity who possesses a liminal body and his daughter Helen is also characterized as a liminal subject by the many aliases she adopts in the course of the novella. Machen introduces this concept early in the narrative when the second incident involving Helen at the village occurs. Helen, as a child of paganism and nature who “still retained her extraordinary fondness for the forest”, takes her new friend Rachel with her (*The Great God Pan*: 22). Again, Machen hints at the animalistic humans and forbidden sexual desire, when at home Rachel’s mother finds her crying, and she asks “Ah, mother, mother, why did you let me go to the forest with Helen?” (*The Great God Pan*: 23). We are not told the exact events of what happened to Rachel, only that she tells her mother “a wild story” (*The Great God Pan*: 23). The phrase itself is not explicit, but Machen’s use of the word ‘wild’ like Stoker’s in *Dracula* (1897) is

significant. Talia Schaffer investigates the influence of Oscar Wilde on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), notably the use of the word "wild" throughout the novel, actually as a reference to Wilde and his sexuality. Indeed the title of Schaffer's study takes a line from the novel said by Jonathan Harker and amends the spelling of wild in the original text: "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*" (1994). Schaffer suggests the character of Dracula:

represents not so much Oscar Wilde as the complex of fears, desires, secrecies, repressions, and punishments that Wilde's name evoked in 1895. Dracula is Wilde-as-threat, a complex cultural construction not to be confused with the historical individual Oscar Wilde. Dracula represents the ghoulishly inflated vision of Wilde produced by Wilde's prosecutors, the corrupting, evil, secretive, manipulative, magnetic devourer of innocent boys. (1994; 1997: 472)

Although Machen published *The Great God Pan* in 1894, a year before 'the Wilde trials' began, Machen was influenced by Wilde's homoerotic *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). As Clarke feels unable to read the full account of the meeting between Helen and Rachel, because he finds it so disturbing, the Wildean implications in the text taken in the context of late Victorian society are enough to let us draw our conclusions. Helen is thus confirmed guilty of the greatest evil in Victorian society and is subsequently condemned. Clarke responds to the story by making an inscription at the end of the account and merely surmises in bold capitalized letters: "ET DIABOLUS INCARNATUS EST. ET HOMO FACTUS EST" (*The Great God Pan*: 23; my trans. "And the Devil was made incarnate. And was made human").

It is interesting that Wilde had written about Pan prior to Machen's publication of his novel, as Mark Valentine observes that Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) also influenced the development of the character of Helen Vaughan. He writes:

Machen told an American correspondent, Munson Havens, that he read Wilde's supernatural novel when it first

appeared, in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, July 1890 (published 20 June), and was 'a good deal impressed by it'. As *Pan* was begun in Summer 1890, [...] it is quite likely that the influence of the latter's novel is to be seen in Machen's book. (1995: 29)

There were two different branches of Pan literature that started to emerge in the late Victorian period. The first was a celebration and rediscovery of Pan and pagan rite; the second was an indirect attack not only on science, but also Christianity, which was criticized for "killing" paganism. Riley further comments on this and notes that much of the Pan literature "sounded a note of lament even as it invoked magic, freedom or the rural idyll. After all the pagan Pan was said by Plutarch to have died at the moment of Jesus' birth" (2007: 88).

The attack on Christianity through Pan literature was a response to the vilification of paganism at the time of the arrival and establishment of Christianity in Britain. Leo Vinci further notes that the image of Pan as the horned god, coupled with his great sexuality was indeed "perverted by the Church for its own ends" and suggests that Christianity, unable to totally eradicate all ancient beliefs, re-packaged them and presented them as part of the "new" religion (Vinci 1993: 27). When the early Christian Church was searching for an image to represent the anti-Christ, Pan fulfilled all the requirements for the role. The Christian image of Satan, with the horns and cloven hooves, is not only born out of the reference to the dragon in Revelations, but also the condemnation of pagan ritual and belief, using Pan as the basis for the image of the anti-Christ. In *The Great God Pan*, Machen was able to use the Christian association of Pan and Satan for Gothic horror purposes. The inverted Christian symbolism is evident in the narrative: the young girl Mary, impregnated by a higher spirit, resulting in the birth of a child (Helen Vaughan) who has a mortal mother and a god for her father is suggestive of the birth of Christ.

It is in this respect that Machen's retention of Christian beliefs influences the text, as Machen portrays Pan as the manifestation of evil. This is expressed throughout the narrative. For example, when Dr. Raymond performs the occult experiment, Mary opens her eyes and Clarke notes: "They shone with an awful light,

looking far away, and a great wonder fell upon her face, [...] but in an instant the wonder faded, and gave place to the most awful terror" (*The Great God Pan*: 16). All those who meet Pan and indeed Helen in the text, meet the same fate: they are either driven to madness or death. After the experiment, Dr Raymond is not surprised by Mary's condition: "It is a great pity; she is a hopeless idiot. However, it could not be helped; and after all, she has seen the Great God Pan" (*The Great God Pan*: 16).

From the beginning, Machen emphasizes that Helen is different and evil manifests itself in cultural otherness. He explicitly writes: "She was, however, of a very different type from the inhabitants of the village; her skin was a pale, clear, olive, and her features were strongly marked, and of a somewhat foreign character" (*The Great God Pan*: 19). Stephen D. Arata introduces this concept in his study "Dracula and Reverse Colonization" (1990), where he suggests that there was a "Western tradition of seeing unrest in Eastern Europe primarily in terms of racial strife" and a constant fear in the West of "racial conquest and domination" (Arata: 1990; 1997: 464).

Symbolically the natural landscape and Pan's domain also represent evil. This idea is linked to Nordau, who believed the desire of man to reconnect with nature was actually a mark of degeneracy. He comments:

Return to Nature! It is not possible to compress more absurdity into fewer words. On our Earth Nature is our enemy, whom we must fight, before who we dare not lay down our weapons. In order to maintain our span of life we must create endlessly complicated artificial conditions; we must clothe our bodies, build a roof over our heads, and store up provisions for many months, during which Nature denies us every nourishment. [...] The 'return to Nature' means, in our degrees of latitude, the return to hunger, to freezing, to being devoured by wolves and bears. (Nordau, 1895: 163 – 164)

Later in the text Helen is drawn to the forest, where the first incident occurs. Like her father, she is inseparable from nature. In this respect, she is akin to the

female vampire, itself a representative of an alternative religious belief system. As Senf notes the female vampire is also “allied with the natural world rather than with those scientists and technologists who desire to harness natural power for their own purposes” (2002: 24). Armed with this natural power, as Senf observes and Nordau suggests, they are equipped with a destructive, overpowering force.

The same forest landscape is described as filled with plants and secret places which breed and nourish death, corruption and evil. Dr. Raymond comments:

halting beneath great oaks; lying on the short turf of a clearing where the faint sweet scent of wild roses came to me on the wind and mixed with the heavy perfume of the elder, whose mingled odour is like the odour of the room of the dead, a vapour of incense and corruption. I stood at the edges of the wood, gazing at all the pomp and procession of the foxgloves towering amidst the bracken and shining red in the broad sunshine, and beyond them into the deep thickets of close undergrowth where springs boil up from the rock and nourish the waterweeds, dank and evil. (*The Great God Pan*: 64)

When asleep in the forest, a little boy is disturbed and hears “a peculiar noise, a sort of singing” and then witnesses Helen “playing on the grass with a ‘strange naked man’” (*The Great God Pan*: 20). The boy is so traumatized by what he sees, he cries out during the night about the man in the wood. Later the boy becomes violently hysterical when he sees a carved head from the Roman period, which he identifies as the same face of the man in the wood. Machen brings Pan’s Roman counterpart into the narrative, as the head is identified as that of a faun or satyr. In a footnote to this epistolary entry, Clarke adjoins: “Dr. Phillips tells me that he has seen the head in question, and assures me that he has never received such a vivid presentment of intense evil” (*The Great God Pan*: 22). Here, the rural landscape is not a romanticized rural idyll, but the earthly manifestation of Pan, sexual taboo and moral evil. This is echoed later in the narrative. Helen’s other alias in the novella is Mrs Beaumont, who

is connected to the death of the painter Arthur Meyrick. Villiers flicks through a collection of drawings of the painter and notes that he was absorbed:

in the frightful Walpurgis Night of evil, strange monstrous evil, [...]. The figures of Fauns and Satyrs and Ægipans danced before his eyes, the darkness of the thicket, the dance on the mountaintop, the scenes by lonely shores, in green vineyards, by rocks and desert places, passed before him: a world before which the human soul seemed to shrink back and shudder. (*The Great God Pan*: 43)

The final piece of evidence we have for the vilification of Pan as the demonised “deity of the forbidden” comes from a statement made by Villiers, who witnesses a victim of Helen’s leaving her house. Machen suggests that Helen’s victims have given themselves sexually to her and her father Pan. Villiers notes the victim’s physiognomy and comments:

I could never have supposed that such an infernal medley of passions could have glared out of any human eyes; [...] I knew I had looked into the eyes of a lost soul, [...] the man’s outward form remained, but all hell was within it. Furious lust, and hate that was like fire, and the loss of all hope, and horror that seemed to shriek aloud in the night, [...] that man no longer belonged to this world; it was a devil’s face that I looked upon. (*The Great God Pan*: 51)

With regard to alternative religious groups and societies, it is interesting that so many Celtic writers were also linked to alternative spiritual or occult groups. In addition to Bram Stoker and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, another of the recognised major driving forces behind the Celtic Revival Movement, William Butler Yeats, also became a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Yeats’s interest in the occult

predated the order, as he came to the Golden Dawn from the Theosophical Society, joining the order in 1890. In a similar fashion, Machen was also a member of the Golden Dawn between 1899 and 1903. Indeed, it was the three *fin de siècle* works of this chapter that gained him membership to the society, as, R. A. Gilbert observes: “His early fiction, with its occult themes and overtones of a powerful secret society, appealed to members of the Golden Dawn and both *The Great God Pan* and *The Three Impostors* found their way into the Order library” (1997: 168-169). Machen had actually no intention of joining the Order until the death of his wife in 1899, when through grief, he felt driven to become a member and accept magic and occultism. He was ordained as Frater Avallaunius in November 1899. He later reflected on his time in the Golden Dawn and noted:

But as for anything vital in the secret order, for anything that mattered two straws to any reasonable being, there was nothing in it, and less than nothing . . . the society as a society was pure foolishness concerned with impotent and imbecile Abracadabras. It knew nothing whatever about anything and concealed the fact under an impressive ritual and a sonorous phraseology. (Machen cited by Gilbert, 1997: 169-170)

The reason why the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn did not fulfil Machen’s expectations is that he had developed his religion, encompassing Celtic and pagan trends, blended with Orthodox Church of England ritual. If anything, occult science is the form of evil in *The Great God Pan* and Machen’s *fin de siècle* works. It is through the advanced scientific, alchemical experiment that the forces of Pan and the evil of the forbidden are unleashed. Machen’s novel is therefore more than just a work of neopaganism and the revival of Pan in literature. *The Great God Pan*, along with *The Inmost Light* and *The Three Impostors*, was produced at the time of Machen’s growing interest in the occult and just prior to his membership to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. There are numerous examples of the occult and occult science in the texts. Dr. Raymond practises occult science or as he refers to it

“transcendental medicine” (*The Great God Pan*: 9). His experiment is simple: to discover the truth regarding man’s existence and the real nature of the world and its creation, or as Machen describes it: “a wide-eyed inquisitiveness with respect to all the more recondite and esoteric elements in the nature of men” (*The Great God Pan*: 17). According to Raymond, this knowledge existed in pre-Christian times, but is now lost as he remarks: “the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan” (*The Great God Pan*: 10). Mark Valentine suggests Dr. Raymond’s experiment on Mary is an example of not just medical procedure, but rather occult science, as there is evidence in the text to suggest it is linked to alchemy (1995: 26). Citing an essay by Ron Weighell entitled “Sorcery and Sanctity: the Spagyric Quest for Arthur Machen”, Valentine observes: “Weighell draws attention to the moment when Clarke waits for Dr Raymond to begin; [...] He points out that ‘The use of perfumes . . . to create an atmosphere conducive to visions of the relevant deity, is a magical technique based on the theory of cabalistic correspondence” (Weighell cited by Valentine, 1995: 26).

Machen’s *The Inmost Light* is similar to *The Great God Pan*, as it demonstrates the unpredictable and uncontrollable evil which dabbling in occult science causes. The short narrative recounts the story of Dr. Black who, after graduating from university and meeting his wife Agnes, buys a new house in a remote suburb of London. Again, Machen approaches the idea of occult science and alchemy changing human matter and form, a subject he would return to again in *The Three Impostors*. At university, Dr. Black had devoted himself to “the investigation of curious and obscure branches of knowledge” (*The Inmost Light*: 27). Starting his new life with Agnes he comments:

I began the regular routine of a sober practice, and for some months lived happily enough, sharing in the life about me, and thinking at odd intervals of that occult science which had once fascinated my whole being. (*The Inmost Light*: 27)

Dr. Black realizes that his occult science practices are destructive:

I had learnt enough of the paths I had begun to tread to know that they were beyond all expression difficult and dangerous, that to persevere meant in all probability the wreck of a life and that they led to regions so terrible, that the mind of man shrinks appalled at the very thought. (*The Inmost Light*: 27)

Glennis Byron suggests, “scientists at the centre of Victorian Gothic, like latter-day Frankensteins, are frequently shown dabbling with forces that are better left alone” (2001: 135). *Fin de siècle* occult scientists are notably interested in the mind and Byron adds that the late Victorian interest in mental health and the study of the mind “became more and more closely implicated in the actual transgression of boundaries” (2001: 136). *The Great God Pan* can therefore be linked with other *fin de siècle* texts that use occult science to push the boundaries of the material world, exploring not only the mind, but also the body and specifically how the body can change its form, for example Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and even Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897).

In his biography of Machen, Mark Valentine suggests the experiment that Dr. Raymond performs on Mary in *The Great God Pan* is not unlike Dr. Moreau’s methods in Wells’s *The Island of Dr Moreau*: “a work of physiological vivisection” (1995: 26). The notion of “psychological vivisection” is interesting as Nordau in the section “Ego-mania” in *Degeneration*, speaks of man’s “evil conscience” and comments:

That inclination to self-torture, that retreating cruelty, of the human brute, forced into inner life, scared back into himself, he who had invented evil conscience that he might torture himself, after the natural outlet of this wish to inflict pain was stopped up, formed also the concept of guilt and sin. We are the inheritors of the vivisection of conscience and of animal self-torture of thousands of years. (1892; 1895: 425)

In this respect, Dr. Raymond's experiment is a degenerative procedure, to intentionally corrupt Mary. Machen suggests Mary is innocent and naïve: she is symbolically dressed in white and Machen describes her resembling "a little child about to say her prayers" (*The Great God Pan*: 15). She openly agrees to the procedure and is willing to trust herself to Dr. Raymond entirely (*The Great God Pan*: 15). By the end of the experiment, her "vivisection of conscience", performed by Dr. Raymond means Mary is driven mad by her realization of evil, guilt and sin. Lord Henry also refers to vivisection in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This relates to what Machen writes in "The Strange Occurrence in Clerkenwell" from *The Three Impostors*: "the greatest of all sciences, the key to all knowledge, is the science and art of pleasure" (*The Three Impostors*: 137).

Occultism in *fin de siècle* literature has physical effects upon the body, and is evocative of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn's quest to be "more than human." It is usually exemplified by a rite of passage, a metamorphosis or as Hurley suggests "liminality". For example, Hurley writes: "human bodies that have lost their claim to a discrete and integral identity, a fully human existence [...] are in contrast liminal bodies: bodies that occupy the threshold between the two terms of an opposition, like human/beast, male/female, or civilized/primitive" (2002: 190). Liminality can take the form of androgyny, although in some instances, such as Stoker's *Dracula* or Marie Corelli's "Heliobas" novels, the merging of male and female or "psychic androgyny" signifies spiritual perfection or divinity. In the search for equality, Alex Owen comments that many alternative theologies sought to achieve "psychic androgyny" (2004: 109). The connection between androgyny and religion derives from the belief that an individual can come closer to enlightenment through the unity of male and female in worship, essentially becoming one. The Great Rite of Wicca, for example, introduces the union of male and female as one, through the symbolic or actual act of sexual intercourse. This union of the High Priest and the High Priestess represents the union between God and the Maiden Goddess. In *The Great God Pan* Dr Matheson witnesses Helen's death and he notes: "I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited" (*The Great God Pan*: 62). Here, although androgyny still signifies an occult or divine, spiritual being, it is nevertheless interpreted as a sign of degeneracy by the orthodox characters. This relates to

Darwin, who argues sexual differentiation is the mark of a civilized society, a society that relied upon scientific rather than religious law. (Nordau suggested the degeneracy of the belief in mysticism in the entire second book of *Degeneration*, published in 1892.) In *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), Darwin noted, for example, that we have to turn to “the lowest of all the classes, to find any still existent androgynous forms” (1871; 2004: 189).

Machen also included a similar liminal and degenerate body in “The Novel of the White Powder” from *The Three Impostors*. Although on this occasion it is a male body, the nature of the “death” scene gives us some insight into the “death” of Helen Vaughan. Miss Leicester recounts the story of her brother, who is prescribed a white powder by a doctor. This medicine changes his character, he is no longer a diligent law student but becomes a familiar face around London. Miss Leicester notices a curious black mark on the back of his hand and calls the doctor. Gradually his condition deteriorates until on returning to the house one evening, she sees an inhuman shape at the window and inside there is a black liquid dripping from the ceiling. She calls the doctor again, who after having broken down her brother’s bedroom door, discovers the following:

There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up that might have been an arm. (*The Three Impostors*: 122)

The doctor kills the “thing” and Miss Leicester discovers that the white powder was actually the powder from which the wine of the Witches’ Sabbath was prepared.

