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Your God Had His Chance and He Blew It:

Modernity, Tradition and Alternative Religion in 1960s and 1970s Horror

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Abstract

The period of the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, falling at a crux between the influences of modernity[1] and postmodernity[2], was an era undergoing vast paradigmatic shifts. Defined by cultural historians as The Final Phase of Modernism, A Rage against Order, The New Sensibility, an era of Getting Loose, or The Culture of Narcissism[3], this decade was increasingly fracturing along conservative- liberal fault lines. Presumably, as a result of this socio-political dichotomisation, debates were being forwarded about the need for and efficacy of grand narratives including historical imperatives, familial connectivity, and traditional spiritual affiliation elicited across this cultural spectrum: from orthodox institutions, such as the Catholic Church to more left-wing establishments such as the Civil Rights and Counter Culture movements. Given prevalence of these conundrums, this thesis will explore how these concerns were discussed and disseminated within the United States through the popular media and, more specifically, works of horror. Indeed, at least since the Gothic literary period, and its qualified revival in the New Hollywood Alternative Religion Horror cinema this discursive thread has, arguably, articulated concerns surrounding the legacy and effects of modernity, traditionalism, the supernatural and affiliations of faith overall. In focusing upon American and British/American co-productions such as *Rosemary's Baby*[4], *The Omen*[5], and *The Wicker Man*[6], their shared concern in addressing spiritual questions will be taken seriously not merely as metaphors but instead as viable contemporaneous debates. This reading thus offers up an alternative to those currently presented by academia wherein religion is regarded as a mere metaphor for restrictive socio-political mechanisms, or as symbols of plenitude and power.

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1 By modernity is meant a series of socio-political norms and mores coalescing around an increasing rejection of traditional systems of personal and cultural cohesion. These mechanisms relate to historical imperatives and include traditional religion, and familial or generational connectivity. The aforementioned ostensibly were rent asunder as a result of the concomitant legacies of the Enlightenment and the Reformation both of which upheld science and rationality over what was perceived to be the irrational: superstition, the supernatural and any adherence to a faith that supported them. This understanding is based upon the writings of historians and cultural critics including Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch, Marshall Berman and their contemporaries all of which are herein referenced and problematized.

2 For an understanding of postmodernity, this work relies upon the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard who discusses this ethos as involving a loss of historic grand narratives and a resultant search for meaning in the wake of this cultural forfeiture.

3 This various phraseology representing definitions of the era by, respectively, Marshall Berman in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*; Daniel Ball in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*; Susan Sontag in an essay of the same title from *Against Interpretation*; Sam Binkley in his book of the same title, and finally Christopher Lasch.

4 Roman Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*, DVD. Directed by Roman Polanski (United States: Paramount Pictures, 1968).

5 David Seltzer, *The Omen*, DVD. Directed by Richard Donner (United Kingdom and United States: 20th Century Fox, 1976).

6 Anthony Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, DVD. Directed by Robin Hardy (United Kingdom and United States: British Lion Pictures, 1973).

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This thesis is dedicated to Richard Sheppard without whose support and love none of the following would have been possible

We believe in the dignity indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it's sacrilegious[7].

The richness of horror fiction testifies to the complexity of the cultural changes which have taken place in the last two hundred years. But the continuity of its rhetoric, its narrative methods, and its symbolism also reveals that the ground-conditions for fantasy projection of this kind have not passed away in the least[8].

"That is the big theme I see all over society. People focused on their own thing." George Romero[9]

Introduction

During a decade beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing through the mid-1970s, a significant outcropping of horror films that articulate concerns regarding the efficacy of non-traditional, alternative religions may be seen to arise. This occurs at a moment in history in which there are, concurrently, intense debates regarding spiritual affiliation and the role of traditionalism overall. These debates foregrounded fundamental questions as to the manner in which adherence to a coherent and morally grounded life may be preserved under the guise of the opening of historically established orthodoxies. Such religious affiliations including: a drive to break down ecumenical division between Catholicism and Protestantism following the Second Vatican Council; an increased popularity of the religious right, an alternative Christianity offered up through the ministries of

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7 Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 142.
8 Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 69.
9 Tony Williams, "An Interview with George and Christine Romero," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 18 no. 4 (2001): 52.

televangelists and the fundamentalist church of Billy Graham; and an augmented cultural acceptance of secularism and atheism disseminated by popular journals like *Time Magazine* and its article entitled "Toward a Hidden God" from the infamous *'*Is God Dead*?'* issue[10].

These alternative religion horror texts address such concerns by debating the viability of unorthodox, and indeed radical, spiritualties including Satanism, Witchcraft and Paganism as being agents of potential cultural cohesion and individual grounding[11]. Additionally, in presenting these spiritual affiliations as an anathema to an increasing cultural scepticism regarding the power of faith, these works also challenge more classical horror tropes within a genre that is known for offering up a central conflict of good versus evil. Up until this time, arguably, the classical horror film set up clear narrative dichotomies wherein those who supported or came to adhere to the tenets of Christianity were on the side of 'good' while those who practiced other faiths, or who held no faith whatsoever were either discerned as being decidedly on the side of 'evil', or at the very least rendered ineffective in terms of agency. The classical horror text, in this way, seems to fall in line with traditional monotheism, which argues that to follow Christ is to be right-minded, while any alternatives may be regarded as being abhorrent, and sinful. Thus,

[10]"Toward a Hidden God," *Time Magazine*, April 8, 1966.

[11] Indeed, the ideological underpinings of these alternative faith mechanisms seem to suggest these self-same contemporaneous cultural debates. As will be discussed later in this thesis, Satanism, in being coterminous with Christianity seems to share a similar concern with ritualistic practice and historical legacy even as it rejects a more traditional concern with self-denial, arguably making it an ideal discourse for an era that, ostensibly, longed for grounding and equally desired to extricate itself from the potentially stultifying constraints that Christianity seemed to elicit. Likewise, if it could be argued that Satanism and Christianity are two sides of the same coin, then Paganism, on the otherhand, may be conceived of as a precursor to all other forms of spiritual affilation, and in being potentially an undergirder must then be set apart, as a proverbial different coin altoghether. This is why, as will also be discussed below, Satanism may be seen to co-exist within the urban world , an environment inhabited by the modern ethos, while the Pagan configured as being separated therefrom, literally of and therefore relegated to the rural, to the village.

just as the culture at this historic moment is regarded as increasingly breaking away from the hold of traditionalism, so too the horror cinema forwards, foregrounds and furthers the era's general ideological debates regarding orthodoxy and the resultant socio-political explosion of religious discourse, not to mention the concomitant eruption of a veritable plethora of institutions responsible for eliciting these articulations. Interestingly, however, even given this essential connectivity between the culture and its artistic output, film theorists and historians have positioned these films and their thematic concerns as not really being about religion at all. Instead, scholars such as Carol Clover, Robin Wood and Mark Jancovich regard these discussions involving spiritual affiliation as being symbolic of larger concerns regarding systems of authority. Indeed, rather than religion being about religion, these issues are instead located as just one of many signifiers of debates surrounding the viability of a necessity for traditional institutions of power.

This socio-political concern with such religious debates and their articulation within this genre, while not taken seriously in contemporary academic contexts, is nonetheless an issue that has been voiced by the reception of these works at the time of their release. Indeed, classical horror which, as suggested above, espouses traditional values, is not seen by religious critics to pose a serious ideological or moral challenge and is therefore ignored within these critical forums. However, since Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1960[12], viewed by many as the first 'modern horror film,' eight such works have been condemned by The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Formerly the National Legion of Decency): *Rosemary's Baby, The Devils[13], The Exorcist[14], The Wicker Man,*

[12] Joseph Stefano, *Psycho*, DVD. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. (United States: Paramount Pictures, 1960).
[13] Ken Russell, *The Devils*, DVD. Directed by Ken Russell (United Kingdom and United States: Warner Brothers, 1971).
[14] William Peter Blatty, DVD. *The Exorcist*. Directed by William Friedkin (United States: Warner Brothers, 1973).

The Omen, Carrie[15]*, Dawn of the Dead*[16], and *Friday the 13th*[17]. Of these films, all are critically regarded as denigrating traditional religion and orthodox religious practice. For example, a review of *The Omen* published by this organisation seems concerned with the potential for defamation inherent to the film when it states:

> The American ambassador to Great Britain (Gregory Peck) finds himself the foster father of the Anti-Christ in director Richard Donner's slick, expensively mounted but essentially trashy horror show. Though it refers to scripture and religious beliefs, its only interest in religion is in terms of its exploitation potential[18].

While the review for *Rosemary's Baby* seems to share similar concerns, as the reviewing body argues:

> Directed by Roman Polanski, the production values are top-notch and performances completely chilling, but the movie's inverted Christian elements denigrate religious beliefs[19].

Furthermore, in the case of *Psycho* and *Rosemary's Baby*, in being directed by two serious cinematic auteurs, Alfred Hitchcock and Roman Polanski, respectively, these films also gain a certain cultural relevance as a high art discourse. Additionally, with regard to *The Exorcist* and The *Omen,* in starring respected actors such as Max von Sydow and Gregory Peck, while being directed by traditionally non-horror directors, William Friedkin and Richard Donner respectively, these alternative religion horror films may be defined as being mainstream cultural products, rather than works that merely rest on the fringes of discourse. It is due to this new-found legitimacy within a designation that will be referred to as New Hollywood[20]

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15 Lawrence D. Cohen, *Carrie*, DVD. Directed by Brian De Palma (United States: United Artists, 1976).
16 George A. Romero, *Dawn of the Dead*, DVD. Directed by George A. Romero (United States: United Film Distribution Company, 1978).
17 Victor Miller, *Friday the 13th*, DVD. Directed by Sean S. Cunningham (United States: Paramount Pictures, 1980).
18 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Film Review of *The Omen*," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Archive, http://archive.usccb.org/movies/o/omenthe1976.shtml (accessed July 15, 2016).
19 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Film Review of *Rosemary's Baby*," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Archive, http://archive.usccb.org/movies/r/rosemarysbaby1968.shtml (accessed July 15, 2016).
20 This is a term coined and manipulated to delineate the filmmaking practices of the period by historians and scholars including Thomas Elsaesser in *The Lost Great American Picture Show*, David A. Cook in *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and*

Alternative Religion Horror and these works concomitant ability to function as significant cultural disseminator that render an historical socio-political analysis of these works important and indeed necessary. The project of this thesis is thus to offer insights into how this cycle of horror films articulates the socio-political debates of its cultural milieu through specifically, and in most cases overtly, addressing the shifting definitions of traditional and alternative spirituality during the mid-1960s and mid-1970s.