In her study on the subject, *The Gothic Body*, Hurley also terms liminal subjects “abhumans” to suggest a threat to either the pureness of humanity or the “normality” and morality established by an advanced and structured society (2004: 3 –

20). Liminality in Machen's text signifies otherness and the unknown. It is a characteristic of any one thing, person or state, which defies normality and categorization and inspires "panic" in others. It is also a mark of the wild, the primitive and the degenerative. As such, figureheads of alternative religious cults and societies are presented as liminal or dual natured subjects. This even applies to the landscape that Raymond describes before the experiment in *The Great God Pan*, which is a territory between the materialistic world and the spirit realm. The setting is a liminal space: "I stood here one evening; it was a summer evening, and the valley looked much as it does now; I stood here, and saw before me the unutterable, the unthinkable gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit" (*The Great God Pan*: 11). The narrative introduces Helen Vaughan as an inhabitant "of a village on the borders of Wales, [...] sheltered by a large and picturesque forest" (*The Great God Pan*: 19). Again, Helen's village, which is set in the Welsh borders is a landscape that embodies liminality. Helen with her liminal body is similarly caught between a spiritual and materialistic state.

Machen describes reconnection with nature and paganism, through the means of occult science. In terms of Nordau, this unleashes the primitive and animal nature of humanity, which Christianity ordinarily attempts to discipline and control in the "normal" and "civilized" idea of Victorian society. To contextualize the pagan, untamed feminine and sexual desire, Machen referred to a growing social phenomenon: the New Woman. It is interesting that in her theory of "abhumaness" Hurley notes that the New Woman was another "liminal subject [...], an outspoken, independent, and thoroughly modern woman, whose "masculine" behaviours made her something of a monster" (Hurley, 2002: 199).

In three articles published in the *Nineteenth Century* between 1891 and 1892 and prior to the publication of Machen's works, Eliza Lynn Linton coined the term "Wild Women" to describe women she believed to be "unnatural", "inverted" and "hybrids" of femininity. In *The Great God Pan* Herbert, Helen's ex-husband, also comments that Helen is inhuman: "The name she passed under when I met her was Helen Vaughan, but what her real name was I can't say. I don't think she had a name. No, no, not in that sense. Only human beings have names" (*The Great God Pan*: 27). In "The Wild Women: As Politicians", which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*, Linton remarks:

“They have not ‘bred true’ – not according to the general lines on which the normal woman is constructed. There is in them a curious inversion of sex, which does not necessarily appear in the body, but is evident enough in the mind” (1891a: 79).

Linton argues that the Wild Woman’s principal desire was to gain “absolute personal independence coupled with supreme power over men” (1891b: 596). Machen gives another account of Helen through a chance encounter of two friends Villiers of Wadham and Charles Herbert, the latter now impoverished. Herbert tells Villiers of a mysterious, beautiful girl whom he married but within a year she had corrupted him and he was now “a ruined man, in body and soul” (*The Great God Pan*: 26). Herbert adds: “I could tell you certain things which would convince you, but you would never know a happy day again. You would pass the rest of your life, as I pass mine, a haunted man, a man who has seen hell” (*The Great God Pan*: 27). Five prosperous, society men of the West End are reported to have died of “acute suicidal mania” (*The Great God Pan*: 46), by hanging (at this point not only was suicide against the law, but it was also a major crime against the Church and Christianity). The deaths are so horrendous that they are reminiscent of the Ripper murders: “before the horrible suicides of Piccadilly and Mayfair they [the police] were dumbfounded, for not even the mere ferocity which did duty as an explanation of the crimes of the East End, could be of service in the West” (*The Great God Pan*: 46). All the men are linked to Helen, although at this point in the narrative she still goes by the alias of Mrs. Beaumont.

According to Linton in “The Wild Women: As Social Insurgents”, which appeared again in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1891, the ‘Wild Woman’ makes no distinction between the roles of men and women in society; she does not recognise a gender hierarchy in society, viewing both sexes as equals. Linton notes, “in obliterating the finer distinctions of sex she is obliterating the finer traits of civilisation” (1891b: 597). Linton further comments: “In them we see the odd social phenomenon of voluntary descent of the higher to the lower forms of ways and works” (1891b: 600). At the end of the narrative, Villiers gives Helen a rope with a noose and “a choice” (*The Great God Pan*: 59). Dr. Robert Matheson when called to the scene of Helen’s death, saw “that which was on the bed, lying there black like ink” begin “to melt and dissolve” (*The Great God Pan*: 61-62). Dr. Matheson notes how Helen’s body de-

evolves, as though it returns to Hell: "Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being" (*The Great God Pan*: 62). In "The Novel of The Black Seal" from *The Three Impostors*, Machen later gave this process the name of "Protoplasmic Reversion" (*The Three Impostors*: 85). Huxley published an article in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869, entitled "Protoplasm: The Physical Basis of Life."

Linton argues: "Mistress of herself, the Wild Woman as a social insurgent preaches the 'lesson of liberty' broadened into lawlessness and licence. Unconsciously she exemplifies how beauty can degenerate into ugliness" (1891b: 596). Ronald Paulson concludes that Helen Vaughan is "an abomination, who becomes the Harlot of Revelation, seducing various men and revealing to them her father, the Great God Pan [...] which drives them to madness and suicide" (2007: 164).

Machen's *The Inmost Light* is connected to Linton's articles. Linton recounts the examples of "womanly loveliness" and the Wild Women of history and legend. Among them the good Countess of Salisbury, and the Wild Woman "Black Agnes, [...] who had none of the delightfulness which made the Countess of Salisbury so beloved." Machen calls the abhuman woman in *The Inmost Light* Agnes Black. She is the wife of occult scientist Dr. Black who performs his experiments on her, making her a liminal and wild subject. The short story is also partly narrated by a gentleman named Salisbury (1891b: 605).

As in *The Great God Pan*, Dr. Black's alchemical experiments with the opal are performed on an innocent female subject, in this case his wife. Prior to the experiment, Dr. Black is fully aware that the occult experiments will change her:

At last I told her all. She shuddered, and wept, and called on her dead mother for help, and asked me if I had no mercy, and I could only sigh. I concealed nothing from her; I told her what she would become, and what would enter in where her life had been; I told her all the shame and of all the horror" (*The Inmost Light*: 28).

After the death of Mrs. Black, a post-mortem is performed. She, like Helen Vaughan, is described as a liminal female – she has the face of a woman and yet she is not. The greatest change is the structure of her brain. One of the doctors present at the post-mortem observes: “I could scarcely believe that the brain before me was that of a human being at all. [...] Some of the appearances [...] indicated a nervous organization of a wholly different character from that either of man or the lower animals” (*The Inmost Light*: 8).

Machen may have chosen Linton’s “Wild Woman” as the subject of his *fin de siècle* texts because many New Woman activists were drawn to and were associated with alternative religious societies and beliefs, particularly The Theosophical Society (which drew many of its theories and practices from paganism) and spiritualism. As Alex Owen concludes:

Occultism was itself bound up with a spiritualized vision of social change that called upon those ideals of regeneration and self-fulfilment that were deeply attractive to feminists of the period, and offered a “new” religiosity capable of outstripping the conventional Victorian association of femininity with a domesticated spirituality. (2004: 87)

In *The Wind in the Willows*, when Mole asks Rat if he is afraid of the unnamed Pan, Rat replies: “Afraid! Of Him? O, never, never! And yet – yet – O, Mole, I am afraid!” (Grahame: 1908; 1983: 130). The two animals then proceed to bow down in worship to the pagan god. Even here, Pan is a liminal or rather dual presence and a being of contrasts. He is lord and protector of nature, a creative and destructive force that Grahame refers to as “Friend and Helper”, yet simultaneously terrifies all those, who come into contact with him. Owen notes that in occult terms, “‘Panic’ is to experience both ecstasy and terror at the hand of the god” (2004: 216).

Pan as a figure of terror / ecstasy can be found in Greek mythology. Pan’s aggressive sexuality is demonstrated by the fact that he regularly seduces and then rapes nymphs. The legend of Syrinx tells of how she is pursued by the lecherous Pan and prays to be transformed into marsh-reeds to escape from the pagan god. It is

from this same reed that Pan creates the first pan-pipes. It is this Pan, not the Pan of the Romantic's rural idyllic landscape, who defines *fin de siècle* literature. The Pan of Greek mythology is a figure of contrasts and sexual taboo. Indeed, according to Peter Abbs, Pan is the "god of instinct and sexuality, of rape, masturbation and nightmare" (1989: 115). The final evidence of this Pan (as opposed to the Romantic Pan) in Machen's novella is Dr. Matheson's report of Helen Vaughan's death: "for one instant I saw a Form [...] the symbol of this form may be seen in ancient sculptures, and in paintings which survived beneath the lava, too foul to be spoken of . . . as a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast, was changed into human form" (*The Great God Pan*: 62). Paulson argues this is actually "one of those images found in the Naples Archaeological Museum – of copulating satyrs, Priapus and Pan with girls and goats" (2007: 168).

Viewed uniquely from a pro-Christian standpoint, Helen's suicide by hanging is evocative of Judas Iscariot and his guilt with regard to his betrayal of Jesus Christ. Yet, Machen's text is far more complex. It is impossible to interpret *The Great God Pan* in this manner, as the Christian message is inverted and subverted throughout the novella. In truth, Helen takes on the role of prophet and subsequent martyr, as she ultimately dies for her father and his faith. Machen's personal belief in Celtic Christianity denotes a longing to see the survival and endurance of aspects of the religion in a predominantly Christian society. This is highlighted constantly throughout the novella. As in Stoker's *Dracula*, we are so convinced of Helen's guilt and sin that we fail to recognise the fundamental flaw of the narrative. Unable to speak and denied her right to give an account of events, Helen is vilified by persons who regularly demonstrate panic and hysteria.

The title of this chapter "The most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things" is taken from the novella which summarizes the message that it contains. For Machen, there are secret and awful forces, which can be traced back to the ancients, long before the arrival of Christianity. The only insight we have into these awesome, "pagan" powers is how they manifest themselves in nature. The danger comes when mankind seeks to "unveil" these powers through unnatural or occult scientific means. Through his introduction of "transcendental medicine," Machen is not only commenting on the dangers of occult science when abused, underestimated, or

taken to the extreme, but on the whole concept of scientific investigation as an intrusive, degenerative and spiritually destructive practice.

CHAPTER SIX: Occultism and Religious Tensions in *Dracula* (1897)

In his diary, Dr Seward records his observations about his patient Renfield:

It looks like religious mania, and he will soon think that he himself is God. These infinitesimal distinctions between man and man are too paltry for an Omnipotent Being. How these madmen give themselves away! The real God taketh heed lest a sparrow fall; but the God created from human vanity sees no difference between an eagle and a sparrow. Oh, if men only knew! (*Dracula*: 96)

According to Dr. Seward an indication of “religious mania” is that the individual believes he or she is endowed with the same powers as those of a god, and if Christian, then they believe themselves to *be* God. This is a reference to Nordau, who comments in *Degeneration* that “the religious manias [are] observed in nearly all degenerates and sufferers from hereditary mental taint” (1895: 22). Moreover, Nordau’s comments that mysticism and religious mania are “a cardinal mark of degeneration” not only have implications for Renfield or indeed *Dracula* and his vampiric society, but also raise questions concerning the orthodox Christian characters in the novel who, along with symbols of Catholicism, readily use folklore and superstition to combat occultism (Nordau 1895: 22).

In his study on *Dracula*, Clive Leatherdale suggests that the “basic lesson of the novel is to re-affirm the existence of God in an age when the weakening hold of Christianity generated fresh debate about what lay beyond death” (2001: 193). From the opening quotation of this chapter, it is evident that for Seward, “the real God” is the orthodox Christian God, who “taketh heed lest a sparrow fall”, which is a reference to Matthew 10, Verses 28-29: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” Yet as we shall see *Dracula* describes a conflict of two belief

systems: orthodox Christianity and the occult. This is complicated by the presence of two diverse quests and rites of passage. The first is the Christian Fraternity's need to re-affirm the existence of God and preserve western Christendom from the threat of "religious orientalism". The second is Dracula's desire to introduce occultism to a predominantly orthodox Victorian society and, in doing so, pose questions concerning notions of Christian morality and Christian sin.

The intention of this chapter is, therefore, to examine religious tensions in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. It will discuss Stoker's portrayal of occultism and orthodox religion in the novel. It will also explore themes of Catholic conversion and religious extremism in response to apotheosis and the occult desire to be "more than human". Moreover, this chapter will argue that *Dracula* is actually a pro-occult novel - in the sense of believing in occult forces - and that the narrative is compounded by the fact that all events are refracted through the Christian views of the principal characters and these characters frequently demonstrate intolerance concerning "religious otherness".

Ironically, vampirism is a by-product of Catholicism. John Watters observes "accordingly, the Church and its priests needed to promote the belief, at least among the laity, that the world was to a greater or lesser extent populated by demons, that the Devil was a physical entity and that Hell's fires were hot. If the laity stopped believing in the Satanic imperative there would be no need for priests" (2005: 110). There is no Catholic priest in *Dracula*, but Van Helsing's presence in the novel and his conviction that there "are such beings as vampires" leads to a reassertion of Christian faith and introduces fears concerning the salvation of the body and soul:

For if we fail in this our fight he must surely win; and then where end we? [...] But to fail here, is not mere life or death. It is that we become as him; that we henceforward become foul things of the night like him – without heart or conscience, preying on the bodies and the souls of those we love best. To us for ever are the gates of heaven shut; for who shall open them to us again? We go on for all time abhorred by all; a blot on the face of God's sunshine; an arrow in the side of Him who died for man. (*Dracula*: 209)

Although Catholic priests are not present in *Dracula*, Watters suggests: “Van Helsing’s studies point to a mixture of humanism and folklore, and a fundamental belief in the truths of the Roman Apostolic Church” (2005: 111). Yet Stoker confuses the message of orthodox religion in the novel. This is due to the fact that, as Glover proposes, *Dracula* “intrudes a logical, procedural eye into a hinterland that is awash with superstition, setting a Protestant discipline against a Catholic worldview with its crucifixes, legends, and stories of saints” (1996: 46). There is a balance of Protestantism and Catholicism at the beginning of the novel, but this balance does not remain constant throughout the narrative. As the characters advance towards their final confrontation with Dracula there is a re-affirmation of Christian faith through Catholic conversion. Thus the demarcation between the two denominations becomes more evident. *Dracula* is part of the Irish Gothic tradition and as Foster suggests, the conflict between the Protestant and Catholic denominations is an inherent part of the narrative, and Van Helsing represents the Protestant “mingled repulsion and envy where Catholic magic is concerned” (1996: 91). Stoker presents the first character we meet, Jonathan Harker, as a stereotypical Victorian Anglican. Contextually, the Oxford Movement of the early 1830s and early 1840s had endeavoured to revitalize the Church of England by reviving certain Roman Catholic practices. Consequently Victorian Anglicanism was suspicious of any practices that were linked to Roman Catholic ritual. We see attitudes of “religious otherness” (in this case the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism) during Harker’s journey through Transylvania. His reaction to the crucifix that the owner of the Golden Krone Hotel gives to him reflects this: “I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous” (*Dracula*: 13). Yet Harker is grateful for his crucifix at Dracula’s Castle: “his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him [Dracula]” (*Dracula*: 31).

Stoker presents all the members of what we may term the Christian Fraternity as Protestant at first, except for Van Helsing. This is evident during the preparations to prevent Lucy’s entrance to her tomb. According to Seward, Van Helsing’s use of “The Host”, “appalled the most sceptical of us” but Seward then recognises that to Van

Helsing, it is the “most sacred of things, it was impossible to distrust” (*Dracula*: 187). Later, as Van Helsing reads a prayer for the dead, Seward notes that he and other members are unfamiliar with Catholic rite as he says: “Quincey and I followed as well as we could” (*Dracula*: 192). The religious stance of the Christian Fraternity alters during the novel and the marked separation of Protestantism and Catholicism is radically lost. There is open conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism, with Van Helsing serving as converter and reformer. The first character to consider conversion to Catholicism is Jonathan Harker. His initial reaction to the crucifix that he is given at the hotel changes during his stay at Dracula’s castle. Later, Harker is thankful for the crucifix and merely remarks:

It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to regard with disfavour and as idolatrous should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort? Some time, if it may be, I must examine this matter and try to make up my mind about it. (*Dracula*: 33)

His full conversion to Catholicism, however, takes place much later in the novel, as his marriage to Mina in Transylvania is definitely an Anglican service as Mina comments: “She [Sister Agatha] has come and told me that the chaplain of the English mission church has been sent for. We are to be married” (*Dracula*: 100). Similarly, Van Helsing approaches Seward about his willingness to convert to Catholicism. A devout Catholic, he asks the rational Seward to keep an open mind: “I want you to believe. [...] To believe in things that you cannot” (*Dracula*: 172). It is not until after the staking of Lucy that all the members of the Christian Fraternity re-affirm their Christian beliefs. As they swear to pursue and defeat Dracula, the members make their promise in a form of a vow as Mina observes: “The Professor stood up and, after laying his golden crucifix on the table, held out his hand on either side. I took his right hand, and Lord Godalming his left; Jonathan held my right with his left

and stretched across to Mr Morris. So as we all took hands our solemn compact was made" (*Dracula*: 210).

This has major consequences in terms of religious extremism and intolerance of other unorthodox faiths in the novel. Re-affirmation of Christian faith affects the narrative leading to the Christian Fraternity's condemnation of occultism. As Van Helsing observes:

I have studied, over and over again since they came into my hands, all the papers relating to this monster; and the more I have studied, the greater seems the necessity to utterly stamp him out. All through there are signs of his advance; not only of his power, but of his knowledge of it. (*Dracula*: 263)

Yet, this is complicated by the fact that Stoker's portrayal of orthodox religion in *Dracula* is ambiguous. Christianity, particularly Catholicism, is presented as regressive and primitive, leading O' Malley to observe that it is essentially a Medieval form of Catholicism which is presented in *Dracula* (2006:147). Harker's journey to Castle Dracula illustrates how Catholicism inhibits "free will" and development of the "higher self". The peasants live in abject fear of superstitions, which have remained since the Middle Ages and they retain a form of Catholicism undeveloped since Transylvania's Feudal times. On his journey to Castle Dracula, "Jonathan Harker notes the almost obsessive rituals of Catholic daily piety" (O' Malley, 2006: 146). Harker comments, "I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool" (*Dracula*: 10).

Because the narrative is constructed using extracts from diary entries, mainly of the Christian Fraternity, the novel is misleading. Senf raises this point in her study of the novel (1997: 424). Re-affirmation of faith overpowers the reader to the extent that we sometimes forget the true reality of the situation and the nature of their actions, as Senf explains:

The difficulty in interpreting Dracula's character is compounded by the narrative technique, for the reader quickly recognizes that Dracula is never seen objectively and never permitted to speak for himself while his actions are recorded by people who have determined to destroy him and who, moreover, repeatedly question the sanity of their quest. (1997: 424)

On the surface, occultism is the source of the greatest evils, but the narrative is biased. The accounts of the Christian Fraternity members which are supposed to be the true version of events are not dependable, as the members doubt their own sanity. For example, Arthur questions Van Helsing and asks "Are you mad that speak such things, or am I mad that listen to them?" (*Dracula*: 184); Seward writes: "I sometimes think we must be all mad and that we shall wake to sanity in strait-waistcoats" (*Dracula*: 240); Van Helsing even comments to Seward: "All men are mad in some way or the other; and inasmuch you deal discreetly with your madmen, so deal with God's madmen, too – the rest of the world" (*Dracula*: 111). The Christian Fraternity demonstrate "mystical delirium", which manifests itself when an individual is "constantly occupied with mystical and religious questions" or "an exaggerated piety" (Colin cited by Nordau, 1895: 22). Furthermore, the evidence that the group provides to suggest Dracula is responsible for unspeakable crimes is inconclusive and unsupported, as Senf observes:

They accuse him of murdering the crew of the *Demeter*, of killing Lucy Westenra and transforming her into a vampire, and trying to do the same thing to Mina Harker. However, the log found on the dead body of the *Demeter*'s captain, which makes only a few ambiguous allusions to a fiend or monster, is hysterical and inconclusive. [...] Lucy's death might just as easily be attributed to the blood transfusions (still a dangerous procedure at the time Stoker wrote *Dracula*) to which Dr. Van Helsing subjects her; and Mina acknowledges

her complicity in the affair with Dracula by admitting that she did not want to prevent his advances. (1997: 425)

Moreover, as the Christian Fraternity represents orthodox Christianity, it is interesting that Stoker suggests its members are guilty of the most degenerate, debauched and barbaric crimes, as Senf again argues:

If Dracula is responsible for all the Evil of which he is accused, he is tried, convicted, and sentenced by men (including two lawyers) who give him no opportunity to explain his actions and who repeatedly violate the laws which they profess to be defending: they avoid an inquest of Lucy's death, break into her tomb and desecrate her body, break into Dracula's houses, frequently resort to bribery and coercion to avoid legal involvement and openly admit that they are responsible for the deaths of five alleged vampires. (1997: 425)

Beal argues "Dracula and his homeland are thus projected as primitive religious otherness within, a dreadfully monstrous return of the repressed within modern English Christianity that cannot be reduced to scientific explanation" (2002: 127). Gelder also suggests that the Christian Fraternity is guilty of intolerance, of "religious otherness" although not concerning the occult. He comments that in addition to the stereotypical Victorian ideas of "Jewish appearance", Stoker describes the Count as a capitalist, hoarding money and gold. This is a reference to the popular Victorian preconception that the "mobility of the foreign Jews was both admirable (since they accumulated capital) and the source of national anxiety (since they drained capital by moving it elsewhere)" (Gelder, 1994: 14). As anti-semitism was prevalent in Victorian society, it is notable that several studies have linked the Count to the Victorian fear of a Jewish assault on London. For example, Pick interprets anti-semitism in *Dracula* on a much larger scale and suggests the novel captures the Victorian sentiment that there was "a perceived 'alien invasion' of Jews from the East,

who in the view of many alarmists were 'feeding off' and 'poisoning' the blood of the Londoner" (1989: 173).

There are other indications of intolerance of "religious otherness" in the novel. After his experience with the vampire women, Jonathan Harker remarks: "I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit!" (*Dracula*: 55) This line "Devils of the Pit" is taken from Rudyard Kipling's *Many Inventions* (1893). Abdul Gafur says: "Oh, Devils of the Pit, I am a Mussulman!" (Kipling 1893; 1918: 218). *The Devil's Dictionary* defines Houris as "A comely female inhabiting the Mohammedan Paradise to make things cheery for the good Mussulman, whose belief in her existence marks a noble discontent with his earthly spouse, whom he denies a soul" (Bierce, 1911; 1993: 52). Part of the Christian Fraternity's religious conflict with Dracula is that Jonathan Harker seems to identify the Count with an Eastern orthodox religion, specifically with Islam. This is understandable as occult groups adopted many principles central to Eastern religions, especially Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. Therefore, as Beal argues, Dracula "is in many respects a projection of modern western representations of unfamiliar religious traditions" (2002: 126).

Conversely, the Count does not display religious intolerance; in fact he is able to co-exist alongside orthodox religion, specifically Catholicism on his own terms. He does not sleep in his room in the castle, but instead chooses to use the old chapel, where Harker discovers him "at rest" in his coffin (*Dracula*: 53). It is strange considering Harker's first impressions of the Count, that upon finding Dracula in the chapel he remarks that he instinctively "knew now well enough where to find the monster" (*Dracula*: 53). The Count wishes to find similar lodgings in England. When Harker describes the Carfax estate, he draws our attention to the fact it "is close to an old chapel or church" (*Dracula*: 29). Dracula replies: "I rejoice also that there is a chapel of old times. We Transylvanian nobles love not to think that our bones may be amongst the common dead" (*Dracula*: 29). However, when Van Helsing enforces Catholicism, through the use of Catholic religious symbolism, the Count is subjected to religious extremism and terror, as Van Helsing observes that: "Further and further back he cowered, as we, lifting our crucifixes, advanced" (*Dracula*: 247).

In order to establish an argument for the promotion of pro-occult, alternative societies in *Dracula*, some mention is necessary of Stoker's own involvement in occult circles. Ravenscroft (1982: 165) and more recently Picknett (2004: 201) suggest that Stoker was a member of the occult society the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Stoker's biographer Belford also comments on his possible involvement in the society (1996: 213). There is no real evidence to substantiate this theory, although it is known that Stoker did have close relationships with several members of the society, including William Butler Yeats and Scottish lawyer and writer John William Brodie-Innes. According to Paul Murray, Brodie-Innes was "much involved in the occult and active organisations such as the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society" (2004: 225).

In a biography of his uncle, Farson suggests that Stoker may not have been involved in that particular order, but rather an off-shoot of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a society called "Alpha et Omega", which was led by Brodie-Innes and essentially followed the same principles established by its parent order. The Rosicrucian Order of Alpha et Omega established temples in Paris, London and Edinburgh between 1900 and 1919. The offshoot order had originated due to a rebellion of Golden Dawn Adepts in London. There had been numerous scandals surrounding the Golden Dawn, which had gained the order notoriety, bringing it to the attention of the press. Disagreements and power struggles had also weakened the Golden Dawn and so various splinter groups were formed in its place. Farson comments: "If Bram was a secret member of one of the splinter groups it shows that he was involved with the supernatural more deeply than hitherto suspected: not merely an observer but a participant" (1975: 207). If Stoker actively chose to participate in an alternative religious and occult order, it is difficult to imagine that he would actively denounce such groups in *Dracula*. Even if Stoker had no personal involvement in the occult he was certainly surrounded on a daily basis by friends and colleagues, who actively participated in alternative groups and societies and was open to their influence. For example, Murray states that Yeats "dabbled in mesmerism, as did Henry Irving, and some see *Dracula's* mesmeric powers as deriving from this" (Murray, 2004: 133).

The writer and Illustrator Pamela Colman Smith designed six coloured plates for the first publication of Stoker's novel *The Lair of the White Worm* in 1911 (Murray,

2004: 264). Smith joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1903, where she met Arthur Edward Waite. She later designed the Rider-Waite-Smith deck of tarot cards for Waite. Belford notes it is especially significant that Smith was in the process of designing the tarot deck while Stoker was plotting *Dracula* and suggests “throughout the novel there is a strong undercurrent of the tarot, symbolic of the classical Gnostic quest” (1996: 214). Leatherdale further develops the link between *Dracula* and the tarot and dedicates chapter twelve of his study to an analysis of tarot symbolism in *Dracula*, using the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana (2001: 210-223). These cards describe the journey or rite of passage of the Fool from his first meeting with the Magician through to the Devil, culminating in The Day of Judgement and The World. There are many parallels between the journey of the Fool and the principal characters and events in the novel. Belford suggests: “Jonathan Harker, obviously is the Fool, who journeys forth and encounters hazards [...]. During his travels he meets the Magician (Van Helsing), the Empress (Mina), the Lovers (Lucy and Arthur), the Hermit (Seward), the Devil (Dracula), and the Hanged Man (Quincey Morris) (1996: 214).

Stoker refers to two Gnostic quests in *Dracula*. Jonathan Harker comments: “There could be no doubt as to his [Dracula’s] quest” (p.47) which is to “create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless” (*Dracula*: 53-54). Van Helsing describes Dracula and observes: “With this one, all the forces of nature that are occult and deep and strong must have worked together in some wondrous way” (*Dracula*: 278). Thus, not only is there a link, as we shall see, to nature, paganism and Celticism, but also to Corelli’s Rosicrucianism and especially her novel *The Soul of Lilith* (1894), as Van Helsing continues: “Doubtless, there is something magnetic or electric in some of these combinations of occult forces which work for physical life in a strange way, and in himself were from the first some great qualities” (*Dracula*: 278). As vampirism symbolizes occultism, Dracula’s quest is to unveil “unknown places and unknown ways” (*Dracula*: 309 - 310). Harker views the Count’s Gnostic quest as “a whole world of dark and dreadful things” (*Dracula*: 310). The Christian Fraternity’s real fear of Dracula and his Gnosticism is that he “disrupts the rational certitudes and securities of the quantifiable universe upon which the rational bias of modern man exists” (Feimer, 1990: 167). However, the Christian Fraternity

also undertakes a spiritual journey and rite of passage, as Van Helsing observes: “And then begins our great quest” (*Dracula*: 193). Mark M. Hennelly suggests that “the disappearance of an omniscient narrator in *Dracula* reflects the atrophy of God and traditional faith [...] hence the small, central group of splintered selves is also searching for a new stockpile of communal and personal values” (1977: 17).

A final example of the Gnostic quest links Stoker to Arthur Machen in terms of Celticism and paganism. In his study of the novel, Hennelly compares *Dracula* to “a primitive Corn God”, because *Dracula* is able to control the elements and “a Fisher King” (1977: 15). In Arthurian mythology, the Fisher King is keeper of the Holy Grail. Wounded in the leg by a spear that pierced Christ’s side, the King is unable to move from his castle: “Because of this ‘curse’ on the King, the land has become a desolate wasteland; but with his restoration, it will be destroyed as well” (Sammons, 2000: 137). The similarities to *Dracula* are evident. The Fisher King appears in the early Grail Celtic Grail romance *Peredur*, where another connection to Stoker’s vampire is the severed head, “which was the object of special veneration in Celtic belief, [and] is an important symbol in *Peredur* and is found in many episodes throughout the romances” (Goetinck, 2000: 122). Moreover, the link to the Holy Grail also suggests that Stoker used occult symbolism as the basis for *Dracula*, as the revival of the Arthurian legend and notably the quest for the Holy Grail was closely linked to late-Victorian occultism and the “mystical revival”. Not only is the Grail the symbol of eternal life and esoteric gnosis, but also as Christine Poulson observes: “there are classic occult elements in the legend of the Grail: the ritual of its appearance, the search after what is secret and hidden, the ordeals which confront the seekers, and the transcendental enlightenment achieved only by the initiated” (1999: 127). Interestingly, Stoker makes a direct reference to the Knights Templar, as Van Helsing observes: “we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more” (*Dracula*: 278).

What this really suggests for this study is the fact that Stoker chose occult symbolism as the basic structure for his plot. This immediately limits our attempts to interpret the novel in a strictly Christian context, as evidence suggests that the novel is actually pro-occult, in that it promotes a sense of belief in occult forces. This is a fact Stoker suggested himself: “Acknowledging the ambiguity of the novel’s theology, a personal letter written one month earlier by Stoker to W. E. Gladstone can be read as

an attempt to forestall at least one reader's objections to the supernatural and violent incidents portrayed" (Hughes, 2000: 15). Stoker commented in his letter to William Gladstone:

It is a story of a vampire, the old medieval vampire but recrudescing today . . . the book is necessarily full of horrors and terrors but I trust that these are calculated to cleanse the mind by pity and terror. At any rate there is nothing base in the book, and though superstition is fought with the weapons of superstition, I hope it is not irreverent. (Stoker cited by Watters, 2005: 109)

There is more evidence to suggest that *Dracula* promotes occultism. First, there is the apotheosis of the Count. Beal suggests that the "heart and soul" of Dracula is deeply religious, as his name translates as "the dragon" or "the devil" and links him directly to the Bible's Revelations and the Apocalypse of John (2002: 124). One particular passage in the text is evocative of the Devil and the Temptation of Christ, as Dracula says to Renfield: "All these lives will I give you, ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me!" (*Dracula*: 245). Gordon and Hollinger support this theory and state that "to emphasize Dracula's metaphysical status, when having Renfield speak of him, Stoker employs capital letters, precisely as "God" is conventionally capitalized" (1997: 18). Renfield says: "I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things?" (*Dracula*: 98). Yet, even in a uniquely Christian context, Beal argues that despite efforts to associate Dracula with the Devil, Dracula actually achieves divine status at certain points in the narrative (2002: 125). Stoker does present Dracula as a creator figure rather than a destroyer, which suggests his god-like status. For example, Dracula says to Mina evoking the Christian marriage ceremony: "And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin" (*Dracula*: 252). Ironically in creating the vampiric New

Woman, Dracula's speech in this passage is suggestive of Genesis 2.23 and God's creation of woman using man.

Certainly, various reactions of the principal characters when they meet Dracula, suggest that they equate him with God or even Christ rather than the Devil. At these points in the narrative they use speech which is taken directly from various biblical passages, or describe the scene, referring to biblical episodes. Usually the biblical passages are texts which describe personal encounters with God and Christ. Beal suggests that Mina in particular "envisions the coming of Dracula in a traditional biblical form of divine presence" (2002: 125). Beal states that Harker's reaction to seeing Dracula crawling along the castle's walls is similar to when the disciples question Jesus in Matthew 8 and Mina's description of seeing the Count as dust in her bedroom echoes "one of the forms God takes while guiding the people of Israel in the Wilderness during their Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 13:21)" (2002: 125). Mina says: "Things began to whirl through my brain just as the cloudy column was now whirling in the room, and through it all came the scriptural words 'a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.' Was it indeed some such spiritual guidance that was coming to me in my sleep?" (*Dracula*: 227). In this respect, there is confusion with regard to the Count's status. On the one hand, the narrative compounds Dracula as diabolical figure, on the other the principal characters elevate him to a position so that he achieves divine status.

Secondly, in terms of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Dracula's occult Gnostic quest is "to be more than human". This is exemplified by the way in which Van Helsing describes Dracula as an advanced and evolved being in Darwinian terms and even remarks that Dracula is "the father or furtherer of a new order of beings" (*Dracula*: 263). This is evocative of Nietzsche's concept of the "Übermensch," a theme he adopted in his 1883 book *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (tr. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Nietzsche's text is similar to *Dracula* as Zarathustra proclaims first that "God is dead" (p.41) and subsequently that the new advanced superman is "the meaning of the earth" (p.42). Nietzsche's philosophy is clear: as God is dead, so are Christian values and the Übermensch becomes the new creator and an evolved being of an advanced society, devoid of Christian traditions. Nietzsche's emphasis is, however, on worldly as opposed to other-worldly achievement. Van Helsing remarks:

“He that can smile at death, as we know him; who can flourish in the midst of diseases that can kill off whole peoples. Oh if such an one was to come from God, and not the Devil, what a force for good might he not be in this old world of ours” (*Dracula*: 279). Cicero explains: “we have become separated from the divine (through involution) and that we seek “the Way of Return” back to unity with the divine (through evolution)” (2004: 30). This suggests that the closer to divinity a being is, the more highly evolved they are, again indicative of Nietzsche’s concept of the *Übermensch*. In comparison to the human, the vampire is highly evolved. Glendening notes that in *Dracula* “the strangeness of what seems supernatural is primarily an expression of what science does not yet fully understand” (2007: 128). In addition to enhanced mental and physical abilities, “Dracula’s existence entails very specialized survival and reproductive strategies” (Glendening 2007: 129).

Thirdly, Stoker introduces the theme of liminality and divine androgyny. There are many references in the text which suggest the liminality of the Count. The in-between state is first personified in Dracula’s surroundings, “on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe” (*Dracula*: 10). Harker further notes on his journey to the castle that he is in the “Mittel Land”, literally in the middle or central country of Transylvania (*Dracula*: 14). Dracula’s castle is located in the heart of the Mittel Land in the Carpathian Mountains, which during the carriage drive a fellow passenger points out to Harker as being “God’s seat” (*Dracula*: 15). Harker also states that the Count’s mission in England is to “create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons” (*Dracula*: 53-54). The prefix ‘semi’ itself suggests a composite and liminal state.

For many esoteric alternative spiritual and occult cults and societies, androgyny symbolizes spiritual perfection; this pre-dates the *fin de siècle* “mystical revival” and can be traced back to antiquity. Gibbons explains that to the ancient mystics, “the subtle body represents freedom from the normal constraints of material existence [...] this ‘perfection of a primordial, non-conditioned state’ is frequently symbolised by [...] androgyny” (2001: 65). Christopher Craft’s study of gender and inversion in *Dracula* highlights the vampire as the ultimate androgynous being, as the vampire mouth is a mixture of feminine and masculine: “Luring at first with an inviting

orifice, a promise of red softness, but delivering instead a piercing bone, the vampire mouth fuses and confuses” (Craft, 1997: 445).