Historical Context and the Socio-Political Debates of the Era

The period beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing through the mid-1970s has been argued by historians and cultural theorists alike as existing at the pinnacle of modernity and advent of postmodernity. During a time coined by these authors as The Culture of Narcissism, The Final Phase of Modernism, A Rage against Order, The New Sensibility, or an era of Getting Loose[21], a veritable plethora of debates arise with regard to, on the one hand, the effect of the loss of certain Lyotardian *Grand Narratives* spurred by an overarching rejection of traditionalism, and on the other the potential benefits and the detriments of this forfeiture when it came to their tendencies toward repression. One such author, Robert Bellah, suggests, "The contemporary lifestyle… is based on a degree of individual choice that largely frees it from traditional…boundaries"[22]. Indeed, in being aligned with traditionalism, a term at once associated with potential positive traits such as stabilisation, while at the same time

Vietnam 1970- 1979, and Geoff King in *New Hollywood Cinema*. It denotes a period that saw an opening up of thematic and visual concerns that extended beyond what was considered acceptable by critics and censoring organisations following the fall of the Production Code and the establishment of the MPAA.

[21] This various phraseology represents the way in which the 1960s and 1970s were defined by, respectively, Christopher Lasch in his book of the same title, Daniel Ball in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Marshall Berman in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, and finally Susan Sontag in an essay from a larger collection entitled *Against Interpretation*.

[22] Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, 70.

possessing possible negative connotations tied to patriarchal, homogeneous and hetero-normative understandings of gender, sexuality and race, it is questionable whether or not such instruments of grounding including familial cohesion, and religious affiliation were in fact desired or desirable at all.

If there is one instrument of socio-political unification by which this time frame can be defined, it would be the Civil Rights Movement and the later Counter Culture Movement out of which it was born. Ironically, during an ostensible era of traditional devaluation, under the guise of these movements, not only was this contemporaneous conservative ethos being called into question, but equally were the intrinsic detriments and benefits of foundational elements of modernity being debated: on the one hand, the necessity of enacting a return to spirituality and on the other the effects of the upholding of the rational and the scientific above all else. With the advent of the Counter Culture movement as Theodore Roszak argues, "What is new is that a radical rejection of science and technological values should appear so close to the centre of our society"[23]. Indeed, what is even more interesting for these mechanisms of social and cultural change is the element that binds them together, namely this aforementioned faith. If this era may be located as a watershed moment with regard to shifting cultural paradigms, as suggested above, it may equally be seen as a time of re-entrenchment in terms of alternative religious discourse and affiliation. As Hugh McLeod argues in *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, "As well as many new religious movements, this period saw major efforts at church reform and theological modernisation"[24]. Admittedly, whereas there was, at the time, a drop in membership to more traditional churches, especially by the college educated, there was also a concomitant rise

[23] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 51.
[24] Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11.

in such alternative religious movements by this self-same group. To return to McLeod:

> In the 1960s and the 1970s the drop in church-going was greatest among the college educated. The college educated were also the more likely to have participated in the counter-culture or in new religious movements to support such causes as women's rights or gay rights… They thus pioneered new ways of thinking and behaving which filtered through more gradually to wider sections of the population[25].

Indeed, if monotheism fostered, historically speaking, an 'us versus them' mentality wherein one either worshipped the God of Christianity, or else was regarded as being wrongminded, and in fact in league with the Devil, then this period in history, arguably for the first time in Western Civilisation saw an acceptance of alternatives in terms of spiritual affiliation. One obvious example of this was the connection between the Civil Rights Movement and spiritual affiliation as evidenced by the case of two of its figureheads, Baptist Minister Martin Luther King, Jr and Islamic Fundamentalist Malcolm X.

Sceptics and secular modernists alike would hold that religion has historically had a stultifying affect culturally, for under the guise of traditionalism there exists a restrictive closing down of choice and opportunity[26]. However, both of these Civil Rights leaders, even as they presented ideologies that were in many ways diametrically opposed, equally furthered philosophies that were born out of an adherence to religious congregationalism that acted to open up a dialogue for change. Indeed, in the Southern United States, where, arguably, the birth of the Civil Rights Movement took place, more and more Christian University students, both black and white, were

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[25] *Ibid,* 15.

[26] This is somewhat of an ironic conceptualisation. As Theodore Roszak notes in *The Making of a Counterculture*, the Christian of the first century was anything but conservative and reactionary. Roszak suggests, "Hopelessly estranged by ethos and social class from the official culture, the primitive Christian community awkwardly fashioned of Judaism and the mystery cults and a minority culture that could not but seem an absurdity to Greco-Roman orthodoxy" (43). Indeed, if now traditional Christian ethos is aligned with traditionalism this was not always the case.

becoming involved in direct social action. Many historians including Allison Calhoun-Brown[27] and Aldon Morris[28] agree that not only did the southern church play a key role within local communities, but equally it was through the church that the civil rights movement was organised and disseminated during this era. It cannot be ignored that Martin Luther King, Jr. was indeed a local Baptist minister, and it was equally at the pulpit that the movement established its figureheads, fed its membership, and organised its campaign of non-violent protest. Another example of the connection between spiritual affiliation and the Civil Rights Movement arose out of Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee a religious institution that brought forth other more radical activists such as James Lawson. Admittedly after being expelled, Lawson went on to form the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), another organisation that was likewise responsible for coordinating sit-ins, freedom rides and protest marches.

Many historians point to the fact that this was not only a time of power for less-traditional non-sacramental congregations[29] such as the Southern Baptist Church, which arguably fuelled the Civil Rights Movement, but that it was equally a time of increased atheism and open secularism within society. With these concerns in mind, *Time Magazine* published a black-covered edition of its weekly publication asking the question “Is God Dead?” contesting the extent to which

[27] Allison Calhoun-Brown, “Upon this Rock,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33, no. 2 (2000).
[28] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).
[29] Sacramentalism refers to religious denominations that incorporate traditional Catholic sacraments such as Baptism and Communion into worship. These faiths hold belief in the supernatural basis for such sacraments as transformative rituals that confer grace, accepting that the blessings said over the water and the wine enact a physical change, which is referred to as transubstantiation. Those churches that are not sacramental may still use these rites within services, but perform these rituals as show and tell devices, as an outward sign of acceptance of the faith. However for non-sacramentalists, such acts hold no power to confer grace.

traditional religion continues to function successfully as a relevant socio-political mechanism. According to Thomas J. J. Altizer:

> Even within Christianity, now confidently renewing itself in sprit as well as form… radical theologians [have] seriously argued that the churches must accept the fact that of God's death, and get along without him. The current death of God group believes that God is indeed absolutely dead, but proposes to carry on and write a theology without theos, without God[30].

However, even while popular publications contested the existence of a traditional God, nonetheless, there was an acceptance of the import of systems of faith for culture, and it appeared that the youth of the Civil Rights movement, and the subsequent Counter Culture possessed a desire to believe, even if this belief was at times decidedly unorthodox. Thus, alongside an apparent concern with atheism and secularism was also an opening up with regard to non-Christian alternative faiths, not only popularised by Malcolm X, who became a faithful follower of the Nation of Islam, but also other cultural icons such as George Harrison who along with other members of the Beatles adopted the Hinduism. Indeed, this was a watershed moment for not only secular but equally and possibly even more pervasively spiritual and religious debate within public forums. Many theorists including Theodore Roszak have argued of that at this historical period one mechanism of cohesion among the youth was their passion and their desire to believe. He asserts:

> What the counter culture offers us then is a remarkable defection from the long-standing tradition of the sceptical, secular intellectuality which has served as the prime vehicle for three hundred years of scientific and technical work in the West[31].

Hugh McLeod likewise suggests of the Counter Culturals who, alongside the Civil Rights Activists, defined the 1960s and 1970s period:

> They were looking for a 'third way' between orthodox religion and orthodox science, both of which they regarded as excessively rigid and dogmatic. They usually believed in God, but not necessarily the

[30] Thomas J. J. Altizer, "Toward a Hidden God," *Time Magazine*, April 6, 1966.
[31] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 141.

God of Christianity and Judaism. They were open to the influence of Eastern Religions, and they also believed that there were powers inherent to human beings which had been lost with their increasing distance from nature[32].

This opening up of alternatives to orthodox faiths, when viewed alongside a traditional church that sought to bridge the gap between Protestant and Catholic faiths within the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), through a process of agreement, or *aggiornamento*, represented an acceptance of diversity in spiritual affiliation presumably never before witnessed in the history of Western Civilization.

Modernity and the Resurgence and Popularisation of the Occult

The most radical faction of this opening up, arguably, may be found when investigating figures within popular culture such as singer Mick Jagger of the *Rolling Stones*, who not only dedicated a song entitled "Sympathy with the Devil*"*[33] to Satan, in the title track of the 1968 *Beggar's Banquet* album, but was also slotted to appear in Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising*[34], a film based on the teachings of spiritual guru Aleister Crowley. Jagger was not alone in his fascination with the occult, however, as celebrities including Jimmy Page, Marianne Faithful and Dennis Hopper, all contributed in some way to Anger's production while other seminal rock music icons, The Beatles, went so far as to include an image of Crowley in their 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. As a result of this collective cultural referencing and reverencing, it should thus seem as no coincidence that during this time not only did a resurgence of interest in Crowley emerge, but equally membership to Anton LaVey's

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[32] McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 25.
[33] Mick Jagger, *"*Sympathy with the Devil*,"* in ***Beggar's Banquet***, rec. by The Rolling Stones (London: Decca, 1968).
[34] Kenneth Anger, *Lucifer Rising*, DVD. Directed by Kenneth Anger (United Kingdom and United States: Kenneth Anger Productions, 1972).

Church of Satan gained unprecedented numbers, possibly even resulting in the mainstream publication of *The Satanic Bible*[35] by Avon Books in 1969. Speaking to this Counter Cultural spiritual alignment, Theodore Roszak argues in *The Making of a Counter Culture*:

> [This] youthful political activism of the sixties… reveals itself in the unprecedented penchant for the occult, and for exotic ritual which has become an integral part of the Counter Culture[36].