Alex Owen comments that in the search for sexual equality, many alternative esoteric spiritual and occult *fin de siècle* cults and societies sought to achieve “psychic androgyny” (2004: 109). The connection between androgyny and religion derives from the belief that an individual can become closer to enlightenment through the unity of male and female in worship, essentially becoming one. Hurley suggests, “liminal bodies [...] occupy the threshold between the two terms of an opposition, like human/beast, male/female, or civilized/primitive” (2002: 190). Thus, liminality came to represent instability and monstrosity. Hurley further notes that in Gothic fiction, the New Woman in particular was another “liminal subject [...], an outspoken, independent, and thoroughly modern woman, whose “masculine” behaviours made her something of a monster” (2002: 190).

As discussed in chapter one, feminism and the New Woman were closely linked to the occult and “mystical revival”. In her vampire state or rather after her conversion to occultism, Seward describes how Lucy Westenra has changed: “The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuousness wantonness” (*Dracula*: 187). Seward specifically draws our attention to the fact that her “lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe” (*Dracula*: 187). Hughes comments on virginity in Stoker’s works and suggests: “virginity is provocative. It is transient, irrecoverable and therefore desirable. Its removal confers ownership, possession and the modification of perceived worth to other competing males” (2000: 106). Here, symbolically Lucy is no longer virginal in appearance and sexuality is a part of the alternative religion; in Christianity the purity of women is sacred. Here lies the true problem as Leatherdale suggests that the Fraternity see that “In her living death [...] Lucy’s beauty changes from that of a virgin to that of a whore” (2001: 164).

In an attempt to abolish the Contagious Diseases Acts and improve the position of women, aspects of the New Woman Movement were seen as promoting immorality. Orthodox religious and secular bodies “responded to the feminist challenge by drawing on their new sexual ideology to label the ‘shrieking sisterhood’ as immoral and impure for daring to speak publicly about sexuality” (Mort: 1987: 82).

Hence the appeal of alternative esoteric spiritual and occult societies, as Foucault comments: "If it was truly necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere: to a place where they could be reintegrated. [...] The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance" (Foucault, 1998: 4).

This leads on to the final point, which is Stoker's portrayal of sexuality in the novel. On his journey to Castle Dracula, Jonathan Harker is confronted by a pack of wolves. Harker's description of the wolves in the text is evocative of the East-End streetwalkers with their "white teeth and lolling red tongues, with long sinewy limbs and shaggy hair" (*Dracula*: 20). Wolf imagery as a metaphor for prostitution can actually be traced back to Roman times, when the word 'lupa' meaning 'she-wolf' also meant prostitute. Harker describes Dracula as demonstrating dominance over the wolves, as though he is their leader. Harker remarks: "I heard his voice raised in a tone of imperious command and looking towards the sound, saw him stand in the roadway. As he swept his long arms, as though brushing aside some impalpable obstacle, the wolves fell back further still" (*Dracula*: 20).

In 1908, four years before his death, Stoker wrote an article for the *Nineteenth Century and After* entitled "The Censorship of Fiction". In relation to sin and Victorian morality he states "women are the worst offenders in this form of breach of moral law" (Stoker, 1908: 485). Harker's description of the wolves/prostitutes hunting together and preying on men (in this case himself) partly forms the basis for the fear and hatred of Dracula's occult vampire society. Harker associates the Count with blatant sexuality, equating this with prostitution and the spread of contagious diseases. As Mort suggests: "from the 1840's public anxiety had also been focused on prostitution, the 'great social evil', by studies from evangelical clerics and medics, and by rescue and reform societies campaigning for a police crackdown on the London streets" (Mort, 1987: 69). In his introduction to *Prostitution in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue* Nield refers to an article in the *Times* that stated prostitution to be the "Greatest of our Social Evils." (Nield, 1973: 1).

It is possible to see how the predominantly subjective Christian male narrative constructs a social monster (Dracula), and effectively de-humanizes and condemns the members of the vampire sorority. Despite the repeal of the Contagious Diseases

Acts in 1886 and the new medical focus on middle class men as the means of infection, overtly sexual women were still viewed as the true danger. Women who displayed any signs of sexuality were viewed as abnormal or rather “abhuman”. Mort explains: “Male sexuality was defined as an instinctual force [...] an essential attribute of masculinity” (1987: 78). Women, on the other hand, were expected to be passive and display no signs of overt sexuality or sexual desire. Mort observes: “Motherhood, marriage and domesticity were basic female instincts [...] compared to the ‘unnatural’ sexual desire of the prostitute, the nymphomaniac and the courtesan” (Mort 1987: 79). Victorian institutions de-humanized the sexual woman. In *Dracula*, the Christian Fraternity’s relentless pursuit of the occult and sexual vampires is similar to the treatment of Victorian prostitutes. Bartley notes: “They [prostitutes] are hunted from place to place [...] The women are brutified.” (Bartley, 2000: 169).

Consequently, Harker finds his stay at Castle Dracula initially filled with anticipation, which then turns traumatic. We are reminded of this when Dracula remarks: “Listen to them – the children of the night. What music they make!” (*Dracula*: 24). Later, as Harker is faced with the vampire women the text again draws similarities between the women of the vampire sorority and the wolves, symbolic of the common prostitutes of the East-End: “as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth” (*Dracula*: 42).

Similarly, at her tomb Lucy’s vampiric rite of passage means that she metamorphoses from “little girl” to woman, embracing the female sexuality which the occult vampire sorority promotes. “Little girl” – Quincey refers to Lucy using this name (p.60) and later calls Mina the same (*Dracula*: 204). In both cases it is used prior to their respective vampire metamorphosis. From this point in the text, Seward recasts Lucy in the vampiric / occult liminal body. He says: “I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape” (*Dracula*: 188). This imagery is repeated again, as Seward refers to Lucy as “the foul Thing which had taken Lucy’s shape without her soul” (*Dracula*: 190). Seward demonises her and comments that her eyes are “unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew” and she is “callous as a devil” (*Dracula*: 188). The religious differences become clear when Lucy

recoils from Van Helsing's crucifix, with a "suddenly distorted face, full of rage" (*Dracula*: 188).

According to Eliade androgynous deities were also presented as possessing "divine bisexuality" (1996: 421-422). In this respect, there are links between *Dracula* and Machen's *The Great God Pan*. During the scene where Dracula interrupts Jonathan Harker and the three vampire women, the Count cries "This man belongs to me!" (*Dracula*: 43). This has been interpreted by critics as homosexual desire. For example, Craft observes that there is a "threat of a more direct libidinous embrace between Dracula and Harker" (1997: 447). In terms of bisexuality and homosexual desire, Marjorie Howes argues that both are recurrent themes in *Dracula* and Stoker's other works through the "mediation of the feminine": "The fear of homosexual desire, conceived as the bisexual phenomenon of a feminine desire in a male body, is implicit in Bram Stoker's notions of naturally existing inner divisions of the human body and psyche into masculine and feminine components" (1988: 105). To support this theory, Howes refers to an extract taken from Stoker's novel *Lady Athlyne*:

That deep-thinking young madman who committed suicide at twenty-three, Otto Weiniger, was probably right in that wonderful guess of his as to the possible solution of the problem of sex. All men and all women, according to him, have in themselves the cells of both sexes; and the accredited masculinity or femininity of the individual is determined by the multiplication and development of these cells. Thus the ideal man is entirely or almost entirely masculine, and the ideal woman is entirely or almost entirely feminine. Each individual must have a preponderance, be it ever so little, of the cells of its own sex; and the attraction of each individual to the other sex depends upon its place in the scale between the highest and lowest grade of sex. The most masculine man draws the most feminine woman, and vice versa; and so down the scale till close to the border line is the great mass of persons who, having only development of

a few of the qualities of sex, are easily satisfied to mate with anyone. (Stoker cited by Howes, 1988: 105)

Referring to a line from the novel, Talia Schaffer's "A Wilde Desire Took Me: The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*" (1994) shows how Stoker "used the Wildean figure of Dracula to define homosexuality as simultaneously monstrous, dirty, threatening, alluring, buried, corrupting, contagious, and indestructible" (1997:473). Schaffer further explains:

The vampire figure therefore fits easily as metaphor for the love that dare not speak its name. To homophobes, vampirism could function as a way of naming the homosexual as monstrous, dirty, threatening. To homosexuals, vampirism could be an elegy for the enforced interment of their desires. (Schaffer, 1997: 473)

Schaffer describes Jonathan Harker's speech during his stay at Castle Dracula as "Wilde-phobia" (1997: 473). The link to Wilde is also interesting, as my next chapter discusses evil, decadence, aestheticism, egotism or "Luciferianism" relating to Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895) with references to Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913), Holbrook Jackson reflected on the Victorian *fin de siècle* and observed that decadence, which was regarded as the arch-villain of the period, was actually "a form of soul-sickness and the only cure for the disease was mysticism" (Jackson, 2008: 132). This soul-sickness was inevitable, as Jackson explains:

New conceptions of life and morality and mankind were demanded. Generations had been brought up in the faith that there were no ideas higher than man and God. But Max Stirner and Henrik Isben were gradually insinuating the idea that the highest of all things was not mankind but the self, the individual ego. (2008: 132-133)

Jackson suggests that whereas orthodox religion states 'there were no ideas higher than Man and God', mysticism promotes "the self" and "the individual ego". This reflects Seward's ideas of "The real God" who "taketh heed lest a sparrow fall" and "the God created from human vanity" who "sees no difference between an eagle and a sparrow" (*Dracula*: 96). Stoker introduces this conflict of Christian selflessness versus occult selfishness and egotism in *Dracula*. Van Helsing observes of the count: "as he is criminal he is selfish; and his intellect is small and his action is based on selfishness, he confines himself to one purpose. That purpose is remorseless" (*Dracula*: 297). Furthermore, Van Helsing calls the Count "the evil doer" who does things for "his selfish good" and has a "selfish child brain" (*Dracula*: 297). Yet, when describing the Christian Fraternity, Van Helsing comments: "We, however, are not selfish, and we believe that God is with us through all this blackness, and these many dark hours" (*Dracula*: 297). Notably, Van Helsing observes:

She [Mina] is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist – and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish. (*Dracula*: 168-169)

This raises questions regarding what Nordau (1895) terms "ego-mania", mysticism, Victorian morality and Christian sin. Nordau comments in *Degeneration*: "The ego-maniacs are, on the one hand, at once mystics, erotics, and, though it seems paradoxical, even affect occasionally an appearance of philanthropy" (1895: 244). As Robert Mighall observes: "Surveying critical comment on sexuality in Stoker's novel, a number of tendencies and assumptions can be identified: that vampirism is erotic; that it embodies some form of sexual threat or 'subversive' sexuality; and that the (male) characters in the text, being 'typical' Victorians, fear vampires because of the threat they pose to orthodox sexuality" (Mighall, 2003: 211). Harker's experience with the vampire women is disturbing, because he understands their overt sexual

conduct is intentional and wanton: "There was a deliberate voluptuousness, which was both thrilling and repulsive" (*Dracula*: 42) The incident most upsetting for Harker occurs towards the end of the scene: "One of the women jumped forward and opened it [the bag]. If my ears did not deceive me there was a gasp and a low wail, as of a half-smothered child" (*Dracula*: 43-44). The scene portrays the three women as what Hurley terms "abhuman" (1996; 2004: 127). They display no signs of a maternal instinct in their treatment of the child, nor respect for the convention of marriage (they enjoy sex without commitment). Harker now understands the implications of bringing Dracula to England, where through vampirism or rather occultism his "mission [...] is the creation of a race of monstrous women" who reject Christian notions of morality and sin (Craft, 1997: 448).

In conclusion, on one of the rare occasions in *Dracula* when the Count is permitted to speak, rather than his actions being recounted by other characters in the novel, there is the feeling that the Count is not only speaking to the Crew of Light, but also to a wider audience: the readers of the novel. Dracula warns: "You think to baffle me, you – with your pale faces all in a row, like sheep in a butcher's" (*Dracula*: 267). Stoker's choice of imagery is interesting particularly as Dracula's criticism of his adversaries may be interpreted as a direct religious insult. Stoker suggests that the orthodox Christian Crew of Light are sheep or rather "sacrificial lambs" awaiting slaughter. The Count's speech may even refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God and his role as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of man, and from the Count's speech and obvious disgust we observe that he does not share the same belief in the idea of Christian sin and evil. The Count embodies what Janet Oppenheim describes as "the revulsion of sensitive consciences" and an "ethical revolt" against the Christian faith that happened in the late Victorian era (1985: 59-60). Oppenheim suggests that there was

The revulsion of sensitive consciences against the harshness, the apparent indifference to human suffering that had accompanied the spread of Christianity throughout its history, and the vengeful, punitive zeal that formed a central part of Christian dogma. This ethical revolt against a faith

that seemed entirely out of step with the progressive and humanitarian sentiments of the times offered a strong foundation for the doubts that were subsequently aroused by discoveries in geology, the life sciences, and biblical criticism. (1985: 59 - 60)

The Count's warning concludes with the message that there is a spiritual battle taking place against Christianity, which he, as an occult figure, will eventually and inevitably win: "My revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side [...] you and others shall yet be mine – my creatures to do my bidding" (*Dracula*: 267).

At the beginning of this chapter it was suggested that an indication of "religious mania" is that the individual believes he or she is endowed with the same powers as those of a god, and if Christian, then they believe themselves to be God. We traced this to Nordau, who observed such religious or mystical tendencies were degenerate. As a final thought, although there is substantial evidence in the narrative that Stoker intended Dracula to achieve divine status or become "more than human", there is evidence in the novel to suggest that the members of the Christian Fraternity believe they are endowed with similar divine powers.

At Lucy's tomb, Van Helsing asserts "the soul of the poor lady whom we love shall again be free [...] she shall take her place with other Angels. So that, my friend, it will be a blessed hand for her that shall strike the blow that sets her free" (*Dracula*: 191). Seward affirms this belief, as he states "We all looked at Arthur [...] his should be the hand which would restore Lucy to us as a holy, and not an unholy, memory" (*Dracula*: 191). Van Helsing reads out the prayer for the dead that Quincey and Seward try to follow and Arthur strikes in "God's name" (*Dracula*: 191). After, Seward remarks "There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing [...] but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity." Furthermore, Seward notes "One and all we felt that the holy calm that lay like sunshine over the wasted face and form was only an earthly token and symbol of the calm that was to reign forever" (*Dracula*: 192).

Restoring Lucy to Christianity and saving her soul from occultism can only be achieved through the most barbaric and violent means. The sadistic and degenerate behaviour of the male characters essentially condemns the Christian Fraternity at this point in the narrative; indeed critics have usually interpreted this scene as a highly sexual and aggressive episode in the novel. Showalter refers to the scene as “gang-rape with the impressive phallic instrument” (2001: 181). Hughes writes:

The threat of rape is present in virtually all of Stoker’s novels. Like marriage, rape is a transaction whereby ownership and value are modified as a result of male power. Its enactment of possession through force rather than through legality enables it to pre-empt marriage, or to subvert ownership already gained [...] a devaluation of the female through the modification of her value in implicitly male eyes. (2000: 106)

Similarly, Craft suggests: “Violence against the sexual woman here is intense, sensually imagined, ferocious in its detail” (Craft, 1997: 455). At the end of the novel, Senf notes:

all the characters who have been accused of expressing individual desire have been appropriately punished [...] All that remains after the primitive, the passionate, and the individualistic qualities that were associated with the vampire have been destroyed is a small group of wealthy men who return after a period of one year to the site of their victory over the vampire. The surviving characters remain unchanged by the events in their lives and never come to the realization that their commitment to social values merely masks their violence and their sexuality. (1997: 430)

When Lucy and Mina meet Mr Swales in Whitby, Mina asks him about the local legends and she comments that he responds in a “sort of sermon” and his thoughts concerning orthodox religion are insightful:

They an' all grims an signs an warnin's be all invented by parsons [...] to get folks to do somethin' that they don't other incline to. [...] Why, it's them that, not content with printin' lies on paper an' preachin' them out of pulpits, does want to be cuttin' them on the tombsteans. (*Dracula*: 65)

Mr Swale's view that Christianity, in this case the Anglican Church, suppresses its followers and ensures adherence to the doctrine through fear is repeated throughout the novel. Occult and alternative methods are never criticized in the novel, in fact through Van Helsing, Stoker asks us to accept their existence and maintain an open mind: “I suppose now you do not believe in corporeal transference. No? Nor in materialization. No? Nor in astral bodies. No? Nor the reading of thought. No? Nor in hypnotism” (*Dracula*: 171). Similarly, Joel N. Feimer observes: “What Stoker's novel objects to most is the insistence of the mainstream of modern thought on the reality of a quantifiable universe that excludes all possibility of the objective existence of the occult” (1990: 165). Orthodox religion or essentially Christianity fails to stand against the alternative religion, and so the fraternity must resort to combining orthodox religion, superstition folklore and science in a bid to defeat the Count. This leads Hughes to suggest: “the near-victory of the occult forces in *Dracula* holds the potential to say as much about the negligence of the Deity as it does of His care and protection” (2000: 15).

In the final analysis of the novel it is not the supernatural and occult forces that are dangerous, but forces that are natural, in this case the forces of humanity or rather Christian morality: “Some power must somewhere in the advance of things recognise the imperfection of humanity. When the integer of that great body recognises that imperfection and the evils consequent upon it, those evils are at their least” (Stoker, 1908: 480). Stoker expresses similar thoughts in his article “The Censorship of Fiction”, published in the *Nineteenth Century* where he comments: “The force of evil

[...] is the more dangerous as it is a natural force. It is as natural for man to sin as to live and to take part in the necessary strife of living" (1908: 481). As Watters suggests: "At the end of *Dracula*, Dracula is not destroyed by Catholic rites or even by Van Helsing. He is killed by physical force meted out by Harker and Morris using secular knives. Religion does not kill the demon" (2005: 121). If we substitute the word "demon" for "occultism", Stoker's overall message becomes evident: orthodox religion, namely Christianity, fails to eradicate occultism in the novel or rather it fails to prevent *fin de siècle* decadence. The higher self is confused with what Holbrook Jackson terms "the ego": "The vice of the many [...] is in this case yielding to the pleasant sins or weaknesses of the flesh [...] The vice of the few who cater is avarice pure and simple" (Stoker, 1908: 481).

We have some insight into the nature of "religious otherness" and recognition of religious intolerance, as Dracula comments to Jonathan Harker during his time at his castle in Transylvania: "There is a reason that all things are as they are, and did you see with my eyes and know with my knowledge, you would perhaps better understand. [...] Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things" (*Dracula*: 26-27).

CHAPTER SEVEN: Satanism and Luciferianism in *Wormwood* (1890) and *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895)

In 1902, Marie Corelli published “The Devil’s Motor”, which first appeared in her anthology of poems and stories *Christmas Greeting*. According to Corelli’s biographer Theresa Ransom, Corelli intended the story to be “an allegory of modern living” (1999: 172). Apart from Corelli’s obvious criticism of the development of the motorcar, “The Devil’s Motor” is interesting due to her portrayal of Satan. In terms of his appearance the Devil is distinctly medieval. Corelli describes a figure:

clothed in black and crowned with fire; large bat-like wings flared out on either side of him in woven webs of smoke and flame, and his face was white as bleached bone. Like glowing embers his eyes burned in their cavernous sockets, shedding terrific glances through the star-strewn space, and on his thin lips there was a frozen shadow of a smile more cruel than hate, - more deadly than despair (1902; 1998: 141).

The aim of Corelli’s Satan in this particular story is also medieval, it is to fill Hell with human souls: “I, the Avenger, the Destroyer, the Torturer of Souls, the Arch-Enemy of God! The Kingdom of Hell grows wide and deep, praise be to Man who makes it!” (Corelli, 1902; 1998: 142). This was not the first time that Corelli had devised a plot with the Devil as the lead character. Satan appears in person in a previous novel, published in 1895, entitled *The Sorrows of Satan*. Yet the incarnation of the Devil in this novel bears no resemblance to the medieval monster who thrives on human suffering in “The Devil’s Motor.” In fact, Corelli describes the Anti-Christ as an aristocrat, wealthy and beautiful. Her portrayal of Satan as Prince Lucio introduces the many forms of true evil and diabolism that she attacks throughout the course of the novel:

I thought I had never seen so much beauty and intellectuality combined in the outward personality of any human being. The finely shaped head denoted both power and wisdom, and was nobly poised on such shoulders as might have befitted a Hercules, - the countenance was a pure oval, and singularly pale, this complexion intensifying the almost fiery brilliancy of the full dark eyes, which had in them a curious and wonderful attractive look of mingled mirth and misery. The mouth was perhaps the most telling feature in this remarkable face, - set in the perfect curve of beauty, it was yet firm, determined, and not too small, thus escaping effeminacy, - and I noted that in repose it expressed bitterness, disdain and even cruelty. (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 23)

Corelli's Satan resembles Milton's conceptualisation of the Devil and, as Mavis Clare notes, "Milton's conception of Satan is the finest, [...] A mighty Angel fallen! – one cannot but be sorry for such a fall" (*Sorrows of Satan*: 233). In William Stuart Scott's account of his friendship with Marie Corelli, the author explains that Corelli's interpretation of the Temptation of Christ led to the development of the characterization of the Satan figure, Prince Lucio Rimânez in *The Sorrows of Satan*. Corelli surmised:

When the temptation was over I read that Satan had left Him, and that angels came and ministered to Him. I thought this out in my own mind and I concluded that if man, through Christ, would only reject Satan, Satan would leave him, and that angels would minister to him in the same way that they had ministered to Christ. Out of this germ rose the wider idea that Satan himself might be glad for men to reject him, as then he might have the chance of recovering his lost angelic position (Scott citing Corelli, 1955: 157).

When Viscount Lynton plays Lucio at cards he is unaware of Lucio's true identity. Lynton is cajoled into gambling his soul in one final game. Lynton loses and he leaves the club while the other players discuss his gambling debts. When Lynton commits suicide, Geoffrey Tempest remarks that if Lucio were Satan he would rejoice, as he is owed Lynton's soul (*Sorrows of Satan*: 115). Lucio merely replies: "No, my friend! If I were Satan, I should probably lament! – for every lost soul would of necessity remind me of my own fall, my own despair, - and set another bar between myself and heaven!" (*Sorrows of Satan*: 116).

Contextually, the nineteenth century Devil ceased to be the direct opponent of God, but rather the fallen angel, who seeks to regain his lost paradise. According to Esther H. Schor the Romantic poets, including Blake, Byron and Shelley, had "revised Milton's epic by aligning themselves with the revolutionary energies of Satan" (2003: 23). In a perverse way, the Devil also ceased to be the enemy of humanity but rather through his methods he became a means for mankind to improve itself. Ultimately, man cannot deny the Devil, as he is a "necessary, though unwilling, instrument of man's betterment. He supplies the motive power, without which man would soon reach the stage of stagnation" (Rudwin, 1973: 279). Corelli's portrayal of Satan as a figure in need of sympathy in *The Sorrows of Satan* is indicative of her unorthodox Christian views. The attempt to rehabilitate the Devil was a radical departure from orthodox Christianity, which clearly states that Satan is beyond redemption as Jesus died "so that through his death he might destroy the Devil, who has the power over death, and in this way set free those who were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death" (Hebrews 2: 14-16).

The general rehabilitation of Satan in late Victorian society was thought necessary for several reasons. In an article published in the *Nineteenth Century*, entitled "Happiness in Hell", St. George Mivart suggests that it was Christianity's teachings regarding the Devil and particularly the existence of Hell, which partly contributed to the "crisis of faith":

the modern mind has come to feel abhorrence for beliefs
which were viewed with complacency or accepted without

difficulty for so many ages. And not only the sentiment of our day, but what we take to be its more highly evolved moral perceptions, are shocked beyond expression at the doctrine that countless multitudes of mankind will burn forever in hell fire, out of which there is no possible redemption. Our experience shows that not a few persons have abandoned Christianity on account of this dogma, which also constitutes the very greatest difficulty for many who desire to obtain a rational religious belief and to accept the Church's teaching. (1892: 899)

Mivart's account of the Christian dogma of Hell and punishment for sin describes the increasingly vexed position of atonement in the Christian doctrine. This was mainly due to two reasons. First, Hugh McLeod suggests that between 1870 and 1914 there was a "leisure revolution" in Britain, which meant that there was a new emphasis on free-time and leisure pursuits. Importantly, many of the new leisure pursuits took place on Sunday, not only because this was for many the only day of the week when many people were not at work but also, as McLeod concludes, "many of the devotees of the cult of leisure saw the rejection of all churches and formal creeds as an integral part of their search for individual self-fulfilment" (1996: 196 - 201). The Reverend Dr. Momerie also commented on the nature of atonement in his article about the future of religion, published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1892:

In its simple form of propitiation by blood, the orthodox Atonement is as vile as anything to be found in heathendom. But the addition to it of the doctrine of predestination makes it infinitely viler still. The two together constitute the most savage superstition which has ever existed in the world. The god of orthodoxy is the very wickedest being which it is possible for the human mind to conceive. (Momerie, 1892: 840)

Momerie's view that the orthodox Christian God became for some people "the very wickedest being" evokes the words of John Stuart Mill, who expressed his ideas regarding judgement in 1865: "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures; and if such a creature can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go" (Mill, 1865; 2004: 129). Momerie subsequently refers to Mill's words in his own article: "The number of human beings is continually on the increase, who sympathise with the words of John Stuart Mill,- "If God can send me to hell for not saying wrong is right, to hell I will go" (Momerie, 1892: 842). The growing scepticism concerning atonement and the eternal punishment for sins in Hell conflicted with the Victorian notion of social reform and the rehabilitation of "social outcasts". One example of this was the Victorian rehabilitation of prostitutes and "fallen women": a response to "The Great Social Evil." As Trevor Fisher observes, this phrase was taken from William Logan's work of the same name (1997: 24). Logan intended to launch an investigation into prostitution in Britain. His findings were published in 1871. Indeed according to Professor James Miller's pamphlet of 1889, entitled *Prostitution considered in Relation to its Cause and Cure*, the rehabilitation of Victorian prostitutes was the rehabilitation of women, who had literally been labelled "a multitudinous amazonian army [of] the devil" – which, if left unchecked, might swallow up the decent social life of the towns, besiege traditional values and domestic placidity" (Miller cited by Nield, 1973: 3). In his account of the history of the Devil and the existence of evil, which he published in 1900, Paul Carus notes that Satan thus appealed to Victorian sensibilities in this respect, as he embodied the Victorian ideal of rehabilitation and reformation. Carus comments:

He appears as the critic of the good Lord, as the representative of discontent with existing conditions, he inspires men with the desire for an increase of wealth, power, and knowledge; he is the mouth-piece of all who are anxious for a change in matters political, social, and ecclesiastical. He is identified with the spirit of progress so inconvenient to those who are satisfied with the existing state of things, and thus he is credited with innovations of all kinds, the aspiration for improvement as well as the desire for the overthrow of

law and order. In a word, he is characterised as the patron of both reform and evolution. (1900: 407-408)

Perversely, atonement and Catholic piety also appealed to the Aesthetes and Decadents. To be able to go to Confession, the Aesthetes and Decadents noted that the greatest sin and evil had to be committed. Wilde in particular was enticed by the eroticism of Catholic ritual and piety. In a study of the relationship between Catholicism and Decadence, Ellis Hanson notes: "Roman Catholicism provided Wilde with an ideal stage. For his dandyism and his aestheticism, there was beautiful ritual and passionate faith. For his taste for scandal, there was a discourse of sin. And for his aesthetic and sexual martyrdom, there was the language of penitence and hagiography" (1997: 231).

Thus, the role of the Devil in *fin de siècle* literature was multi-faceted. Depending somewhat on the author's own views and intentions, Jean La Fontaine suggests that Satan was a figure who first of all came to:

represent the rebellion of the individual against the powerful, whether these are secular monarchs, Church leaders or the impersonal bureaucrats of the state. His fall from Heaven was portrayed as the result of his daring to oppose the all-powerful, rather than in the more orthodox manner as the triumph of good over evil, and he became, by this strange twist, a symbol of human liberty. (1999: 88)

This idea occurs in Corelli's earlier novel *Wormwood*, published in 1890 where she describes an eternal struggle between orthodox Christianity, the tyrannical Catholic Church and her true faith (esoteric Christianity or Rosicrucianism) and when Gaston Beauvais kills the hypocritical priest Silvion Guidèl, Corelli suggests that for once the forces of evil have succeeded: "The libertine, - the Priest! - there he lay, the holy chosen servant of Mother Church, - dead! Dead, and I had killed him! Good! For the millionth time or more, the world's Cain had proved himself stronger than God's favoured Abel!" (*Wormwood*: 243).

In addition to being a rebel against figures of power and authority, the Devil was a figure that came to represent the rebellion of the individual, who refused to be governed by stifling orthodox Christian morals, virtues and social codes, which were imposed by Victorian society. He was the spirit of humanity's right to individualism. Evil thus became a means of self-expression and "the new hedonism", as is evident in Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan, Wormwood* (1890) and certainly in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). As Maximilian Rudwin comments in his study of the role of the Devil in both legend and literature, the Devil represented the lower self and the repressed human nature and the "existence of duplicity, sensuality, knavery, and malice" (1973: 273). According to La Fontaine it is really for the reasons of individualism that Satanists align themselves with the idealized figure of Satan as saviour as they believe that he will save them from the social repression imposed by Christianity:

there are two main tenets to their opposition: first they claim that Christianity denies and suppresses the physical nature of human beings, stigmatizing the body and its pleasures as evil. [...] Secondly they deny the Christian moral evaluation of self seeking as wrong. (La Fontaine, 1999: 88-89)

The word "Satanist" is actually a term misused to describe various forms of diabolism. This is an inaccurate generalization. In terms of this chapter there is a distinction between the worship of Lucifer (Luciferianism) and Satan (Satanism). James Randall Noblitt and Pamela Sue Perskin observe that Lucifer, as the "bringer of light" is represented as a "Promethean figure [...] the rebellious spirit opposed to Christianity and the god of creation who is instead portrayed as the one responsible for introducing evil by creating a material world. Thus, Luciferianism reverses the Judeo-Christian-Islamic concept of a good creator and an evil demon" (2002: 156). Conversely, Satan is not the bringer of light, but rather the bringer of darkness. "Satanists worship Satan because he is perceived to be more powerful or because the cultist might view himself or herself as belief beyond redemption by a benign deity. In

this system of thinking, goodness itself is characterized as a weak, ineffective, and futile goal” (Noblitt and Perskin, 2002: 156).

To illustrate this point further, Aleister Crowley is generally acknowledged to be the founder of modern Satanism. Crowley epitomized the Victorian stereotype of the upper class, high society individual indulging in satanic worship and embracing evil, resulting in extreme hedonism, sadism and degeneracy. Leonard R. N. Ashley notes that Aleister Crowley had the appropriate personal motto “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law” (1986; 1996: 180). In his entry about Crowley, Ashley comments that before establishing his own satanic groups Crowley was first a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (1986; 1996: 180). Indeed, it was the foundation of occult groups such as the Golden Dawn which ultimately contributed to a growth of interest in Satanism, where magical and alchemical practices could be taken to another, darker level. Alex Owen notes that in addition to Rosicrucian theory and Masonic ritual, the initiates of occult groups, particularly the Golden Dawn, were well versed in astrology, alchemy, cabala, geomantic and tarot divination and a range of magical techniques. Indeed, for those initiates lucky enough to be selected to progress to the Second or Inner Order, “adherents began to access the secrets of ritual magic [...] as a unique undertaking through which invisible forces could be influenced and controlled” (2004: 46). It is unsurprising therefore, that after his expulsion from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Crowley turned to the study of black magic. Ashley notes that Crowley went on to join a German group called the Ordo Templi Orientis (the Order of the Eastern Temple) in 1912 and then after moving to Sicily in 1920, he founded the Abbey of Thelema appropriately named, as “thelema” translates as “will” and “choice” in Greek (1986 ; 1996: 180). Marie Corelli ‘invented’ the name Thelma, derived from Thelema, in her novel *Thelma*, published in 1887. The Abbey was notorious, as were Crowley and his followers, who according to Ashley “indulged in animal sacrifices, black masses, worship of Satan, and orgies and drug taking and sex” (1986 ; 1996: 180). This is the primary difference between the two forms of diabolism. Whereas Satanism involves the clichéd black masses and black magic, Luciferianism is a refusal to accept the Christian doctrine, which is perceived to be morally hypocritical, socially restrictive and personally inhibitive.

According to John Michael Greer it is a misconception that modern diabolism can be solely attributed to Aleister Crowley, as Crowley's establishment of his own religion of Thelema means that he cannot even be described as a Satanist in a literal sense of the term. Instead Greer notes that modern Satanism, which essentially originated at the *fin de siècle* can actually be traced back to a hoax, which was started by the French journalist Léo Taxil. In 1884, Taxil was "reconciled to the Roman Catholic Church, and proceeded to publish a flurry of writings detailing a vast satanic organization, the Palladian Order, which was associated with Freemasonry." In 1896, author and journalist Edward Arthur Waite published one of the few studies on forms of diabolism in the nineteenth century, an account of the history and nature of contemporary Devil worship in France. Waite's initial aim in his study was to debunk the Taxil hoax in an effort to clear the name of the Order of the Freemasons, which Taxil had labelled as being satanic. Taxil had been denied membership to the Freemasons and his hoax was a means of personal revenge, not only to demonstrate the gullibility of the Roman Catholic Church, but also to tarnish the name of the Freemason order (Greer, 2004: 422).

Waite's name is predominantly associated with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, as he was initiated into the group in 1891 though he had a strained relationship with the order. As John Michael Greer notes he left in 1893, but was re-admitted in 1896 and when the revolt took place in 1900, Waite decided to support the rebellion and lead a small minority with the aim of taking control of the order. When this failed, Waite went on to establish two further societies: the Independent and Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn, which collapsed in 1914 and then the Fellowship of the Rose Cross (Waite was also a Freemason, initiated into the order in 1901). However, as Greer observes, Waite's religious background was extremely diverse and he had a keen understanding of several alternate groups, as he had also been a member of the Spiritualist movement, after he was first introduced to spiritualism in 1878, before returning to Catholicism and studying Christian mysticism during the early 1880s and then turning to occultism in the mid-1880s. In addition to his publications on aspects of occultism and alternative groups, Waite was also partly responsible for the creation of the Rider-Waite Tarot deck (Greer, 2004: 507).

Waite's deep involvement with and understanding of occultism meant he was able to produce a detailed study of diabolism in France, tracing the emergence and spread of diabolist groups and diabolism during the course of the nineteenth century. Waite immediately recognised there were in fact two main diabolist groups and classifications of diabolist worshippers. This is vital in understanding Corelli's attack on diabolism or rather a form of Luciferianism as opposed to actual Satanism in *Wormwood* and *The Sorrows of Satan*:

There is (a) devil-worship pure and simple, being an attempt to communicate with evil spirits, admitting that they are evil; (b) the cultus of Lucifer, star of the morning, as distinguished from Satan, on the hypothesis that he is a good spirit. [...] The first division is, in any case Satanism proper, and its adepts are termed Satanists; those of the second division are, on the other hand, Luciferians, Palladists, &c. The two orders are further distinguished as unorganised and as organised diabolism. (Waite, 1896: 20)

Two things become evident after reading Waite's account of Satanism in the nineteenth century. Firstly, he notes how the "movement" was growing at *the fin de siècle*, notably as diabolism moved from France to England. Waite believed this to be mainly through the circulation of satanic literature, but this included what could be termed as Luciferian (or rather "decadent") novels and poetry too. Secondly, Waite comments on the social class of people, who were involved in diabolist worship, and the type of adherents of either organised or unorganised diabolist groups. In fact, Waite observed:

Books have multiplied, periodicals have been founded, the Church is taking action, even a legal process has been instituted. The centre of this literature is at Paris, but the report of it has crossed the Channel, and has passed into the English press. As it is affirmed, therefore, that a cultus of

Lucifer exists, and that the men and women who are engaged in it are neither ignorant nor especially mad, nor yet belonging to the lowest strata of society, it is worth while to investigate the matter. (1896: 6)

Indeed, Waite suggests that the majority of diabolists were in fact members of the upper class, a concept that can also be found in J. K. Huysmans's *La Bas*, trans. *The Damned* (1891). The novel describes the Parisian underground of Satanism, black magic rituals, eroticism and sexual perversion. Its main character Durtal attends a black mass and he is initiated into "obscenities whose existence he had never suspected" (Huysmans 1891; 2001: 230). Indeed, As John P. Newport observes, Satanism "arose among the privileged, wealthy classes, beginning as a search for sexual perversion, sensual enjoyment, and power over others" (1998: 537).