In terms of occult philosophy and practice these two aforementioned figures, Aleister Crowley and Anton LaVey respectively may be regarded to represent a continuum of alternative belief moving from a focus upon scientific grounding to a faith that was more grounded in superstition, religious ritual and rite, thus framing a concern with the supernatural that seems to align with the overarching contemporaneous cultural concerns of this decade as described above. Indeed, whereas Crowley, on the one hand, adopts an inherently logical and methodological framework for the understanding of spiritual ritual, what he deems 'Magik,' LaVey, alternatively, sought to found a church that filled what he considered to be a gap left by a privileging of the scientific rational over the supernatural universe.

To begin, for Crowley, Magik was a 'science of life' handed down from the ancients encompassing a study of what he regarded as the laws nature from a scientific vantage point. Crowley argues:

> [T]he mind should be trained by the study of any well-developed science, such as chemistry or mathematics. The idea of organisation is the first step, that of interpretation the second[37].

The magician therefore relates to the world by endeavouring to foreground the objective over the emotional. In order to do this, the self and a resultant self-interest must, for Crowley, necessarily be

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35 Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon Books, 1969).
36 Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 124-125.
37 Aleister Crowley, *Magik,* (United States: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

reined in. An understanding of the occult and its practice can only be achieved when the ego-idea is overcome. He states:

> [A]ttainment means first and foremost the destruction of the individuality. Each of our ideas must be made to give up the Self to the Beloved [38].

However, even while rejecting the concerns of the individual, Magik at the same time refused to adopt a political stance. Crowley argues:

> You will cease to be interested in controversies, politics, ethics, religion will seem so many toys and your Magical Will will be free from these inhibitions[39].

Even as Crowley, twenty years after his death, was being resurrected, possibly in part due to the fact of such theories that foregrounded science over sentimentality, another equally powerful occult figurehead was establishing himself and his church.

Interestingly, and possibly even antithetically, while Crowley championed a devaluation of the self in favour of attaining a certain connectivity to a higher power, Anton LaVey seemed to found his church upon a tendency toward hedonism and an almost diametrically opposed focus upon freeing of the self and the will of the individual above all else. In a section entitled “The Infernal Diatribe” from the larger work, *The Satanic Bible*, LaVey asserts, ““Life is the great indulgence—death the great abstinence. Therefore, make the most of life—HERE and NOW”[40]. While again later in the same section, the author suggests, “Then all my bones shall say pridefully, ‘Who is like unto me? Have I not been too strong for mine adversaries? Have I not delivered MYSELF by mine own brain and body?”[41]. This hedonistic glorification of the self may then be contrasted with the spiritual philosophy of Crowley who suggests not an embrace but an abhorrence of the individual, enacting a

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[38] *Ibid*, 57.
[39] *Ibid,* 39.
[40] Crowley, *Magik,* 33.
[41] *Ibid*, 34.

renunciation of the self and the ego so as to enact a unification and thus attain fulfilment. It is, ultimately, this self-same debate posed by occult practitioners that is revisited within the larger culture of the period. Specifically, should the individual be reverenced, or conversely should the ego remain in check, if not repressed than restrained so as to be engulfed within the protective and productive auspices of a higher power?

Paradoxically, rather than making note of the ways in which the occult and by extension alternative religious practice as a whole figures these aforementioned vital contemporaneous cultural debates, many historians, arguably, reject these conundrums made manifest within such factions. Instead they suggest that rather than adhering to the tenets of such alternative religious practices, this choice between a glorification of the self and a renunciation of the same became, arguably, one more method for suggesting the socio-political dominance of a display of individual choice as opposed to the adoption of faith. Bellah argues in this regard:

> If the mystical quest is pursued far enough, it may take on new forms of self-discipline, committed practice and community, as is the case of serious practitioners of Zen Buddhism. But more usually the languages of Eastern spirituality and American naturalistic pantheism are employed by people not connected with any particular religious practice or community[42].

As is suggested in the above, even given the gravitas of these concerns involving paradigmatic shift with regard to a foregrounding of spirituality overall, such debates often get lost, or ironically, take a back seat to the shadow of the political crises that, for many historians, brought an end to the optimism that characterised the early years of the decade. Indeed, it may be argued that the final result of such concerns was not an opening up of ideology or spirituality, but instead a fracturing of the political world between

[42] Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, 234.

radical and conservative spheres. This political dichotomy was increased with the shootings of liberal figureheads Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr, and the alignment of the liberal agenda to that of violence as a result of the Riots at the National Democratic Convention in Chicago, the Watts Riots, and the Black Panther Movement. Violence escalated not only internally, but abroad as well, with the bloodiest campaign of the Vietnam War, the Tet Offensive, which further fractured the nation between liberal and conservative ideologies. Flower Power indeed seemed to be eternally at war with Fire Power. It appears that this era of Civil Rights and Counter Culture Movements, initially defined by the slogan "I Have a Dream[43]" ended with another idiom, "Burn, Baby Burn"[44].

This upheaval was further problematized with the political scandal associated with the Presidency of Richard Nixon which added a new layer of scepticism and uncertainty to an already growing debate with regard to the efficacy of traditional regimes. Indeed, Nixon was the first and only person ever to resign from the Executive Office of the United States Presidency when it was discovered that members of his administration were responsible for illegally installing recording devices into the Democratic Party Headquarters at Watergate. After the resignation of the Vice President Spiro Agnew, and before the commencement of Impeachment hearings called for by the House Judiciary Committee, Nixon also stepped down in 1974. Although never actually admitting to any wrongdoing, in a speech before relinquishing command to Gerald Ford, his newly appointed Vice President, he stated that he was terminating his term of office, not as an admission of guilt, but instead for the good of the country. Indeed,

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[43] Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).
[44] Leroy Green and Ron Kersey, "Disco Inferno," in *Disco Inferno*, rec.The Tramps (Philadelphia: Atlantic Records, 1976).

as the people lost faith in the power of activism and affirmative action to enact positive change, they also became increasingly wary of the ability of the mainstream government to do the same. If this political crisis can be in fact configured as a crisis of individual agency over objective and rational control, then such concerns may be framed as being primary not only to the spiritual but equally the political realms, suggesting that the two are not as separated or indeed as distinct as they have been regarded within an academic framework.

Revelations of Cultural Concerns within the Media Output

The filmmaking output from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s was, like the culture that gave it birth, in a state of ideological flux and paradigmatic shift. As suggested above, many historians and film scholars agree that beginning in the mid-1960s, new traditions and a new style of filmmaking enacted a breaking away from the staid establishment of Classical Hollywood. Just as there was a concomitant break in alignment to cultural traditionalism fostered by the ethos and the socio-political debates circulating during this era, so too was there a shift in terms of what was acceptable within the sphere of the media. Indeed, the Counter Cultural Movement, the sexual revolution and the combined political crises of the Vietnam War and Watergate, arguably, all acted to establish an edginess within this cultural maelstrom, an affect that arguably resulted in and then furthered an era of filmmaking known as The New Hollywood within the United States. This suggested rebirth was, however, not only a product of an increased opening up of cultural discourse; it was in fact equally born out of a weakening of the conservatism to which the American film industry up until this point was in many ways aligned.

If Pre-Renaissance classical Hollywood could be considered, ironically, to be the filmic dark ages, even as it was equally regarded as the Golden Age of Filmmaking, then the era beginning in the mid-1960s saw its potential and increasing demise. Indeed, not only were box office returns increasingly weakening under the influence of, among other things, the age of television, and big budget Hollywood epics on the downswing, but also iconic figureheads of old Hollywood were literally dying out. Individuals that represented the grandeur of the studio system, the likes of David O Selznick (1902-1965) Charlie Chaplin (1889- 1977), Joan Crawford (1904- 1977) and John Ford (1984- 1973), all passed away in the period extending from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and so too the traditional structuring mechanisms that supported this old regime. One example of this shift was the demise of the Production Code. The Code instituted in the early 1930s based upon precepts outlined in the Ten Commandments and drafted by Catholic Priests including Joseph Breen and laypeople alike, represented an attempt by traditional conservative groups to instil family values and eliminate morally questionable content from the cinema. As Paul Monaco suggests in *History of the American Cinema: The Sixties*:

> The entire issue of control over movie content, after all, involved complex assessments as to what the public wanted or would tolerate, what parts of society would object to changes in Hollywood's traditional standard, and just how to proceed most efficaciously on behalf of an industry for which image and popular approval were vital[45].

Many film historians including Monaco agree that one reason for the change that occurred at this time was the introduction of foreign films into mainstream American theatres, films which offered different guidelines when it came to what was deemed morally and ideologically acceptable with regard to content, political, sexual, moral, or otherwise.

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[45] Paul Monaco, *History of the American Cinema: The Sixties* (New York: Charles Scribners, 2001), 59.

Another watershed moment symptomatic of this increased leniency was when in 1965 The Legion of Decency, populated and enforced since 1960 by the Roman Catholic Church as the newly formed National Catholic Office of Motion Pictures, revised its condemnation of *The Pawnbroker*[46], altering its 'C' rating to one of 'A-3', meaning morally **un**objectionable for adults. Even given the nudity depicted in the film, an inclusion of bare bosoms that resulted in it being deemed morally offensive, the National Council of Churches gave the film an award for best picture of the year, this acknowledgement and acceptance equally alluding to the opening up of moral standards by traditional groups. Although The Production Code under the auspices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops nonetheless continued to function for another three years, it did so with a complete lack of efficacy as filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors alike failed to abide by restrictions that they regarded as being outdated. This continued until 1968 when this body was finally replaced by the MPAA rating system in 1968, ending the vetting of filmic censorship by religious institutions and ushering in a secular model in which individual choice overtook overarching traditionally religious restrictions, allowing for the first time since the pre-code era the cultural dissemination of belief systems and moral codes that were heretofore effectively restricted by law in the establishing age restrictions and warnings rather than enacting an overarching censorship of questionable material.

Not only was there an increase in terms of allowable new material, however, but there were equally a wave of new directors, actors and producers who were likewise coming to the fore. Arguably, this cinematic rebirth within the United States began with the release of

[46] Edward Lewis Wallant, *The Pawnbroker*, DVD. Directed by Sidney Lumet (United States: Allied Artists, 1965).

Bonnie and Clyde[47] in 1967, wherein, paradoxically, the violence was more forceful and disturbing while the narrative and conflict were understated and more internally and psychologically driven. Dealing directly with issues of moral ambiguity including sexuality and violence, these films promised to reveal the forbidden, an opening up of discourse similar to that of the culture of which these films were a part. As Thomas Reigler argues of the 1970s in an article entitled "We're All Dirty Harry Now: Violent Movies for Violent Times*:"*

> 1970s … movie genres fed on political and social turmoil that began in the late 1960s: The Vietnam War, a string of high profile political assassinations, racism, and urban riots. There was evident paranoia about the rise of violent crime, economic woes resonated strongly, and the political system was engulfed in a serious crisis of confidence after the Watergate scandal. Overall there was a crisis of faith[48].