In his effort to debunk the Taxil hoax, Waite suggests that the real originator of the renewed *fin de siècle* interest in the Devil was the French author: "M. Huysmans, [...] is, in a certain sense, the discoverer of modern Satanism. Under the thinnest disguise of fiction, he gives in his romance of *La Bas*, an incredible and untranslatable picture of sorcery, sacrilege, black magic, and nameless abominations, secretly practised in Paris" (1896: 11). According to John P. Newport though, Satanism in France had existed long before Huysmans published his novel and its account of attending a black mass. Satanism "began in the eighteenth century in the ferment that led up to the French Revolution" (1998: 537). Similarly, there had been satanic groups in existence in England before the nineteenth century. Newport, for example, notes the Hellfire Clubs, where "masses were conducted over an altar consisting of a naked girl. The monks of these groups, known as the "Unholy Twelve" were influential political and literary figures" (1998: 538). According to Noblitt and Perskin the most notorious Hellfire Club in England was the one founded by Sir Francis Dashwood who called his group the Friars of St. Francis of Wycombe. Dashwood bought Medmenham Abbey, where he had the motto "Do what you will" inscribed in Renaissance French on a doorframe (2000: 138). Noblitt and Perskin conclude: "some authors have interpreted their unorthodox behaviours as not genuinely satanic, but more as a kind of organized libertinism" (2000: 138).

What Huysmans did in his novel was to bring satanic practices to the attention of the public and to popularise the black mass as a sort of new trend for socialites. In fact, Waite believed Huysmans's *La Bas* was an obvious example of the "doctrine of Lucifer". He explained:

The doctrine of Lucifer has been tersely described by Huysmans as a kind of reversed Christianity---a Catholicism *à rebours*. [...] It is inferred from the condition of the world at the present time that the mastery of the moment resides with the evil principle, and that the beneficent Deity is at a disadvantage. Adonai reigns surely, as the Christian believes, but he is the author of human misery, and Jesus is the Christ of Adonai, but he is the messenger of misfortune, suffering, and false renunciation, leading ultimately to destruction when the *Deus maledictus* shall cease to triumph. The worshippers of Lucifer have taken sides in the cause of humanity, and in their own cause, with the baffled principle of goodness; they co-operate with him in order to insure his triumph, and he communicates with them to encourage and strengthen them; they work to prepare his kingdom, and he promises to raise up a Saviour among them, who is Antichrist, their leader and king to come. (1996: 23-24)

The trend for upper class diabolism is apparent in Corelli's *Wormwood* and *The Sorrows of Satan*. In their biography of Marie Corelli, Thomas F. G. Coates and R. S. Warren Bell believed that the critics of *The Sorrows of Satan* had failed to understand the true message of the novel: "Now the idea of Lady Sibyl was an allegorical one. She represented, to Marie Corelli's mind, the brilliant, indifferent, selfish, vicious impersonation of *Society offering itself body and soul to the devil*" (1903; 1996: 165). Indeed, Father Ignatius (the Revd Joseph Leicester Lyne) praised Corelli, stating that her readers "will bless Marie Corelli's pen [...]. Where did the courage come from that made her pen so bold that the personality of God, the divinity of Christ, the sanctity of marriage, the necessity of religious education should crash

upon you from the pen of a woman?" (Father Ignatius cited by Coates and Bell 1903; 1996: 166). Christine Ferguson refers to the novel as portraying "the extent of modern Britain's moral bankruptcy" and Britain as an island where the "inhabitants are no longer rational, articulate, and upright citizens but an atavistic brood of squabbling primates" who have become dehumanised (2006: 47).

Coates and Bell believed the real message of the novel was also to represent the New Woman as a consort of the Devil, a figure who can only be redeemed by the traditional angelic woman stereotype, hence the direct contrast of Lady Sibyl Elton and Mavis Clare: "Facts, however, are facts. Marie Corelli considers that the evils of society are wrought by women [...]. Secondly, she considers that the reformation of society must be wrought by women" (1903; 1996: 165). For Coates and Bell what also becomes clear is that as a New Woman figure, Lady Sibyl Elton is not only guilty of "masquerading", "lying", "trickery" and "vice", but also an "atheism" which makes her "an abomination in the form of Venus." As such, she stands as a warning, for the "woman who reads and studies *The Sorrows of Satan*" will desire to attain the angel ideal" (1903; 1996: 167-168).

Corelli's portrayal of women in the novel is, nevertheless, complex. Coates and Bell suggest above that Sibyl represents the New Woman figure and Mavis Clare the traditional woman. There is evidence in the novel to support this theory. When Tempest kisses Sibyl she is unmoved, saying: "I cannot feel. I am one of your modern women, - I can only think, - and analyze" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 196). On the other hand, as Tempest is envious of Mavis Clare's literary genius, he is angry because she has not had to buy her fame or success. He retorts: "This Mavis Clare - 'unsexed,' as I at once called her in my own mind, simply because she had the power I lacked" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 171). Yet when Lucio speaks of Mavis Clare to Tempest, he says: "You are thinking of the 'New' women I suppose, - but you flatter them, - they never had any sex to lose. [...] Mavis Clare is not one of them, - she is an 'old-fashioned' young woman" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 216).

Ferguson comments "one might read *Sorrows* as an epic contest between the forces of the real (represented by the working class) and the fantastic (represented by the rich) in which the former finally triumphs to the spiritual benefit of the nation" (2006: 63). Sibyl Elton symbolizes the New Woman debate. It describes an eternal

power struggle for supremacy between men and women, rather than the Rosicrucian and Corelli's Electric Creed ideal of the 'equalization' of men and women, to achieve spiritual balance. Similarly, Corelli discusses the society woman who allows herself to be dominated and corrupted mostly through literature. Sibyl reasons: "I am old in heart and feeling. I was young for a little while at Willowsmere, when I lived among flowers and birds and all the trustful honest creatures of the woods and fields, - but one season in town was sufficient to kill my youth in me, - one season of dinners and balls, and - fashionable novel-reading" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 197). Indeed, Sibyl's corruption through literature is reminiscent of Dorian Gray. Sibyl asks Tempest: "do you think a girl can read the books that are now freely published, and that her silly society friends tell her to read, - 'because it is so dreadfully queer!' - and yet remain unspoilt and innocent?" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 198). Similarly Wilde notes: "Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 1891; 2003: 140).

As Corelli wanted to demonstrate that it was the upper classes who are representative of atheism and Luciferian modern evil, the contrast of Sibyl and Mavis is not a straightforward division of New Woman versus tradition. When Sibyl recalls her childhood at Willowsmere, she remembers a girl playing near the estate (the girl is the Corelli figure, Mavis Clare). She remarks: "I wanted to know her and speak to her, but my nurse would never let me because she was supposed to be 'beneath' me" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 136). Yet, Sibyl feels that Mavis Clare "is above me now!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 137) As Sibyl has been corrupted by reading decadent novels and poetry, she also remarks to Tempest: "You wonder at my fanaticism for Mavis Clare, - it is only because for a time her books give me back my self-respect, and make me see humanity in a nobler light, - because she restores to me, if only for an hour, a kind of glimmering belief in God, so that my mind feels refreshed and cleansed" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 198). After meeting Mavis Clare, Sibyl remarks that she now hates her, because Mavis has truly found happiness: "She believes in a God, - she thinks all He ordains is right and good. With such a firm faith as that, she would be happy in a garret earning but a few pence a day" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 316).

Corelli also portrays the religious division between the working class and the upper class in terms of literary genius versus notoriety and wealth. Lucio introduces this theme at the very beginning of the novel, as he tells Tempest: "Leave your

quixoticism behind you with your poverty. Live your life to yourself, if you do anything for others they will only treat you with the blackest ingratitude, so take my advice, and don't sacrifice your own personal interests for any consideration whatever" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 38). When Tempest buys a book by Mavis Clare on impulse, he rages: "What power had so gifted this author – this mere woman – that she should dare to write better than I! [...] – and all at once, in the very midst of reading, such a violent rage possessed me that I flung the book down, dreading to go on with it. The potent, resistless, unpurchasable quality of Genius!" (Sorrrows: 170). Tempest wants to be remembered for his literary genius not for his accumulation of wealth. He aspires to genius, which Corelli suggests is a gift of God; the other, the desire for wealth and fame comes from the Devil, as Lucio says to Tempest: "why one should trouble to fight for merely literary honours! You are far too modest in your ambitions, Tempest! – high seated as you are upon bank-notes and bullion, with all the glory of effulgent county chronicles behind you, you still stoop to clutch the laurel! Fie, my dear fellow! You degrade yourself by this desire to join the company of the immortals!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 140).

Corelli suggests that money and materialism are destroying Christian values. Tempest recalls walking late one night with Lucio and "three young sons of English peers", when they meet a young, poverty stricken girl standing outside a church, clinging to the iron railings imploring God to help her. Nobody helps her, except for Lucio, who gives her some money, and she blesses him. One of the party observes: "You paid dearly for that blessing, Rimânez!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 176). Tempest also recalls that "One of my companions seized her by the arm with a lewd jest" while another comments "I'd have had something more than a blessing if I had been you" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 176). Corelli criticizes the treatment of the poor by the upper class and at the same time suggests that male chivalry no longer exists. Indeed later in the novel, when Lucio unsheathes a rapier, he comments to Tempest: "there is no real use in this flimsy blade, - it is merely an emblem of dead chivalry. [...] But now [...] men carry toys like these as a melancholy sign to show what bold fellows they were once" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 185). This is developed further through Corelli's abhorrence of the "purchasing" of society women, a theme she introduces with the marriage of Sibyl and Tempest. After seeing Sibyl declaring her love for Lucio,

Tempest challenges her, but Sibyl just responds: "I gave you what you paid for, - my beauty and my social position" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 362).

The final point of the novel, a theme that is also found in the "Heliobas" novels, is Corelli's endeavour to re-establish Christianity as the true religion of Victorian society. However, as in the Heliobas texts, the Christianity which Corelli wants her readers to accept is not orthodox. She suggests that orthodox Christianity is a form of blasphemy and evil, as Lucio remarks: "the word 'Christian' vexes me. There is no such being alive. *You* are not a Christian, - no one is really, - people pretend to be, - and in so damnable an act of feigning are more blasphemous than any fallen fiend!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 33). In fact, Mark Knight and Emma Mason suggest "the main ecclesial target of Corelli's novel is the Roman Catholic Church" (2006: 207). Corelli accuses the Church of promoting evil, as though the clergy are in league with the Devil, as Lucio remarks: "The clergy are doing their utmost best to destroy religion, - by cant, by hypocrisy, by sensuality, by shams of every description, - and when they seek my help in this noble work, I give it, - freely!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 71). Ironically, apart from Mavis Clare, the only character in the novel who understands the true nature of religion is Lucio, who observes: "I do not believe in the clerical heaven [...] I cannot picture the angels in white smocks with goose wings, or the Deity as a somewhat excitable personage with a beard. Personally I should decline to go to any heaven which was only a city with golden streets; [...]. I do believe in Heaven all the same, - a different kind of heaven, - I often see it in my dreams!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 149).

At the end of the novel it is interesting that Corelli's Devil is not overthrown by the powers of good, as Tempest witnesses Lucio, and a "well-known Cabinet minister" ascending the steps of the Houses of Parliament as "Devil and Man, - together!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 471). Apart from Corelli's obvious views about corruption in politics, she also recognises that the Devil must continue to exist if God is to succeed. Essentially, without the Devil, God ceases to exist as the two are dependent on one another, a fact that Corelli acknowledged in her poem "God and Satan," which appeared in her *Christmas Greeting* anthology "God said - "I will ordain that thou shalt not longer be!" / Satan answered - "Thou canst not, Lord, for I am a part of thee!" (1902: 157).

The Sorrows of Satan is not the only novel in which Corelli introduces her concept of evil and the degeneration of the upper class through a compact with the Devil. She took the title of *Wormwood* from a passage in the Bible: "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" (Revelation 8: 10-12). In her study *The Trees, Fruits, and Flowers of the Bible*, Harriet N. Cook notes that there are several references to wormwood in the Bible, as it "is always used to denote something peculiarly offensive" (1846: 117). According to Cook, among these references there are those which include idolatry, mentioned in Deuteronomy 29: 18; the consequences of wickedness, as in Proverbs 5: 4 and to describe "extreme misery", Lamentations 3: 19 (1846: 117 – 118). Doris Lanier suggests "wormwood also has been traditionally associated with Christ's crucifixion in that some people believe that Christ was given wormwood to drink when he was crucified" (1995: 3).

According to Kirsten MacLeod in her introduction to *Wormwood*, although the novel is set in Paris, it is actually an attack on British society at the *fin de siècle*. "In this period, France served as a powerful image for Britain in concretizing the nation's more general fear of its own demise. [...] Britons regarded France as a country characterized by dangerous political radicalism, lax social and moral values, and a corrupt literary and artistic culture" (2004: 11). MacLeod further notes that the French literary schools of Naturalism and Realism, Decadence and Impressionism were also starting to influence British writers and poets. Annette R. Federico observes that in a preface to an American edition of *Wormwood*, Corelli decided that she wanted to expose the evils of absinthe and intended to "bring this "fatal brain degradation" before French authorities and so put an end to its destructive progress" (2000: 73). In the novel, Corelli's use of absinthe is more than an exposure of the dangers of drug abuse. It is an allegory for abandoning Christianity (or at least Corelli's version of Christianity, esoteric Christianity) and the short descent from atheism into diabolism or rather Corelli's version of Luciferianism, as evil is represented by decadence. As Wilde writes in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "There were moments when he [Dorian] looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the

beautiful" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*: 140). Indeed, Max Nordau dedicates chapter three of book three of *Degeneration* entitled "Ego-mania" to the "Decadents and Aesthetes", stating: "Existing vice does not satisfy them; they invent, they rival each other in seeking for, new evil, and if they find it they applaud each other. [...] To reason, justify, to apothosize evil, to establish its ritual, to show the excellence of it – is this not worse than to commit it?" (Nordau, 1895: 298). Corelli notes in *The Sorrows of Satan* that after hearing Lucio play the piano, Tempest tells him: "You have roused in me evil thoughts of which I am ashamed. I did not think that was possible to so divine an Art." Lucio merely replies: "Art takes its colours from the mind, my dear friend [...]. If you discover evil suggestions in my music, the evil, I fear, must be in your own nature" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 151).

In a religious context, Corelli uses France as a means to continue her personal vendetta against the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical figures and what she viewed as the hypocrisy of orthodox Christianity. As Waite believed *fin de siècle* diabolism had originated in France, it is appropriate that Corelli chose the French passion for drinking absinthe as a metaphor for turning to evil, decadence and degeneration. She portrays a society where the Catholic clergy are responsible for the dying belief in God, and the only thing that remains for the novel's principal character Gaston Beauvais to do is to sell his soul to a devil, not the literal figure of Satan, but his metaphorical and literary counterpart, absinthe. Historically, in addition to being known as the "Devil in a bottle" and "the green fairy", MacLeod notes that the drink was also known as "the green muse," "the green menace," "the green fiend," "the green goddess," and "the green curse" (2004: 45). Indeed, there are several contemporary poets, authors and artists who labelled the drink as "satanic." For example, poet Richard Le Gallienne observed "I had just heard of it, as a drink mysteriously sophisticated and even satanic [...] [i]n the [18]90s it was spoken of with a self-conscious sense of one's being desperately wicked, suggesting diabolism and nameless iniquity" (Le Gallienne cited by MacLeod, 2004: 46) and French writer Raoul Ponchon, also commented: "C'est le diable fait liquide" or "the devil made liquid" (Ponchon cited by Jad Adams, 2004: 1). Corelli uses similar language after Gaston tastes absinthe for the first time: "it had given the devil time to do good work, - to

consume virtue in a breath and conjure up vice from the dead ashes – to turn a feeling heart to stone – and make of a man a fiend” (*Wormwood*: 172).

After Gaston’s devilish compact is made with the “Green Fairy”, his life deteriorates, enabling Corelli to fully criticize the literary movement of Decadence and the subsequent degeneration of Christian social values and moral codes. In fact, Gaston implores the reader to “re-set the wrong and silly balance of your brains, reverse the inner dial of your lives [...] steep your fine feelings in the pale-green fire that enflames the soul – and make yourself absintheurs” (*Wormwood*: 176).

Contextually, Oscar Wilde introduced Decadence as a form of Luciferianism to the British public with the *Picture of Dorian Gray*. The novel was influenced by J. K. Huysmans’s *À Rebours*, trans. *Against Nature* (1884). Both Huysmans’s *Des Esseintes* and Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* pursue hedonistic lifestyles, essentially abandoning Christian morals to live a life of sin and Luciferian evil. In a similar fashion to *Dorian Gray*, Gaston, through his compact with the absinthe devil, is able to acquit himself of any evil deeds, merely stating: “Knowing the times to be evil, why should we weary ourselves with the imaginary good?” (*Wormwood*: 176). Thus, the term “decadence”, as Nordau previously suggested becomes a euphemism for evil. It is also a metaphor for aligning oneself not with Satan, but rather with Lucifer, in opposition to the Christian God and the Christian doctrine. Ironically, Wilde would later suffer the same fate as Gaston in *Wormwood*. Doris Lanier comments that after Wilde was released from Reading Gaol in 1897, his addiction to absinthe increased: “Finally, friendless and destitute, in desperation Wilde took another name – Sebastian Melmoth – from a character who had traded his soul to the devil for a longer life in the novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*, as a result, he had to wander the earth for a hundred years as a vampire” (1995: 68).