While not speaking of a crisis of faith in spiritual terms, this scepticism when it came to structures of authority was a consistent trope in 1970s filmmaking. For Reigler, the result of a perceived socio-political breakdown, as discussed above, resulted in a thematic concern with vigilantism as in the case of *Taxi Driver*, notions of paranoia as evidenced in films like *The Conversation*, and apocalyptic visions articulated by the disaster film. To return to Reigler:

> The medium for confronting the deepest fears and nightmares was of course the disaster genre, which went through a golden age with any kind of apocalyptical danger and threat imagined [49].

Indeed, what is interesting for the horror films of the period is how they provide an articulation of all of these thematic tropes. Reigler mentions violence as being a concern of horror cinema, which he argues is used in the service of political criticism in works such as

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[47] David Newman and Robert Benton, *Bonnie and Clyde*, DVD. Directed by Arthur Penn (United States: Warner Brothers, 1967).
[48] Thomas Reigler, "We're All *Dirty Harry* Now: Violent Movies for Violent Times," *At the Interface/ Probing the Boundaries* 70, (November 2010): 18.
[49] *Ibid*, 21.

Night of the Living Dead[50], and *The Hills Have Eyes*[51], but even more so, the genre, as discussed by scholars like Carol Clover, Stephen Prince, Robin Wood, and Mark Jancovich, reveals debates with regard to an overarching failure of systems of authority.

1970s Horror Cinema and the Failure of Authority

Scholarship devoted to the horror film of the 1970s seems to fall into an essential debate between a universalising focus upon spectatorial identification on the one hand, and an historical imperative which connects the films to the debates surrounding its socio-political milieu on the other. The first of these is by far the most prevalent analytic strategy within academia, a focus best represented by the work of Carol Clover in *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, and Robin Wood in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*. Although purporting to present discursive and historically focused approaches, for Clover, this moment would be the feminist movement, and for Wood, the Vietnam War, both authors rely primarily upon psychoanalytic analyses to position these texts as discourses based upon repression and transgression. The second side of the debate can be broken down into further categories: the first involving a comprehensive overview of the genre, focusing upon trends that seek to explode current generic convention, as represented by Andrew Tudor, and secondly those who use discursive analysis, a methodology that positions these films within the socio-political and cultural context in which they were produced, a concern represented by authors such as Stephen Prince, Mark Jancovich, and Vivian Sobchack.

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50 George A. Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*, DVD. Directed by George A. Romero (United States: Continental Distributing, 1968).
51 Wes Craven, *The Hills Have Eyes*, DVD. Directed by Wes Craven (United States: Vanguard Monarch Releasing Company, 1977).

Carol Clover, like her contemporaries Barbara Creed[52] and Lucy Fisher[53], argues of the horror cinema that this popular, although critically marginalized output offers up a picture of sexual attitudes, which in the period were regarded as being both excessive and transgressive specifically in terms of gender and gender positioning. Clover elucidates, "What filmmakers seem to know better than film critics is that gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane"[54]. For Clover, it is this concern that specifically allows for the horror films of the 1970s to be regarded as transgressive texts. She then goes on to establish the importance of these works for her overall thesis of gender transgression by focusing upon those films which articulate an essential dichotomy between White Science and Black Magic. She argues:

> White Science refers to Western rational tradition. Its representatives are nearly always white males… and its tools are surgery, and other forms of hegemonic science. Black Magic, on the other hand, refers to Satanism, voodoo, spiritualism, and folk variants of Roman Catholicism. A world of crosses, holy water, séances, candles, prayer, exorcism, strings of garlic, beheaded chickens, and the like, its inhabitants are… first and foremost women[55].

This model, she suggests, involves a repudiation of the efficacy of the rational realm of science, by the irrational world of the spiritual, both of which may be regarded as being heavily gendered systems

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[52] Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous Feminine* relies upon the work of Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror,* specifically with regard to the symbolic and the abject to suggest the anti-feminist thread within the genre at this time. To Creed, the female as constructed in the horror films of this period are rendered monstrous because they represent the bodily, elements of female sexuality and the maternal. Through foregrounding blood, excrement, and corporeality, the 1970s horror film reveals the abject, a signal of the boundary between the undifferentiated maternal, or that which is ego dystonic and the building of effective self-agency through differentiation. In essence, locating a discourse of the marginalised feminine is at the heart of her theoretical project, thus offering up a universalised, and ultimately an ahistorical discursive thread

[53] Lucy Fisher in "Birth Traumas: Parturition, and Horror in *Rosemary's Baby*" locates historical discourses of fear surrounding the birth cycle within the horror films of the 1970s, focusing upon representations of real-world maternal concerns and conditions ranging from a belief that the mid-wife was a witch, to a women who view their babies are "a rejected alien object." Although providing a historically focused look at these concerns, the work does little to ground the text itself within the social and political milieu in which it was conceived, nor does she consider the religious or moral implications that *Rosemary's Baby*, and other possession films espouse.

[54] Carol Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46.
[55] *Ibid*, 66.

of belief. Clover thus adopts a Freudian model to elucidate the way in which these films engage spectatorial identification when she goes on to argue that this rejection of the rational signals a larger transgression of gender dichotomies, for in accepting the irrational world of the supernatural, the rationally oriented male becomes associated with a feminine subject position. In focusing on gender as the privileged system of signification, and relying upon psychoanalytic theory to facilitate this analysis, what Clover fails to address, however, is the very way in which this debate over the rational and the supernatural become key signifiers of a culturally significant paradigmatic shift in terms of religious affiliation, a shift that, as was argued above, is a key discourse of the era in which these films were made. Indeed, rather than representing the masculine and the feminine, these concerns with regard to faith and spirituality may be regarded as being significant in and of themselves.

Similarly, Robin Wood, in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Regan* begins by purporting to present a methodology based upon a blending Marxist and Freudian analyses. Like Clover, Wood's discussion surrounds an historical moment, which accounts not only for an ideological shift but also, contingently, for the rampant evolution of the horror film: The Vietnam War. For Wood, the war opened up a generalised cultural questioning of dominant ideologies and more specifically authority and its tenets including government, the family and religion all of which he collapses under the category of 'patriarchy'. The filmmakers working in this era of unrest, he goes on to argue, react to this cultural condition either openly, or without meaning to, the latter of which establishing a discourse that the author refers to as being incoherent. This element is further privileged within the horror text specifically because as a marginalised discourse, it is not engaged as a serious form by the culture of which it is an integral component. Wood likens this lack of

critical awareness to a "Sleep of consciousness"[56], and therefore, like a dream, the material which is socio-politically repressed comes to the fore. If the seventies can be characterised as the "Golden Age of Horror"[57], then this Golden Age can equally be defined by the way in which it allows for these elements to be made manifest, in the horrific form of a nightmare. Wood asserts:

> Central to the effect and fascination of the horror films is their fulfilment of our nightmare wish to smash the norms that oppress us and which out moral condition teaches us to revere[58].

Thus, like Clover, Wood argues that the horror cinema of the 1970s acts to foreground innately repressive cultural mechanisms utilising Freudian theorisations, in this case dream theory, to make this apparent. Indeed, the primary concern of this analysis involves a discussion of the ways in which Western art objectifies and denies otherness. For Wood, "The traces… within our popular cinema of that innate bi-sexuality the repression of which Freud saw as necessary for the construction of "socialised" men and women in our culture[59]. His project, therefore, is political in nature as he seeks to reveal how these works both interrogate and complicate marginalisation within the primary cultural conflicts, and debates that are centred upon wealth, gender, race and sexual orientation and are equally configured through the privileging of "heterosexual monogamous couple, the family, and the social institutions that defend them"[60]. For Wood, religion acts simply as one of these patriarchal and repressive mechanisms, rather than being significant in and of itself. It is for this reason that he does not elucidate the ways in which, specifically, religion is represented or revealed to connect to the culture of the era. Like Clover he does not take the debates surrounding religion seriously even though they represent a

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[56] Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 78.
[57] *Ibid*, 70.
[58] *Ibid*, 80.
[59] *Ibid,* 1.
[60] *Ibid*, 79.

significant thread not only within these films themselves, but indeed, the larger culture out of which they are born.

The second pole of this intellectual debate surrounding the horror film of the 1960s and 1970s in utilising discursive analysis rather than psychoanalytic theory, is one in which academics like Stephen Prince, Anthony Tudor, Mark Jancovich and Vivian Sobchack re-establish the imperative of a socio-historical and cultural context as an integral methodological concern for an effective analysis of these texts. In a chapter entitled "Dread, Taboo and the Thing" published in his edited collection entitled *The Horror Film*, Stephen Prince begins by establishing his belief in the necessity of interpolating the socio-political milieu back into an analysis of the horror cinema, thus acknowledging these works not only as cultural products, but also as social manifestations. For Prince, the monstrous is equally transgressive in the collapsing of boundaries, but the dichotomies that he presents are not Freudian constructs, but socio-politically embedded:

> Perceptions of malevolent and anti-social powers, then, may emerge from the ill-defined, contradictory lines of social structure where networks of authority, allegiance, are unclear, and the categories that arouse the greatest fear, interest, and sense of mystery are the ambiguous ones[61].

Thus, the monster is not found in the permeable boundary between the masculine and the feminine, the logical and illogical, or the mainstream and the marginal but instead located in, "those unmapped areas bordering the familiar configuring of the social world"[62].

[61] Stephen Prince, "Dread, Taboo, and the Thing," in *The Horror Film*, ed. Stephen Prince (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 122.
[62] *Ibid*.

This work of mapping has been carried out, most significantly, by film historian Andrew Tudor in his seminal text on the nature and history of the horror genre entitled *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Film*. Enacting an extensive project of categorization of these films Tudor relies upon conflict, setting, character and other generic signposts to locate the historical trends of the horror film and open up the genre conventions to explore texts that are commonly not considered to be horror constructions. In doing so, this analysis pinpoints a period extending from the early to mid-1970s as a period of legitimisation, expansion and consolidation. He argues:

> The horror movie world-view suggested by these developments is one in which typical threats have increased in intensity and become more focused. We, in our familiar domestic and everyday settings, are the unwitting prey of graphically presented horrors created by our failings or by invasion from a seemingly malevolent natural world[63].

In organising these texts into delineated categories, Tudor identifies a huge rise in those horror films in which the predominant threat involves the externalised supernatural, a total of 55 films made during what he has come to regard as the 'Seventies Boom.' Interestingly within this concern for the supernatural, half of these works feature witches, Satanists or demonic intercession. To return to Tudor:

> The penetration of the everyday world by malevolent super-nature is a significant feature of the seventies supernatural movies… Whatever their differences, they share a presupposition that supernatural forces may be channelled into the secular world, where they can and will destroy everybody with whom they come into contact[64].

What is thus being represented in these films, according to Tudor, is the social condition. Indeed, for Tudor these texts that are concerned with malevolent supernature are, "More about the need

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[63] Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 67.
[64] *Ibid*, 66.

for and the risks of belief and faith"[65], a trend marked by the release of *The Exorcist* in 1974, an event that represented a radical shift in the way the horror cinema was regarded within the larger cultural context[66]. Thus, Tudor argues not only for an understanding of this discourse from an historical perspective, but equally argues that such an understanding is obligatory as horror increasingly became a mainstream cultural product, thus not only being influenced by, but influencing the society out of which it arose.

It is this imperative that is reiterated and further addressed by Mark Jancovich in his chapter, "Post-Fordism, Postmodernism and Paranoia: The Dominance of the Horror Genre in Contemporary Culture" from his book entitled simply *Horror*. Following along similar lines to those of Tudor, Jancovich argues that with the dominance and popularity of authors like Steven King, the critical and economic success of mainstream Hollywood horror films and the increasing academic interest in the genre, horror is, "No longer consigned to the status of the B-movie"[67]. He then goes on to tie this increasing social interest in the horror genre with the condition of the post-1960s consumerist culture:

> Constantly presented with media and advertising images of their inadequacy and the commercialised means of recreating and idealising themselves, the population felt increasingly insecure, not only in their own abilities, but in their very sense of self[68].

This 'culture of narcissism' saw not only a breakdown of rigid conservatism, but equally an intensification of a sense of a loss of agency as a result of the increasing lack of faith in established

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[65] *Ibid*, 70.

[66] In winning two Oscars and garnering eight nominations, films such as *The Exorcist* further challenged the nature of horror cinema as a marginalised discourses as did *Psycho* before it. Indeed, Prince like others suggests that this Hitchcock film not only ushered in the modern horror film, but further legitimated this discourse, a trend that continued, as suggested above by *Rosemary's Baby*, and later by *The Omen*

[67] Mark Jancovich, "Post-Fordism, Postmodernism and Paranoia: The Dominance of the Horror Genre in Contemporary Culture," in *Horror: the Film Reader*, ed. Mark Jancovich (London: Routledge, 2002), 81.

[68] *Ibid*, 82.

institutions, namely the family and the military. Thus, Jancovich argues, the problem that is at once culturally motivated and artistically interrogated involves an essential breakdown of the grand narratives by which society cohered and was rendered meaningful. This breakdown manifested in a collapsing of dichotomies: between order and disorder; and normalcy and the abnormal. Indeed, for Jancovich, authority itself in failing to mitigate this postmodern rupture becomes essentially ineffectual. Using *Rosemary's Baby* as an example, he argues, "Despite the continual discussions about 'the death of God' it is authority that is a problem, not the loss of religious faith"[69].

The family, one of the primary authority bearing institutions of the era, is thus, for Jancovich, articulated as a locus of ambivalence within the horror film of the late 1960s and 1970s. Patriarchy in general is seen as the site of horror as the male role model is displaced and rendered ineffective. Although female characters are thus, in this vacuum left by the failure of patriarchy, primarily responsible for their own survival, these films cannot be, according to this author, truly conceived of as feminist narratives, as this lack of agency affects these characters as well. Jancovich once again returns to *Rosemary's Baby* as an example of the threat of authority and the subsequent breakdown of the efficacy of agency, which came to dominate the period:

> During the mid-1960s… the media made figures such as Dr Benjamin Spock into best-selling authors and media personalities by convincing parents that unless they heeded expert advice on childcare, their children would grow up to be little monsters. Interestingly, given the novel's preoccupation with childbirth, Spock's name is absent. Instead, the novel contains references of Thalidomide and its side effects. In a society administered by experts, Rosemary feels powerless and ignorant with relation to the processes taking place within her own body. She feels dependent on experts, but is also aware of the damage they have done in the past… It is these feelings of helplessness with regard to experts—but

[69] *Ibid*, 88.

also the desire for continual reassurance by them which it engenders—that concerns this novel[70].

One of the main forms of authority historically speaking, was traditional religion, however, like government, this mechanism is in crisis. To return to Jancovich:

The modern world is presented as a kind of permissive hell which is now open to the invasion of demonic forces, especially since the Catholic Church has given up the concept of evil, and come to rely on sociology, psychology, and psychoanalysis[71].

However, whereas Jancovich notes the ways in which religion functions in these texts, he, like Prince, see this thematic concern as representative of a larger breakdown of grand narratives inherent to the period existing at the end of the modernist and beginning of the postmodern period, rather than being a significant thematic concern for these texts or indeed for culture in and of itself. Again, this discursive element is not taken seriously.

Finally, Vivian Sobchack in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, like Jancovich and Prince, discusses the horror film of the sixties and seventies as an articulation of the failure of grand narratives. For Sobchack, this crisis brought upon the family and familial institutions by an outside alien other exists as an external threat from the realm of the public sphere. As it increasingly encroaches upon the family and indeed upon the private universe as a whole, the result and indeed the horror is the ultimate destruction of the balance of the universe. What is interesting about the intervention Sobchack makes to this academic discursive thread is that for this theorist, the threat against the natural order of things is perceived not only as a social condition, but is also configured as a moral dilemma, for as Sobchack goes on to argue, “The horror film deals with moral chaos, the disruption of natural order (assumed to

[70] *Ibid*, 87.
[71] *Ibid*, 94.

be God's order), and the threat to the harmony of hearth and home"[72]. However, even given this nod to the importance of morality and faith, Sobchack, like her contemporaries, nonetheless falls back on viewing these systems as symbols of patriarchy, rather than representatives of spiritual affiliation. Rather than regarding the nuclear family as being the seedbed out of which religion and faith flower, this analysis locates the attack on the nuclear family as being an attack on patriarchy itself. She goes on to suggest:

> [T]he contemporary horror film dramatizes the terror of patriarchy without power and refuses or perverts paternal responsibility when it is not rewarded with the benefits of patriarchal authority[73].

Indeed, tor Sobchack, the fruit of the nuclear family is the child, who represents not only the structuring absence of the patriarchal position, but more pointedly the attitudes toward youth that were espoused during this period. Like Jancovich suggests above, at the time child-rearing was regarded as a fearful prospect not only because it was seen a locus for a maternal crisis of agency, but also because the product, the child, itself becomes, in these narratives, an articulated threat. To return to Sobchack:

> From the early to mid-1970s and coincident with bourgeois society's negative response to the youth movements and drug culture of the late 1960s, and early 1970s, generic emphasis was on the child, not as a terrorized victim, but as cannibalistic, monstrous, sexual. The child was figured as an alien force that threatened both its immediate family and all adult authority that would keep it in place… Thus, while these children are verbally articulated as 'possessed' and 'victims,' they are visually articulated as in possession of and victimizing their households. [They] refute parental love and authority and mock the established values of dominant institutions"[74].

Thus, while Sobchack, like Jancovich and Prince, succeeds in interpolating the historical context back into an analysis of these works, she nonetheless fails to address how these films relate to the era's significant paradigmatic shift in terms of spiritual belief. For

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[72] Vivian Sobchack, *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film* (Austin: Texas University Press, 2015), 144.
[73] *Ibid*, 153.
[74] *Ibid*, 150.

even as Sobchack herself concedes, the family, the natural order and, arguably, morality itself are all heavily tied to issues of religion and mechanisms of faith. Rather than merely being a metaphor for patriarchy, repression, plenitude or power, religion itself, as suggested above, can be located as being a chief thematic concern not only for the culture of the period, but as will be seen, for the horror genre itself.

Religious Discourse and Spiritual Debates and the Horror Genre

When discussing an historical trajectory of religious articulations in what may broadly be termed horror, the Literary Gothic[75] movement and the works of New Hollywood's Alternative Religion Horror cinema arguably represent a discursive continuum that may in fact establish the latter as a qualified revival of the former when it comes to issues related to modernity. This shared thematic focus may be located not only in terms of articulations of the general debates that circulated in their respective eras with regard to the supernatural as an anathema to a prevailing cultural concern with rationality, but also equally the ways in which contemporaneous arguments surrounding, more specifically, the place and efficacy of faith versus reason within this larger configuration are in fact foregrounded in both artistic outputs. Indeed, the Gothic fiction, like its contemporary counterpart, presents a similar fascination with the potential breakdown in

[75] The Gothic, like all generic distinctions is intrinsically difficult to define with certainty, not only because it exists within a scope that spans from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day, but equally because in order to remain effective as an historical discourse, it, like other genres, must necessarily undergo transformation and reinvigoration in order to remain culturally relevant. Thus when it comes to discussions of the nature of the Gothic, as Fred Bottling suggests, there is a tendency to sub- categorise this movement. Bottling notes that scholars refer to categories of the Gothic that include but are not limited to 18th Century Gothic, Victorian Gothic, Modern Gothic and even Postmodern Gothic not to mention panoply of sub-genres such as female Gothic, postcolonial Gothic, Queer Gothic, and urban Gothic. This thesis, however, will not attempt to define the Gothic, just as there is no intention to do so with regard to the horror genre either. Instead, certain thematic concerns evidenced in this literary framework arising at a time of cultural conflict will be traced through to the contemporary horror, which many would argue is a descendant of this earlier discourse.

processes of self-identification elicited by the moral erosion endemic to an increasingly secular culture. As the supernatural element rises to the surface, in both the Literary Gothic and New Hollywood Alternative Religion filmic horror, so too do anxieties and debates regarding the attraction of darkness, passion and superstition within an overarching enlightenment ethos that privileged and continued to foreground rationality above all else. As Fred Bottling suggests:

> The interest in the amoral is historically grounded in a series of shared knowledges between the late Victorian Gothic and the modernist text. Theories of degeneration, for example, had a cultural prominence throughout the late Victorian and early twentieth century period. The ideas that civilisation was threatened by the possibilities of atavistic reversion"[76].