In chapter one of *Wormwood*, the narrator Gaston Beauvais introduces the corruption of Parisian society, stating that the vice of the city is linked to the bourgeoisie. Gaston refers to them as “beasts in search of prey” as though they are a species of social vampire, dependent on absinthe to survive (*Wormwood*: 69). In *The Sorrows of Satan* Corelli uses similar language to describe Sibyl who is reminiscent of Lucy Westenra in Stoker’s *Dracula*. When Sibyl declares her love for Lucio he retorts: “I know you love me! [...] I have always known it. Your vampire soul leaped to mine at

the first glance I ever gave you, - you were a false foul thing from the first, and you recognised your master!" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 350). For Corelli, the word vampire in the *Sorrows of Satan* implies a corrupt society woman and is a condemnation of 'aggressive' sexuality. Lucio describes how he has come into possession of an insect he calls a "Sprite" and observes how the incredible insect was found nesting in an Egyptian female mummy (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 57-58). He remarks: "I am much inclined to accept the idea of the transmigration of souls, and so I please my humour sometimes by thinking that perhaps the princess of that Royal Egyptian house had a wicked, brilliant, vampire soul, - and that . . . *here it is!*" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 59).

Gaston even describes the hunger for absinthe in vampiric language: "Would you know the single craving of my blood – the craving that burns in me more fiercely than hunger in a starving beast of prey – the one desire, to gratify which I would desperately defy all me? Listen, then! A nectar, bitter-sweet – like the last kiss on the lips of a discarded mistress" (*Wormwood*: 77). The very first time he is taken to a café to drink absinthe, he notices too that his companion, André Gessonex, walks quickly "out of the mere impulse of the hungry craving he could not quite repress" (*Wormwood*: 163). At the café, it is Gessonex who indoctrinates Gaston into the absinthe cult, as though the first drink resembles the vampire baptism. Gessonex merely observes: "I feel as if there were a mystical new bond between us!" (*Wormwood*: 164). The vampire imagery is reiterated, as Gessonex promises that absinthe will change Gaston: "There, beside you, you have the most marvellous cordial in all the world, - drink and you will find your sorrows transmuted – yourself transformed!" (*Wormwood*: 166).

As a vampiric and occult figure in the novel, Gaston is subsequently demonised and his descent into "*absinthism*" (*Wormwood*: 231) amounts to atheism, or as Corelli portrays it, a form of Luciferianism. This is confirmed as Gaston believes he has discovered the "Elixir Vitae! [...] I was as a god in the power I had obtained to create and enjoy the creations of my own fertile brain" (*Wormwood*: 185). Finally, as Gaston's addiction has increased, he notes that the 'absintheur' "acts suddenly as a wild beast springs, - on impulse, - needless to add that the impulse is always more or less evil" (*Wormwood*: 231). In fact, Gaston comes to recognise himself as one of many 'absintheurs' and "human wolves who would kill you as soon as look at you [...]"

men who would ensnare the merest child in woman's shape and not only outrage her, but murder and mutilate her afterwards" (*Wormwood*: 270 – 271).

After drinking the absinthe for the first time, essentially having sold his soul to the absinthe devil, Gaston feels a sense of empowerment: "I found I had acquired new force, - new logic, - new views of principle" (*Wormwood*: 175). He also denounces Christianity, refusing to forgive Silvion, stating that "What a fool I had been to entertain for a moment the idea of forgiveness! [...] Such an act might suit the *rôle* of a saint, - but it would not suit *me*" (*Wormwood*: 175). Gaston admits that there is a growing sense of evil within him as he remarks: "I suppose it must have been the consciousness of the growing devil within me, - the devil that had already begun to preach away conscience and make a gibe of principle" (*Wormwood*: 196). Even Gaston's father notes later "Some strange demon seems to inhabit your frame" (*Wormwood*: 216).

As an 'absintheur' Gaston has abandoned his Christian faith, declaring "we need not trouble ourselves about God any more" (*Wormwood*: 71). Gaston further declares: "If He is the Author of Creation, He is answerable for every atom within it, even for me. I have done evil" (*Wormwood*: 71). Corelli is criticising the image of the orthodox Christian God that has been enforced upon Gaston by the Catholic Church. Gaston's descent into absinthe addiction, decadence and degeneration is marked by his increasing acts of sin and evil. He abandons Catholicism essentially after a failed romance with Pauline de Charmilles because of her affair with Silvion Guidèl, who is destined to become a Catholic priest. Gaston's view of Pauline when he first meets her is one of intense adoration to the extent he feels the need to worship her as a religious icon: "how I adored her; how I worshipped her" (*Wormwood*: 91). When Gaston discovers absinthe, he essentially exchanges the worship of one female idol for another.

As in the "Heliobas" novels, Corelli is able to denounce orthodox Christianity, but introduce esoteric Christianity through the quasi-biographical figure of Héliöise St. Cyr. It is her role in the novel to remind us that it is left to the individual to follow his or her own beliefs and to make choices not based on the teachings of any orthodox religious body, but rather through the will to gain esoteric knowledge. As Corelli notes, "The Church is a tyrant, none crueller, more absolute, or more lacking in Christian

charity – its velvet glove covers a merciless hand of iron” (*Wormwood*: 239). Similarly, when Gaston hears a church bell ringing, he declares seethingly: “I reflected how many a canting hypocrite earned dishonest bread by playing a sanctimonious part before the so-called sacred altars, - altars polluted by such paid service; how in every church, in every form of creed, men preaching one thing and openly practising another, offered themselves as ‘Christian examples’” (*Wormwood*: 235). For Corelli, there are two paths open to the individual: to abandon false orthodox religion to pursue esoteric Christianity and discover the true faith, or turn to atheism, which means the individual is open to temptation and evil. This is apparent when H el oise meets Gaston in the woods of Boulogne and Gaston recognises that there is “such a chasm of eternal separation between all good things and the accursed Me” (*Wormwood*: 304). Corelli notes that they resemble “two spirits, one on the gold edge of Heaven, the other on the red brink of Hell” (*Wormwood*: 308).

Finally, Gaston becomes a slave to absinthe, as though the “fairy with the green eyes” or later the “absinthe witch” is his mistress: “The suggestions IT [sic] offers are resistless and implacable, - no opposing effort will break ITS [sic] bonds!” (*Wormwood*: 181). The typography that Corelli uses, namely the capitalization of ‘it’ in reference to absinthe, is evocative of the Christian spelling of “God”. Similarly on the morning of his marriage, Gaston feels “as though some great force were, so to speak, being hurled through me, compelling me to do strange deeds without clearly recognizing their nature” (*Wormwood*: 206). This moment in the text clearly defines the master and slave relationship as a result of Gaston’s devilish compact with absinthe and descent into decadence and evil. Gaston’s absinthe devil is personified as a white half naked witch who he says has been his companion on the eve of his wedding: “Oh, she was a blithe brave phantom, that Absinthe-witch of mine!” (*Wormwood*: 206). He recalls how they had supposedly flown in the dark and found themselves in church, with a priest – Silvion Guid el – kneeling at the altar: “How my fair witch laughed as she pointed to that dull deep hole in the ground! – how I kissed her on the ripe red lips for the appropriateness of her deathful suggestion! – how I toyed with her fiery-gold hair!” (*Wormwood*: 207). The theme of idolatrous worship is also present in *The Sorrows of Satan*, though this time it is of an older male by his younger prot eg e, which is evocative of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Indeed,

Christopher S. Nassar comments “the devil Dorian sells his soul to is Lord Henry Wotton, who exists not only as something external to Dorian but also as a voice within him” (1974: 38). This is another form of evil, as the Bible warns against following other masters that would lead the Christian away from Christ: “Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ” (Matthew 23: 10).

To conclude, Corelli presents two very different interpretations of the Devil in *Wormwood* and *The Sorrows of Satan*. In the first of these novels, her concept of “absinthism” (*Wormwood*: 231) amounts to atheism and atheism leads to diabolism or rather her version of Luciferianism. In *Wormwood*, orthodox Christianity and the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church have driven individuals to atheism. Gaston observes that religion has been “rendered such a ghastly mockery by its very teachers, that it was no wonder if some honest folk preferred to believe in no God at all, rather than accept a God in whom his servants could profess to find such inconsistency and absolute lack of principle!” (*Wormwood*: 235). In such cases, those who turn from God and embark upon a rite of passage are open to the influence of evil, personified by decadence and hedonism. They give themselves metaphorically to the devil, and Gaston Beauvais makes his compact with the devil in a bottle, absinthe. Similarly, in *The Sorrows of Satan* Tempest remarks: “Now-a-days no one believes in either devils or angels; - I, for example, do not even believe in the soul.” Lucio replies: “And your scepticism is very comfortable because it relieves you of all personal responsibility” (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 67).

Descent into evil is marked by degeneration, or as Gaston’s father observes a “wilful debauchery of both intelligence and conscience” (*Wormwood*: 282). Nordau categorized Satanists in *Degeneration* as the “higher degenerates” who are “morbid, immoral and antisocial” (Nordau, 1895: 295). So, as Gaston renounces God and accepts his form of diabolism, he descends to a primeval state and adopts animalistic behaviour: “I had become for the time being, a mere beast, with every animal instinct in me awake and rampant” (*Wormwood*: 270). Ironically, this is evocative of Aleister Crowley’s own declaration that “Before I touched my teens, I was already aware that I was THE BEAST [sic] whose number is 666” (Crowley cited by Ashley, 1996: 179). Gaston’s father even remarks that he is confronted with a “fiend” in his son’s “disfigured likeness” (*Wormwood*: 282). Gaston as “absintheur” is described as living a

vampiric existence. He is a predator dependent on an elixir who is ultimately condemned to a living death and realises that the only escape is suicide (*Wormwood*: 337).

In *The Sorrows of Satan*, Geoffrey Tempest sells his soul for notoriety, wealth and his pre-conceived ideas of happiness. Yet evil and a compact with the Devil take many different forms. Essentially, Corelli suggests that the upper classes of Victorian society were all practising a type of diabolism. This was not the satanic worship of black masses and black magic, but rather a form of diabolism that idealized Waite's notion of the "cultus of Lucifer" or the "doctrine of Lucifer." This form of diabolism, again a variation of Luciferianism, describes how Lucifer as opposed to Satan (the lord of darkness) is worshipped as son of the morning, heralding a new dawn as the light bearer and ruler of the materialistic world.

In the novel, Lucio arranges several "Tableaux Vivants" for Tempest. Each is designed to represent the Luciferian evils of Victorian society. The first, which is called "Society", portrays Corelli's concept of evil as the decadence of the rich and their refusal to help the poor. The second tableau "Bravery: Ancient and Modern" depicts the death of male chivalry, replaced in a modern age by dandyism. The third tableau "A Lost Angel" shows an angel whom mankind refuse to acknowledge and the collapse of religion. The fourth tableau, entitled "The Autocrat" portrays the corruption of politics, as an emperor refuses to acknowledge his starving and oppressed people, while his confidante holds a dagger behind his back, denoting the evils of power. In "A Corner of Hell," Corelli describes a man counting money, denoting how wealth and materialism lead to Hell. In "Seeds of Corruption," the tableau portrays a young girl corrupted by sexual decadent literature. In "His Latest Purchase", Corelli denounces the "purchasing" of society women for marriage. In the final tableau, entitled "Faith and Materialism," Corelli wanted to demonstrate that true faith has been replaced by materialism (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 267 –271).

Finally for Corelli, there is another evil of Victorian society that is suggested in *The Sorrows of Satan*. In the Bible, chapter one of Romans introduces the theme of "self idolatry". Although the term is not explicitly used, the individual who indulges in self idolatry is described:

They are filled with all kinds of wickedness, evil, greed, and vice; they are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, deceit, and malice. They gossip and speak evil of one another; they are hateful to God, insolent, proud and boastful; they think of more ways to do evil; they disobey their parents; they have no conscience; they do not keep their promises, and they show no kindness or pity for others. They know that God's law says that people who live in this way deserve death. Yet, not only do they continue to do these very things, but they even approve of others who do them. (Romans 1: 29-32)

When Lucio reveals to Tempest his true identity, Lucifer, aboard his yacht "The Flame", he condemns self idolatry: " Whosoever prefers Self to God, and in the arrogance of that Self, presumes to doubt and deny God, invites another power to compass his destinies, - the power of Evil, made evil and kept evil by the disobedience and wickedness of Man alone, - that power whom mortals call Satan" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 445). Lucio accuses Tempest of being guilty "of the chief crime of the age, - Sensual Egotism, - the blackest sin known to either angels or devils" (*The Sorrows of Satan*: 449). This also describes the characterization of Dorian Gray. It is interesting, however, that the same chapter of Romans, which condemns self idolatry, also denounces homosexuality: "In the same way the men give up natural sexual relations with women and burn with passion for each other. Men do shameful things with each other, and as a result they bring upon themselves the punishment they deserve for their wrongdoing" (Romans 1: 27-28). Wilde was imprisoned a mere five months before the publication of *The Sorrows of Satan*. The Wilde trials had constructed an image of homosexuality, aestheticism and decadence that was not only presented as degenerate, but inherent in the aristocracy. Thus, Annette R. Federico concludes "that Corelli's suddenly aristocratic hero appears to battle homosexual desires illustrates the incipient link between wealthy, university-educated literary men and homosexual tendencies" (2000: 79).

The Devil and evil took many forms in Victorian literature, usually Gothic monsters such as vampires, who represented the greatest fears in Victorian society,

including xenophobia, homophobia, and general cultural or social “otherness”. Nevertheless, the Devil remains a constant fixture, as Paul Carus concludes: “In popular literature the Devil plays a most important role. While he is still regarded as the incarnation of all physical and moral evil, his main office has become that of a general mischief-worker in the universe; without him there would be no plot, and the story of the world would lose its interest” (1900: 407-408).

CONCLUSION

The mystic life, therefore, involves the emergence from deep levels of man's transcendental self; its capture of the field of consciousness; and the "conversion" or rearrangement of his feeling, thought, and will – his character – about this new centre of life. (Underhill, 1911; 2002: 68)

This quotation is taken from Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, published in 1911. Underhill describes the conversion to mysticism as "the awakening of the transcendental consciousness" (1911; 2002: 176). The main argument of this thesis is that the "will" to uncover the "Divine Self" is the desire to go beyond human existence and to locate God in man. The Victorian "mystical revival" embodied the need of society to break away from orthodox religion but at the same time to follow and worship *something* bigger than itself. Underhill suggests that the conversion to mysticism is marked by the following characteristics: "a sense of liberation and victory: a conviction of the nearness of God: and a sentiment of love towards God" (p.179) and observes that mystic conversion is the experience of the "union of human and divine" (p.100) and the recognition that there is "life beyond that which the eye can see, a glorious reality shining through the phenomenal veil" (1911; 2002: 258).

The "mystical revival" promoted the psychological well-being of certain individuals who needed to fill a spiritual void left by Christianity and break away from orthodox, secular conventions, as the Church played a fundamental role in the formation and running of the Victorian State. The members of alternative cults and societies made a conscious decision to embrace modernism and technology, and to accept a religious faith that welcomed scientific investigation and supported aspects of social change. Moreover, they wanted a faith that recognised the importance and impact of the Victorian woman and man in modern times. The *fin de siècle* "mystical revival" promoted the inner divine potentiality of man by embracing a kind of Darwinism: not just the evolution of the physical self, but also the evolution of the

human mind and the hidden psychic self. Edward Maitland suggests that this psychic evolution was only possible through the acceptance of a “magnetic”, “mental”, and “psychic consciousness” that eventually led to “absolute consciousness” (1885: xii). This new self was totally different from the Christian notion of humanity. The mystical and occult self was multiple, complex, and its core – the soul – was not only divine, but also immortal.

In the introduction to his study *The Occult Sciences: A Compendium of Transcendental Doctrine and Experiment* (1891), Arthur Edward Waite comments on the evolution and psychic potential of the human mind: “the mode of transcending the phenomenal world [...] consists, and to some extent exclusively, of a form of intellectual ascension or development, which is equivalent to a conscious application of selective evolutionary laws by man himself to man” (1891: 1). In *Dracula* the fascination with the mind and the need to understand its workings is central to the narrative. In trying to analyse Renfield, Dr Seward comments: “men sneered at vivisection, and yet look at the results today! Why not advance science in its difficult and vital aspect – the knowledge of the brain?” (*Dracula*: 71). Seward’s interest in Renfield is similar in this respect: “had I even the secret of one such mind.” Yet he questions the limits of his own human cognitive abilities: “may not I too be of an exceptional brain, congenitally?” (*Dracula*: 71).

Waite suggests that “transcendentalism is concerned with the development and application of certain powerful forces resident in the interior man” (1891: 3). Van Helsing also notes that in life Dracula “had a mighty brain” and “the brain powers survived the physical death” and that “he may be yet if we fail – the father or furtherer of a new order of beings” (*Dracula*: 263). Van Helsing suggests here that Dracula embodies the Nietzschean “Overman” and is leader of an advanced race of beings allied with occultism and mysticism, with highly evolved minds. *Fin de siècle* mysticism and occultism supported the idea of the Nietzschean “Overman”. On the 24th September 1893, a high-ranking member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Moina Mathers, delivered an “Address to the Zelator Adepti Minores” entitled the “Flying Roll XXI Know Thyself”. The lecture begins with the instruction: “Perfect knowledge of Self is required in order to attain Knowledge of Divinity, for when you can know the God of yourself it will be possible to obtain a dim vision of the God of All”

(Mathers, 1893; 1971: 137). As Moina Mathers concludes: “It must be our object then, to become that Perfect Man” and “Our Order teaches that one of our aims should be the Regeneration of the Race of the Planet” (Mathers, 1893; 1971: 140-141).

The quest for knowledge or “gnosis” of the potentiality of man and the “Divine Self” can only be achieved through occult study and the evolution of the mind through mystical conversion. Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories, Corelli’s “Heliobas” novels, and Marsh’s *The Beetle*, all portray highly evolved beings through their development of what Waite terms the evolution of “the powers of interior man” (1891:2). In *The Great God Pan*, Dr Raymond attempts to unlock these inner powers by using occult science. The brain surgery he performs on Mary will enable her to experience the “real world” that “is beyond this glamour and this vision, beyond these ‘chases in Arras, dreams in a career,’ beyond them all as beyond a veil” (*The Great God Pan*: 10). The result of the experiment is inevitable: “it is a great pity; she is a hopeless idiot. However, it could not be helped; and, after all, she has seen the Great God Pan” (*The Great God Pan*: 16.)