In many ways, the 19th century with its dual legacies of the Protestant Reformation, which many historians and theologians including Hugh McLeod agree, effectively robbed religion of its supernatural element, and the subsequent Age of Enlightenment which foregrounded scientific inquiry over questions of faith was equally a time of radical shifts with regard to issues of spiritual affiliation. This configuration opened up, on the one hand debates regarding, as suggested earlier, a freedom of choice and enquiry never before experienced in Western Culture, whilst at the same time foregrounding an underlying uncertainty as to the direction that this essentially secular road would lead. Indeed, the culture that bore the Gothic may in many ways be considered to be in a state of flux similar to that which was experienced in the mid-1960s and 1970s as the self-same mechanisms of cultural cohesion including tradition, familial connectivity and spiritual affiliation were being questioned as to their relevance and efficacy. One such mechanism, for both England and indeed equally the United States, may be located in debates regarding the acceptance of and adherence to Protestantism. For America, it was this element by which, arguably, the country was

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[76] Fred Bottling, *Gothic, The. Essays and Studies* (New York: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2001), 3.

founded, and its work ethic established, and as Victor Sage suggests in *Horror in the Protestant Tradition*, the Reformation and the privileging of Protestantism as the predominant faith mechanism equally penetrated every aspect of English culture from popular culture to the Arts. Sage suggests:

> When we speak of Protestant tradition, we are apparently speaking of a common set of doctrines which hold English culture together. There is an important sense in which theology… must preserve itself and its limits. To be a social cement, it must be recognisable and it must transmit a set of values from generation to generation. On the other hand, Protestantism in its social and political aspects is notoriously hydra-headed. It is always in the process of reforming itself, re-aligning its sympathies in relation to economic and political changes. The rhetoric of the horror novel is demonstrably theological in character. And theological assumptions play the role, again demonstrably, of organising and determining factors in the psychology of the individual writers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries[77].

However, just as the culture was embroiled in paradigmatic shifts in terms of religious affiliation, leading to a cultural ethos that was decidedly unsettled, so too was its artistic output. One of the values which not only elicited during the period, but also was equally disseminated by this literary genre was a decidedly Anti-Catholic sentiment[78]; however, at the same time the Gothic equally provided an assault on Enlightenment norms in its tendency to foreground science and the rational above all else. For authors like David Punter, the dominant thematic concern in Gothic fiction was, "the revisiting the sins of the fathers upon their children"[79], referencing both the Reformation and the Enlightenment and the potential problems these two historic monuments might have unleashed. In fact, in providing a critique of the socio-political milieu, arguably, the Literary Gothic used this artistic forum to voice fears about the

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[77] Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*, xii-xvi.
[78] Catholicism as system of faith, which was regarded as being an antithesis to the ethos of the Gothic in not only privileging an ordered hierarchy which not only functioned as a structural mechanism, but also acted to privilege through the tenet of indulgences, wherein one could reduce the time spent in purgatory through monetary means. it would appear that those with money and /or power ended up on top, both literally and figuratively
[79] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the present day* (London: Longman, 1980), 52.

supernatural, while at the same time questioning the effects of the dominance of the rational. It was this overarching attempt to rationalise all aspects of the universe that resulted in a feeling of mastery on the surface, but equally elicited a lurking undercurrent of fear for that which cannot be assimilated, understood and conquered. In many ways, like its cultural milieu, this output was more nebulous and divergent than it was single-minded and unilateral in focus.

Both Sage and Punter recognise the conflicted nature of this discourse, a nature that is equally born out of its time. For Sage, such conflicting concerns, in fact, speak to an essential wariness of the potential for entrapment, what he refers to as a "traditional threat". Tradition, in this sense, was aligned with the classical, which was simply ordered, while in opposition to this, the Gothic was defiant, frenzied, elaborate, and excessive, which also speaks to its conflicted nature. Yet, even as Gothic fiction was wary of traditionalism, it was nonetheless literally and figuratively haunted by it, as if through making the past manifest, reinventing while at the same time recapturing history for its own purposes. To return to Punter:

> When thinking of the Gothic novel, a set of characteristics spring readily to mind: an emphasis of portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters, and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense. Gothic fiction is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters and werewolves[80].

In the Gothic novel, the conditions of reality became fantastic, and through calling upon the supernatural, historical and social critiques could be articulated safely through this self-same process of distanciation.

[80] *Ibid*, 1.

Interestingly, these very questions are not only addressed by the Gothic literary fiction, but equally the classical Hollywood Horror Cinema.

Within this filmic genre, like its ostensible literary antecedent, the isolated, remote and foggy landscapes, what James B. Twitchell calls 'Horror Art,' are likened to dreams in producing 'marvellous,' inexplicable imagery that is not only literally distant in being set in a remote locale, but equally distant in terms of its choice of narrative antagonist, born within a dream-like realm wholly separate from the really real. Indeed, the settings, like the characters, reflect this elusive quality in being predominantly located in the perennial 'over there,' foggy, dark and obscured spaces beyond the realm of human experience. Classical horror in this way may be defined as an "Art of Occlusion"[81], a text which offers up diegetic monsters that are fundamentally unknowable because they exist on the peripheral line between the conscious and the subconscious. However, whereas the classical horror may be regarded as being apart both in terms of its aesthetics and its antagonists, it nonetheless seemed to espouse traditional values inherent to the era. Ironically, while distanciation was used, it need not have been a concern in terms of thematic controversy.

As discussed above, the classical horror film seemed to project a traditional ethos when it comes to religious discourse. Existing within a trajectory beginning with the Universal Horror films of the 1930s and ending, as many suggest, with the release of *Psycho* in 1960, these films predominantly presented a conflict of good versus evil. Indeed, when focusing upon the central thematic concern, what is considered on the side of the virtuous, for example Van Helsing in

[81] James B. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 22.

Universal's 1930s *Dracula*[82] all the way through to Richard Barlow in the 1960 Hammer classic *City of the Dead* are those characters who come to rely upon tradition, historical knowledge, and the tenets of orthodox religion to defeat evil. Van Helsing, although a scientist, is also willing to accept the possibility of the supernatural, and thus uses supernatural means, in the form of religious implements, to defeat the evil foe. In brandishing the cross, the symbol of the power of God to defeat the Devil, the efficacy of traditional Christianity is reiterated. Even in a more modern context, the 1960 film *City of the Dead*[83], protagonist Richard Barlow defeats the Satanic cabal lead by iconic British horror actor, Christopher Lee, using these same traditional means. Although his scepticism in the potential of the supernatural results in the loss of his sister, his ultimate acceptance of the power of religion, also in the form of the cross, saves his girlfriend and indeed defeats Lee.

While those who are deemed on the side of good are those who accept the power of traditional religion, as argued above, those who practice alternative faiths, such as Satanism and Witchcraft, are decidedly regarded as being evil. It is Bela Lugosi and later Christopher Lee, as Dracula, who are defeated because they are Anti-Christian, just as is the later character also portrayed by Lee, Alan Driscoll. If the ending to traditional classical horror is almost always resolved, and evil is almost always defeated, then it is the problemisation of this conflict, and the lack of assuredness of this resolution that define the modern horror text. According to Andrew Tudor:

> The horror movie world-view suggested by these developments is one in which typical threats have increased in intensity and become more focused. We, in our familiar domestic and everyday settings, are the unwitting prey of graphically presented horrors created by our

82 Garrett Fort, *Dracula*, DVD. Directed by Tod Browning (United States: Universal Pictures, 1931).
83 George Baxt, *City of the Dead*, DVD. Directed by John Llewellyn Moxey (United Kingdom and United States: British Lion, 1960).

failings or by invasion from a seemingly malevolent natural world. Victory is no longer assured[84].

The fact that these threats are left unresolved, for Tudor poses an additional threat, for, to return to Tudor, "If the fears here represented are undefeated, then the cultures within which such narratives make sense must surely be less secure than they once were"[85]. The crowning example of modern horror, for many theorists, is *Psycho*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1960. As Stephen Prince argues:

> Classical horror happened in a remote location. "Things have changed in the modern period, with Psycho (1960), being one of the threshold films that mark a separation between eras… Hitchcock put horror in the here and now[86].

However, it could be argued that in setting the horror in an isolated motel far off the new main highway, definitely positions this text as not being in the here. Equally, the setting of the Bates mansion behind the all but deserted motel, is also described as being antiquated inside and out. This is suggested in the novel upon which the film was based, "Here everything was orderly and ordained; it was only there, outside, that the changes took place"[87].

If as Vivian Sobchack, suggests:

> Since the 1960s, the events of family life and social life have been commonly and increasingly experienced as convergent… The displaced 'There' has been replaced with 'Here,' and 'Then and 'When' have been condensed as 'Now'[88].

Then, *Rosemary's Baby*, as another 1960s horror text presents a more accurate marker for a universe in that is radically, realistically articulated. Thus, this work could in fact be considered to be one of the first works of horror not only to fit within the framework of New Hollywood, but equally to be regarded as espousing an ethos reminiscent of modernity in its rejection of the traditional, and its

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84 Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 67.
85 *Ibid*, 95.
86 Prince, "Introduction to the Horror Film", 4.
87 Robert Bloch, *Psycho* (New York: Tor Books, 1989), 1.
88 Sobchack, *The Dread of Difference*, 146.

foregrounding of concerns with the here and now. Indeed, in being set in an urban mecca New York City, and in being imbued with contemporary references to the New York City blackout, the Pope's visit to the big apple, among others, this film seems to be rooted in the present in a far more radical sense than even *Psycho* can be credited with. Additionally, in referring to 1966 as year one, and in incorporating the *Time Magazine* issue on the cover of which was emblazoned *'Is God Dead?'*, this film equally refers directly to the debates surrounding religion that were coming to the fore during this time period.

The 1970s Horror Film as a Spiritual Discourse

It has thus been argued that in many ways horror has always in certain ways been concerned with religion and faith. As discussed above, the Gothic literary genre became a forum for the discussion and dissemination of issues related to shifting paradigms in terms of spirituality and connectivity to faith mechanisms, while the classical horror film equally dealt with religion from a more traditional framework. However, as the hold of traditionalism became increasingly less socially politically rooted during the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, so too did the horror films thematic concern become less grounded in monotheistic religion, a discourse wherein Christianity was on the side of good and all else was on the side of evil. Just as a paradigmatic shift in terms of spirituality, arguably, issued forth the Literary Gothic, so too did the culmination of modernity and inception of postmodernity issue in new concerns and debates with regard to religious connectivity. As discussed above, within a culture that was becoming open to a vast array of choice when it came to spiritual affiliation, even including secularism and atheism, the allure of spirituality and the power of the supernatural was a key

trope, especially when it came to horror. This is revealed in the creation of a panoply of alternative religion horror films including, but not limited to *Eye of the Devil*[89], *The Witches*[90], *Rosemary's Baby, The Brotherhood of Satan*[91], *Season of the Witch*[92], *The Wicker Man, Race with the Devil*[93], and *The Omen*, not to mention teleplays including *Robin Redbreast*[94], and *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*[95]. All these works not only share a thematic consideration with religion, thus making them part of what Anthony Tudor calls the Supernatural Seventies Boom, but also were received by the secular and religious press alike as foregrounding a religious discourse.

One such example of the reception of these texts in terms of the popular press can be located in an article published in the *New York Times* entitled "In Horror Movies Some Things Are Sacred." In this piece, Leonard Wolf argues that there is a special appeal that he ascribes to the modern horror film beyond its ability to scare audiences. He suggests:

> The lurking religious content… gives many [horror films] their special power to attract. It seems bizarrely true that the cinema of horror provides its highly secularised audience with their last, perhaps their only opportunity to experience mystery and miracle as if they were *dread*ful, as if they were *awe*ful"[96].

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89 Robin Estridge, *Eye of the Devil*, DVD. Directed by J. Lee Thompson (United Kingdom and United States: Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1966).
90 Peter Curtis, *The Witches*, DVD. Directed by Cyril Frankel (United Kingdom and United States: 20th Century Fox, 1966).
91 L. Q. Jones and Sean MacGregor, *The Brotherhood of Satan*, DVD. Directed by Bernard McEveety (United States: Columbia Pictures, 1971).
92 George A. Romero, *Season of the Witch*, DVD. Directed by George A. Romero (United States: Jack H. Harris Enterprises, 1973).
93 Wes Bishop and Lee Frost, *Race with the Devil*, DVD. Directed by Jack Starrett (United States: 20th Century Fox, 1976).
94 John Griffith Bowen, *Robin Redbreast*, DVD. Directed by James MacTaggart (United Kingdom: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970).
95 Thomas Tryon, *Dark Secret of Harvest Home*, DVD. Directed by Leo Penn (United States: Universal Television, 1978).
96 Leonard Wolfe, "In Horror Movies Some Things Are Sacred," *The New York Times,* April 4, 1976, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

This depiction was common to a specific group of texts, what will be referred to as New Hollywood Alternative Religion Horror, a cycle of works briefly noted, although not thus defined by theorist David Punter as being, "more designed to cope with specifically contemporary perceptions of terror… [by returning] to age-old themes of Satanism and possession[97]". What is interesting about these texts is, however, not only the very fact of their depiction of these radical faith mechanisms, but, more specifically, how they position these belief systems as viable alternatives, often cloaked in the garb of traditional religion. Using Biblical vernacular or Latin, traditional religious robes, while incorporating traditional religious rites these films offer up an alternative religion that is at times, ironically, even more orthodox that the orthodoxy of the period.

Indeed, following the Second Vatican Council, wherein under the banner *aggiornamento* the Church sought to make the Catholicism more relevant and in accord with other Christian faiths, certain tenets of the faith were undergoing transition, including but not limited to: the preaching of liturgy in the local vernacular versus using the traditional Latin; reforming the hierarchy of the church to account for the rights of individual conscience that moved away from the long established belief that the Church was the only true teacher and disseminator of Truth; and the establishment of dialogue with other faiths and the secular community all of which, for Hugh McLeod, "[P]resented a mainly positive view of contemporary culture"[98]. However, even as the Catholic Church was becoming less orthodox, the religions presented in these films were, at times, articulated as being highly traditional, relying on the historical traditions that are associated with what is referred to in these works as being 'old religions'. This element was also

[97] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 369.
[98] McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 93.

noted in the ways in which these works were received. To return to Wolfe:

> The great frenzies of chaos, creation, disobedience, disaster, solitude and evil, which have been rendered bland in the well-bread church and synagogue services of the 1970s, are restored to their terrifying proportions in the half-light of the movie theatre. Priests from the horror cinema still recite incantations that count; Satan, appears, sacrifices are still offered and refused; creatures still die to save the world[99].

What is interesting in regard to these films is not only how they, in many cases, depict traditionalism as efficacious, but more importantly how these texts ushered in a new era of legitimacy for horror altogether, one in which, as Jancovich suggests, the horror text becomes an increasingly mainstream cultural product. *New York Times* film critic Vincent Canby sums this up when in an article for this popular secular publication he asserts:

> [The devil is] the biggest thing at the box office this summer no matter what you call him: Satanism has always been an interesting, though not a very respectable form of movie myth. The subject was usually left to the 'B' picture makers ... but it was never considered worthy of the attention of the makers of 'A' films. Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*… started to change that. … It is to overemphasize the point, I suspect, to say that this renewed interest in Satanism represents what psychologists and sociologists describe as a need to externalize evil… The fictional process itself is a way of externalizing ideas and feelings, the better to understand them. The existence of Satan is part of our mythology[100].

Indeed, these films offer up a discourse of religion that was, like these films, an inherent part of the socio-political milieu. In thus being, these films, like the Gothic texts that precede them, may be regarded, like their culture, as being equally unsettled. As discussed above, one conclusion presented in certain of these works concerns the efficacy of religious belief which allows for the

[99] Wolfe, "In Horror Movies, Some Things Are Sacred."
[100] Vincent Canby, "Hollywood Has an Appealing New Star, Old Gooseberry," *The New York Times,* June 25, 1976, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

stabilization of agency, regardless of the nature of the religion in question, as is the case with texts like *Rosemary's Baby, Race with the Devil* and *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*. There are, however, an equal number of texts included within this cycle that articulate a battle of traditional versus alternative faiths such as *The Wicker Man*, or even a battle between belief and a lack thereof, as is the case with *Robin Red Breast, The Witches*, and *The Omen*, texts wherein, unlike their classical Hollywood counterparts, there is no one who is truly on the side of good, in a traditional sense.

Thus, the essential research question of this thesis involves an attempt to address how these texts that deal with alternative religion, either in the form of Witchcraft, Satanism or Paganism may be read, as their Gothic predecessors were, as integral components of their cultural milieu, and in being so, formulate, foster and foreground the debates central to this time period with regard to spirituality, faith mechanisms and religion.

Methodology: Primary and Secondary Sources

As this project began with a research question as how and the extent to which these works engage with the religious debates of the 1960s and 1970s, the formulation of a filmography was of primary concern, and from this would follow the delineation of a more specific time frame. With this in mind, *The New York Times* film reviews beginning in 1960 and continuing until 1980 were researched. As the project is discursive in nature, narrowing down to a singular cultural output was equally mandatory, and thus American films formed the basis for the field of study, although several works that may be regarded as American-British co-

productions were also included[101]. The focus of this project was equally limited in terms of genre. However, rather than attempting to define horror, as many other theorists have done and continue to do, the delineation of what may be considered to be inclusive within the genre for this project was based upon reception. Thus, any film which was regarded at the time of release as being a horror film was noted. After further limiting consideration to those texts that seemed to share a thematic concern with alternative religion, including Witchcraft, Satanism, or Paganism, this list was narrowed down into a series of works that represent the larger trends within this discourse: those that focused on a battle between religions, and those that offered up a conflict between spirituality and scepticism. Thus, out of the one-hundred and seven films considered in both filmographies, ten were in fact incorporated into and analysed herein. These films were not, however, viewed in isolation, but were considered as textual constellations. In incorporating not only the films and teleplays themselves, but also their adaptive literary sources, novelizations, and sequels, it will be argued throughout this work that a more privileged reading can be achieved not only in terms of narrative and thematic development, but also, and even more significantly, in terms of socio-political connectivity[102]. This because rather than seeking to evaluate the primacy, validity or fidelity of the 'original' versus the adaptive work, thus focusing upon textual differentiation, this methodological underpinning foregrounds intertextuality and cultural embeddedness. As Thomas Letich suggests in "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory:"

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[101] Many historians including Paul Monaco, David Pirie and Peter Hutchings all agree that the distinction between American and British horror outputs were blurred at this time. This is due not only to many British works being funded and produced by American companies, but also the extent to which those horror films produced in the UK were specifically made to be marketed to international, and specifically American audiences.

[102] This is not to say that all the sequels were considered, nor were all the novels produced in association reviewed. The time frame and periodisation for the thesis limited those works that were considered. For example, while two of *The Omen* films in the series are herein analysed, the final film, being produced in the 1980s was not. Equally while *Rosemary's Baby* as an original novel and an adaptive film were studied, the novel produced later in Ira Levin's career, *Son of Rosemary*, was not incorporated herein.

> Though novels and films may seem at any given moment in the history of narrative theory to have essentially distinctive properties, those properties are functions of their historical moments and not of the media itself[103].

If it could in fact be argued as Leitch does in the aforementioned essay that any text is by definition intertextual in nature, then to study now they expand upon one another rather than how they may be seen as merely possessing unique systems of signification, a primary focus of adaptation studies, may open up insights into how these works in fact reveal, as a constellation of meaning, contemporaneous cultural debates. With this in mind, not only novels and their adaptive filmic counterparts will be engaged, but equally, the primary televisual texts that were critically related to these cinematic works, as well as their adaptive literary sources were also incorporated into the filmography, as a result of this consideration of thematic expansion even if, in some cases, these works were made and marketed outside of the American context, as is the case with the BBC production *Robin Redbreast*.

Once these primary media sources were selected, in order to engage with the connection between these works and their socio-political milieu, archival research of generalised popular publications was enacted to reveal the way in which the culture of the 1960s and 1970s defined and discussed itself and indeed these works. In addition to *Time Magazine* and *The Nation*, publications representing Catholic and Protestant ideologies including the archives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and *Christianity Today* were also analysed to pinpoint not only the critical reception of these texts at the time of their release by both the secular press and the religious media, but also the extent to which questions of traditionalism, religious affiliation, familial cohesion, counter culturalism, feminism and the civil rights movements affected the

[103] Thomas Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory," *Criticism* 45, no. 2 (2003): 153.

culture at large, concerns that are popularly discerned as being key socio-political debates of the 1960s and 1970s.