Edward Maitland labelled those individuals who chose to ignore the divine potentialities of man as “subhuman” as opposed to the Nietzschean concept of the “Overman” (1885: xiv). Maitland’s ideas concerning the evolution of man and the higher self through the development of the mind suggest a humanity that has split into two distinct species. This concept is present to some extent in H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895). The Eloi, who are the simple, weak and backward inhabitants of the “upperworld” are maintained and fed by the Morlocks. Whilst the inhabitants of the underworld may be carnivorous and display barbaric and atavistic characteristics, in comparison to the “upperworlders” they are still more highly evolved and technologically advanced. Stoker explores similar themes in *Dracula*. The vampire, like Marsh’s “Beetle” is a higher evolved occult being and although it has retained some aspects of the human appearance, it has nevertheless lost its humanity. Therefore Holbrook Jackson’s suggestion that physical excess and the acceptance of sin “went hand in hand” with a “mystical revival” is also linked to the realization of the higher self, or what Jackson terms the “ego”. This is the underlying theme of this thesis and the novels and stories studied. Jackson believed that the decadence of the 1890s was a “form of soul-sickness”, a disease for which the only cure was mysticism

and that the “recognition of sin was the beginning of the revival of mysticism” (Jackson, 2008: 132).

Yet, here lies the main problem. Sin was defined by Christian doctrines. For those individuals who had accepted alternative esoteric, spiritual and occult faiths and beliefs, the idea of Christian sin was an orthodox concept. The occult characters in this thesis - who are presented as religious dissenters and social deviants - are pursued, marginalized and vilified by devout Christian characters. This makes it difficult as the narrative is compounded by the fact that these characters are judged by the measures of Christian sin, and moreover, put on trial by members of a Christian Victorian State whose ideas of morality are derived from orthodox religious teachings. In certain cases such as the Count in *Dracula* and Helen Vaughan in *The Great God Pan*, the occult characters are not permitted to tell their version of events. In *Dracula* this is highlighted by the fact that the central characters fail to understand the complexity of the Count’s beliefs. Dracula recognises this religious otherness and intolerance during Jonathan Harker’s stay at his castle in Transylvania. He comments to Harker: “There is a reason that all things are as they are, and did you see with my eyes and know with my knowledge, you would perhaps better understand. [...] Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things” (*Dracula*: 26-27).

The intention of this thesis is to demonstrate how alternative religious beliefs enabled individuals to re-connect with what was conceived as a higher self, or the self that was liberated from the boundaries and limitations of orthodox religion, Victorian social conventions and materialistic science. While this thesis has shown that aspects of the fictional texts examined promoted social, political and religious reform supported by conversion to mysticism, it is not intended to be a biased study, namely pro-occult. Alternative esoteric spiritual and occult groups did seek enlightenment. However, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno observe in their study *Dialectic of Enlightenment* first published in 1944: “Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (2002: 1). They suggest that through knowledge, or perhaps “gnosis”, the end result is a re-connection with the higher self, which they term “the

sovereignty of man.” However this sovereignty results in disaster and tragedy, as knowledge leads to absolute and corruptive power (2002:1).

Perhaps the real threat that Victorian *fin de siècle* literature discusses with regard to alternative esoteric spiritual and occult groups of the period is the question of power, rule and control. Patrick Brantlinger examines the links between imperialism and occultism in *Rule of Darkness* (1988). He suggests that imperialism is “an atavistic stage of economic and political development” and “a retrograde social development, a backsliding towards barbarism” (1990: 236). Taking the view that occultism is similarly degenerate, Brantlinger introduces the term “imperial Gothic” which “combines the seemingly scientific, progressive often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult” (1990: 227). Therefore, in addition to “religious orientalism”, the Victorian “mystical revival” raised fears concerning religious imperialism, namely that “Western rationality may be subverted by the very superstition it rejects. The destructive magic of the Orient takes its revenge” (Brantlinger, 1990: 227). Perhaps these fears were not completely unfounded. The Gnostic quest at the heart of Victorian mysticism, spiritualism and occultism was to be “more than human”: in other words not only to connect with the higher self, but also to achieve stability and balance. However, as we have seen, this also raised arguments concerning the ego or as Nordau terms it in *Degeneration* (1895) “ego-mania”. Aleister Crowley called his religious philosophy “Thelema”, the Greek word for “will”. Crowley’s law of Thelema states: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the Law, Love under Will” (McGovern, 2007: 673). In Christian circles, Crowley’s doctrine is regarded as forms of Luciferianism and Satanism. It is “an invitation to licence or self-indulgence”, despite Crowley and other Thelemites maintaining that the doctrine has been misunderstood and misinterpreted, particularly as it can be traced back to St Augustine who wrote “Love, and do what thou wilt” (McGovern, 2007: 673).

Yet what did the Gnostic quest to be “more than human” imply for the literature of the Victorian *fin de siècle*? In an article entitled “Literary Degenerates”, published in the *Fortnightly Review*, Janet E. Hogarth notes that in *fin de siècle* literature characters and authors, particularly female characters and female authors, had become the victims of a “sex mania in art and literature” and hoped that the

“modern heroine’s admirable manner of expressing herself may outlast her repulsive qualities, to the exceeding great benefit of literature and society” (1895: 592). Moreover, Hogarth criticizes those “bolder sisters, who are prepared to follow nature and defy convention” and would “replace the divine right of instinct as an article of faith by a wholesome revival of the obsolete and unscientific doctrine of original sin” (1895: 591). Taking Nordau’s *Degeneration* as the inspiration for her article, she draws a connection between the “contrivances of civilisation” and the degenerate who “rebels both in word and deed against the existing order of society, and [...] takes refuge in various forms of mysticism” (1895: 586-587).

“Seeking God by strange ways” is therefore not just applied to those who would defy orthodox traditions in Victorian society but to those who would also include or promote unorthodox beliefs in fiction and defy the conventions of “acceptable” literature. B. A. Crackanthorpe’s “Sex in Modern Literature” (1895) published in the *Nineteenth Century* observes a parallel between the material body and the ethereal soul, and a similar duality in late Victorian fiction and art:

We are part of nature, we are in nature, and by nature. But this natural world of ours is essentially dual; it is a body animated by a soul. Essentially dual, too, are the worlds of art and literature. The two elements, the Real and the Ideal, must, if they are to produce a perfect harmony, have allotted to them equal rights and equal powers, for each is the necessary complement of the other. Explore, dissect, analyse the Real as the modern artist in letters may, there will be no new birth, no breath of life, for any of his brain-creations until the quickening spirit of the Ideal shall move upon the face of the waters. (Crackanthorpe, 1895: 616)

The act of “seeking God by strange ways” is a Gnostic quest and a rite of passage that involves the traveller passing through “the veil” to reach the “real world” that lies beyond it. Locating God in man does result in the evolution of the mind, a re-connection with the higher, “Divine Self” and an apotheosis of sorts, but in the novels

and stories discussed here it is also characterized by “abhuman” qualities and tendencies. As Kelly Hurley suggests, the abhuman is a move away from and towards *something*. It is linked to liminality, fear and abjection. Liminal entities live outside the “norms” of society and therefore they “question their self and the existing social order” (Thomassen, 2006: 322). Notably, *fin de siècle* groups and societies embraced liminality as it symbolized unconformity and the breaking away from traditions and conventions that had been imposed on the State by the Christian Church.

Blavatsky believed that beyond the veil “science, theology, every human hypothesis and conception born of imperfect knowledge [was] lost forever” (1887; 1994, vol. 1: vii). Yet, she also questioned who would have the courage to undertake the “Gnostic quest” when she asked: “who of our modern, materialistic dwarfs and unbelieving Sadducees will dare to lift the Veil of Isis?” (1997: 122). References to the unveiling of Isis or lifting the veil can be found in practically all the texts in this study. In *Scarabaeus, The Story of an African Beetle*, Clara Lanza and James Clarence Harvey observe how “a veil of superstition, like a poisonous miasma, has hung over the African Continent for centuries, and were it not for the encroachments of European influence and enterprise, it would have endured forever” (*Scarabaeus*: 45). In *The Great God Pan* Machen writes: “the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan” (*The Great God Pan*: 10). In terms of Rosicrucianism, according to The Seventh Aphorism “The Sevenfold Soul of Man”, every individual is unaware of his or her true origins and self (the soul) as there are “seven veils which conceal from (yet reveal to) Man his real Self” (Incognito, 1918: 144). Unsurprisingly, in *Ardath The Story of a Dead Self*, Corelli’s Heliobas tells Alwyn that he is “bold to a fault, but at the same time [...] ignorant of all that lies behind the veil of the Unseen” (*Ardath*: 27). In terms of spiritualism, it is interesting that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle uses similar language to describe Sherlock Holmes’s battle with his nemesis, Professor Moriarty. In “The Final Problem”, Holmes tells Watson:

For years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organizing power which forever stands in the way of the law, and throws its shield over the wrong-doer. Again and again in cases of the

most varying sorts – forgery cases, robberies, murders – I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its action in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally consulted. For years I have endeavoured to break through the veil which shrouded it, and at last the time came when I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me, after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty, of mathematical celebrity. (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 471)

Doyle's description of Holmes "breaking through the veil" and discovering "some deep organizing power which forever stands in the way of the law" could be used to describe the Victorian "mystical revival" and its main adversaries, materialistic science and orthodox religion. Holmes's own encounter with Moriarty, leads to his "death" and re-appearance in "The Empty House." It seems Holmes is reborn almost vampiric and he gains some kind of gnosis: an esoteric knowledge of the universe, especially of humanity, and an understanding of his higher self. For this reason, he achieves an apotheosis and becomes a quasi-divine figure. Interestingly, during his absence, or what we may call his renaissance, he tells Watson in "The Adventure of the Empty House" that he visited the East and had some involvement with mysticism: "I travelled for two years in Tibet, [...], and amused myself by visiting Lhasa, and spending some days with the head lama" (*The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*: 488).

This thesis has only concentrated on a small number of authors and their works. As this was the first piece of research on this subject, it was necessary to focus on a range of alternative beliefs and include a variety of familiar and lesser-known texts to form the basis of the discussion. As a result, the thesis presents opportunities to undertake further research in the future and explore other areas, subjects, themes that are more specific and other authors and works that are not as recognized. In *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1945) Howard Phillips Lovecraft discusses "the weird tradition" in British literature, including authors such as Rudyard Kipling; H. Rider Haggard; Robert Louis Stevenson; Oscar Wilde; Matthew Phipps Shiel; Bram Stoker's

works other than *Dracula*; Richard Marsh; Arthur Machen; Sax Rohmer (Arthur Sarsfield Ward); John Buchan; George MacDonald; Walter de la Mare; J. M. Barrie; E. F. Benson; H. G. Wells; Arthur Conan Doyle's works other than the Sherlock Holmes stories; William Hope Hodgson; Algernon Blackwood and W. B. Yeats (1973: 76-86). Lovecraft predominantly discusses male authors, yet there are some female authors, some of whom were linked to occult societies, including the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its off-shoots, such as the Alpha et Omega society who deserve further discussion. These include Irish author Maude Gonne; E. Nesbit (Edith Bland) and Dion Fortune (Violet Firth). Similarly, other female authors and poets to deal with the supernatural and mysticism in fiction and poetry include Rosa Campbell Praed and Vernon Lee (Violet Paget). There is also an opportunity to investigate occultism in Victorian science fiction and fantasy texts, although there is some research on this topic, for instance Kathleen Spencer mentions occult science in the fiction of H.G. Wells and Robert Louis Stevenson in her study entitled "Victorian Urban Gothic: The First Modern Fantastic Literature" (1987).

Diana Basham (1992) associates the Victorian interest in witchcraft with the Victorian occult and "mystical revival". The Victorian sorceress often symbolised feminism, as Maureen F. Moran comments:

High culture (as evidenced in the poetry of Tennyson and Rossetti, for example) appropriates the image of the witch to create the glamorous sorceress who conflates popular male fears and fantasies of the "New Woman": beautiful, sexually forthright and desirable, but unnaturally beyond domination by virtue of her independence, guile, and strength of mind and emotion (Moran 2000: 123-124).

Several works were produced on the subject in the 1890s by American journalist, folklorist and author Charles G. Leland who published *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune Telling* (1891), *Etruscan Roman Remains in Popular Tradition* (1892), *Legends of Florence* (1895), and *Arcadia, Gospel of the Witches* (1899), the latter

having considerable influence in the formation and popularisation of modern neopaganism (Hutton, 1999: 143).

In conclusion, “Seeking god by strange ways” raises many questions in terms of *fin de siècle* psychology. The highly evolved mystic or occultist seeks to gain knowledge of the inner “Divine Self” and a limitless understanding of the universe. However, through gaining “gnosis” they lose some of the qualities that make them human. This theme is central to the *fin de siècle* novels and stories discussed in this thesis. Disturbingly, Moina Mathers’s ideas concerning the “Perfect Man” and “the Regeneration of the Race of the Planet” foretold Adolf Hitler’s vision of a perfect race of mankind. It would be interesting to trace the legacy of the late Victorian occult and “mystical revival”. Notably, *fin de siècle* cults and societies and religious doctrines greatly inspired Hitler and the creation of the Third Reich. Hitler had been influenced by (among other people and sources) Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled* to the extent that he claimed in his autobiography *Mein Kampf* (trans. *My Struggle*, 1925 and 1926) “to have lifted a corner of nature’s gigantic veil” (Battersby citing Hitler, 1998: 239).

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APPENDIX

The Sherlock Holmes "Canon"

Below are the titles of all the Sherlock Holmes texts and collections. There is also a list of the four Sherlock Holmes novels. I have included the dates of first publication in Britain and the name of the original British publishers of the texts.

Sherlock Holmes Novels

A Study in Scarlet. (*Beeton's Christmas Annual*, December 1887).

The Sign of Four. (*Lippincott's*, February 1890).

The Hound of the Baskervilles (serialized in *The Strand* from August 1901 - April 1902; first published in book form by George Newnes Ltd., 1902)

The Valley of Fear (serialized in *The Strand* from September 1914 - May 1915; first published in book form in New York by George H. Doran Company, 1915).

Sherlock Holmes Collections

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892)

Originally, these individual stories appeared in *The Strand* magazine from July 1891 to June 1892. The collection was first published as a book under the title *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in the Britain by George Newnes Ltd. In 1892.

The twelve stories in this collection are:

- "A Scandal in Bohemia" (*The Strand*, July 1891).

- "The Red-Headed League" (*The Strand*, August 1891).
- "A Case of Identity" (*The Strand*, September 1891).
- "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (*The Strand*, October 1891).
- "The Five Orange Pips" (*The Strand*, November 1891).
- "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (*The Strand*, December 1891).
- "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (*The Strand*, January 1892).
- "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (*The Strand*, February 1892).
- "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb" (*The Strand*, March 1892).
- "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor" (*The Strand*, April 1892).
- "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet" (*The Strand*, May 1892).
- "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" (*The Strand*, June 1892).

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (1894)

This collection contains twelve stories, which appeared again in *The Strand* magazine during the period of 1892 – 1893. The first British edition of the collection as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* appeared in 1894.

The twelve stories are:

- "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" (*The Strand*, December 1892).
- "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box" (*The Strand*, January 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Yellow Face" (*The Strand*, February 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk" (*The Strand*, March 1893).
- "The Adventure of the *Gloria Scott*" (*The Strand*, April 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" (*The Strand*, May 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Reigate Squire" (*The Strand*, June 1893).

- "The Adventure of the Crooked Man" (*The Strand*, July 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Resident Patient" (*The Strand*, August 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter" (*The Strand*, September 1893).
- "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty" (*The Strand*, two parts, October / November 1893),
- "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (*The Strand*, December 1893).

The Return of Sherlock Holmes (1905)

The individual stories were published in *The Strand* magazine between 1903 – 1904. The stories were published as a collection in book form under the title *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* in Britain, 1905 by George Newnes, Ltd.

The thirteen stories include:

- "The Adventure of the Empty House" (*The Strand*, October 1903).
- "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" (*The Strand*, November 1903).
- "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (*The Strand*, December 1903).
- "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist" (*The Strand*, January 1904).
- "The Adventure of the Priory School" (*The Strand*, February 1904).
- "The Adventure of Black Peter" (*The Strand*, February 1904).
- "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" (*The Strand*, April 1904).
- "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" (*The Strand*, May 1904).
- "The Adventure of the Three Students" (*The Strand*, June 1904).
- "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez" (*The Strand*, July 1904).

- "The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter" (*The Strand*, August 1904).
- "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" (*The Strand*, September 1904).
- "The Adventure of the Second Stain" (*The Strand*, December 1904).

His Last Bow (1917)

The collection of seven stories was originally published between 1908 and 1913. The story "His Last Bow" was published in 1917 and gives its name to the collection that was first published in Britain, 1917.

The seven stories are:

- "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" (*The Strand*, October 1908).
- "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" (*The Strand*, December 1908).
- "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" (*The Strand*, December 1910).
- "The Adventure of the Red Circle" (*The Strand*, two parts, April 1911).
- "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax" (*The Strand*, December 1911).
- "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" (*The Strand*, December 1913).
- "His Last Bow" (*The Strand*, September 1917).

The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes (1927)

This contains the final stories, which were originally published between 1921 and 1927. The stories were published collectively in book form for the first time in 1927, under the title *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*.

The twelve stories include:

- "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" (*The Strand*, October 1921).
- "The Problem of Thor Bridge" (*The Strand*, February 1922).
- "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" (*The Strand*, March 1923).
- "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire" (*The Strand*, January 1924).
- "The Adventure of the Three Garridebs" (*The Strand*, January 1925).
- "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" (*The Strand*, May 1925).
- "The Adventure of the Three Gables" (*The Strand*, October 1926).
- "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier" (*The Strand*, November 1926).
- "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" (*The Strand*, December 1926).
- "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman" (*The Strand*, January 1927).
- "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger" (*The Strand*, February 1927).
- "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" (*The Strand*, April 1927).