Next, in terms of secondary texts, in order to discern the intellectual context and debates forwarded during this era, the work of cultural historians and socio-political theorists including Max Weber, Daniel Bell, Marshall Berman, Susan Sontag, Robert Bellah, Theodore Roszak[104] and Christopher Lasch were interrogated. In the service of positioning a theoretical framework, such authors were chosen not only because they were writing of this era within this timeframe, but also as they represent opposing political and cultural ideologies espousing both conservative and liberal agendas. On the one hand, qualitatively judging society based on the effective assimilation of traditionalism amidst the apparent breakdown of 'stabilising' cultural values including: the necessity of religious grounding, and the allure of historical imperatives, while on the other hand exploring the opening up of these institutions that at the time were considered by many to be restrictive especially with regard to minority populations including African-Americans, and women, not to mention those who wished to adhere to and practice alternative religions, or by extension no religion whatsoever. Finally, historians that specifically deal with moral and religious issues of the period, including, but not limited to Beth Bailey's *Sex in the Heartland*[105], and Hugh McLeod's *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* were also engaged to locate connections between traditional religion, alternative faith mechanisms and more specifically debates surrounding an increasing cultural scepticism with regard to the establishment of and need for such orthodoxies.

[104] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).
[105] Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

After this, the relationship between this deep-historical trajectory and discussions regarding the history of media both generally and the horror genre specifically were engaged so as to discover how academia discerned this time frame when it comes to filmic discourse. In addition to more general film history texts including Paul Monaco's *History of the American Cinema: The Sixties*, research into horror, and horror film histories and analyses were also analysed. This study began with a consideration of the Gothic, arguably the root of horror, forwarded by scholars such as Victor Sage and David Punter, and concluded with an analysis of the work of film theorists writing on the horror output of the1960s and 1970s, authors including but not limited to Carol Clover, Robin Wood, Mark Jancovich, Stephen Prince, and Andrew Tudor.

Methodology: Beginnings, Endings and Issues of Periodisation

One of the most difficult considerations for any historian has to do with periodization. Indeed, when considering precedents, scholars have forwarded a veritable plethora of formulations with regard to how the 1960s and 1970s time periods might be delineated[106]. For

[106] One popular concept has been termed the 'Long 1960s', wherein the era is structured around issues related to the civil rights and the counterculture movements. Thus, the 1960s might officially begin, at least within the United States, with the landmark Supreme Court case Brown Versus the Board of Education of 1954, which, arguably, brought issues with regard to equal rights into the public forum in a way not seen since the Reconstruction. The end of the 'Long 1960s' might then equally have been brought about by the 1972 defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the rise of the religious right, two landmarks that signal an end to the 'opening up' ethos characteristic of this era. Another conceptualisation for this timeframe is one that is forwarded within many universities. The span of periodisation in this context is even longer still as the1960s and 1970s are incorporated into what may be regarded as the Post War Era. Indeed, many introductory history and film history courses begin, obviously, with the year 1945, and continue into an elusive and ever increasing 'present.' Still others support a delineation of the this time span as beginning in 1960, with the election of John F Kennedy, a Democratic candidate that, arguably, instilled a sense of hope and new beginnings. Indeed his presidency is often referred to as Camelot, with all that this title implies. If 1960 can then be regarded as the beginning of a golden age, for many historians this period of optimism effectively ended in 1968. It was in this year that an increased concern with violent action as opposed to peaceful resistance was signalled by the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr, and Robert Kennedy, not to mention the media frenzy that brought the unprecedented violence of the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive and the riots of the Chicago National Convention into American living rooms.

the purposes of this thesis, the research that will be engaged, after a careful review of the primary sources as discussed above, commences with the mid-1960s, and more specifically with the year 1963, and concludes in the mid-1970s, and again more specifically with the year 1978. One precedent for this timeframe follows the work of Anthony Tudor, who in his seminal discussion of the horror film entitled *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, suggests that it was in1963 that a change occurred within this discourse, a shift that he refers to as a period of American Decline. During this period, the effects of *Psycho,* arguably, the first modern horror film were truly felt, as he contends:

> The internal incoherence of the supernatural sub-genre reflects a general tendency in sixties horror movies. The period of American Decline illustrates exactly that: the American horror-movie forms are either changed or rendered insignificant"[107].

Indeed, the argument offered up in this thesis relates exactly to this transformation from classic to a modern horror, a shift that, as discussed above, is directly related to debates regarding the efficacy of traditionalism, which were key components of this era and its media output.

Equally, in the larger socio-political context, this year also quite was significant in terms of a shifting traditionalism that resulted in landmarks with regard to religion, and civil rights. One example of this can be located with the death of Pope John XXIII and the election of Pope Paul IV as the head of the Catholic Church. Reform had, admittedly, already begun within this religious institution resulting in the opening of the Second Vatican Council, in October 1962; however, it was in 1963 that the reins of the Council and indeed the Catholic Church overall were effectively handed over to Pope Paul IV. The choice of this new spiritual leader was symptomatic of the larger concerns of the era itself. Indeed, Paul IV

[107] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists,* 56.

was popularly discerned as a man who was instrumental in implementing the certain reforms suggested by the Council and who equally was thought to have fostered improved ecumenical relations between Christian factions including Catholicism, Protestantism and Eastern Orthodox churches. This was also the Pope that appeared and preached in Yankee Stadium, offering a new and more liberal face to Catholicism. Outside of a strictly religious forum, and more specifically in terms of the Counter Culture and civil rights movements, 1963 was also the year in which Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique* was first published, a text that was popularly discerned, although not un-problematically, as being the watershed moment with regard to Second Wave Feminism. Further, this was also the year that Martin Luther King, Jr engaged his March on Washington, culminating in one of the most famous proclamations of his career, the "I Have a Dream" speech.

If 1963, for the reasons specified above, then serves as an opening, with *Eye of the Devil*, produced in 1966 and its literary antecedent, written under the name of *Day of the Arrow*[108], published in 1964, being the first text chronologically to be considered, then the ending date would fall in the mid-1970s, and more specifically 1978. It was during this year that the final text to be herein considered, *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*, was produced. Additionally, within the larger cultural context, this was the time when the religious right was on the upswing, and when conservative candidate Ronald Reagan was beginning his campaign for President, being on the verge of coming into office in 1980, effectively ending what may be regarded as a period of 'getting loose'. This was also the year that Andrew Tudor marks as being the end of the 1970s boom in supernatural themed horror and the beginning of the genre's sustained growth[109].

[108] Philip Loraine, *Day of the Arrow* (Richmond: Valancourt Books, 1964).
[109] This sustained growth, arguably coalescing around an increasing concern with graphic violence as a chief element of horror following the birth of the slasher film with the release of *Halloween* in 1978. Equally, the horror film seemed less concerned with religion, faith or the

Indeed, if the early to mid-1970s was a time of uncertainly and lack of cohesion, then the late 1970s appeared to get its ducks in a proverbial row, signalling a solidifying of the debates and tensions that were inherent to the mid-1960s to mid-1970s era both socio-politically for the United States, and thematically for the horror cinema.

Overview of Thesis Chapters and Sections

Section One

Section one delineates the first type of alternative religion text that will be discussed in this thesis, those works that share a thematic concern with Satanism and Witchcraft, the two being closely aligned and pitted against more traditional religions such as Catholicism and Protestantism. Although it is suggested by media historians and critics alike that this dichotomisation is one involving good versus evil in which the former, Satanic Witchcraft, is regarded as evil, and the latter, traditional Christianity as being good, this section will problematize this notion first by suggesting that these divisions are not as simple as they appear. Indeed, in being New Hollywood Alternative Religion Horror texts, those works discussed in this section challenge the notion of a central conflict, arguably inherent to most classical horror narratives in which religious traditionalism and its underpinnings are regarded as being efficacious to stabilise the self and by extension society, and that as a result good always overcomes evil. This because in most instances, Satanism is configured as being traditional and in being coterminous with Christianity in adopting links to both historical imperatives and generational legacies. It is this 'alternative' orthodoxy that is then pitted not against Christianity, but on the contrary, seen to be the antithesis of a condition of disbelief and disconnectedness inherent

occult after the release of *The Amityville Horror* in 1979.

to modernity as an ethos. In this way, this group of films discusses and disseminates contemporaneous cultural debates with regard to the apparent efficacy of both modernity and traditionalism within this period.

Chapter One discusses the adapted film and original literary source for the textual constellation *Rosemary's Baby* with regard to specific modernity and its concerns regarding the role of consumerism in providing a grounding for the individual and by extension the society. In this film and novel, it will be suggested, the central conflict is not one of good versus evil, or even traditional versus alternative faith mechanism, but instead belief versus disbelief.

Chapter Two focuses upon the first film in *The Omen Trilogy* and the subsequent novelisation written by the screenplay writer of *The Omen*. As with the film and novel versions of *Rosemary's Baby,* and potentially arising out of a culture at the crux of the modern and postmodern eras, *The Omen* in both forms problematizes the conflict of good versus evil and traditionalism versus modernity by aligning Catholicism and Satanism as being equally traditional with regard specifically to the concept of predestination, a trope present, as articulated in this textual constellation, in both the more traditional faith and its more alternative model.

Chapter Three deals with several other horror texts that share a similar thematic concern with the works discussed above. Included in this analysis are the film and literary versions of *The Witches*, the film *Race with the Devil*, and another cinematic work entitled *The Brotherhood of Satan*. Once again, these three films not only present a narrative dichotomy of belief versus scepticism, as opposed to a more traditional conflict of good versus evil, but also

these texts equally reveal a focus upon a uniquely modern construct: the cult of youth, which will be figured in to this cultural conundrum wherein the individual searches for a stable mechanism for identification during a time of vast social, political and cultural paradigmatic shift.

Section Two

Section Two is concerned with a second group of works that offer up a consideration of Paganism during a time wherein contemporaneous cultural debates fostered by the Counter Culture movement questioned the role and efficacy of traditionalism. On the one hand, it was believed that historical imperatives such as family and religion provided grounding, while on the other these self-same structures were located as being restrictive and repressive, thus providing a query as to the necessity for stabilisation at all. In addressing a spirituality essentially based upon a worship of nature, these texts at once align and differentiate the Pagan from the back to earth movement, as both simultaneously divorce themselves from the modern urban mecca while at the same time concomitantly diverge in terms of the popular 'hippie' ethos of getting loose.

Chapter Four involves an analysis of two texts that share a thematic concern with the pagan rites and rituals as located and discussed by Sir James Frazer in his seminal anthropological text T*he Golden Bough*. Textual constellations such as *Eye of the Devil* and its literary antecedent *Day of the Arrow* as well as the BBC Play for Today instalment *Robin Redbreast* are herein discussed as similarly foregrounding the ways in which these articulations of pagan spirituality may be connected to the Counter Culture of the mid-1960s and 1970s while at the same time conflicting with this ethos in

presenting the pagan as being inherently stratified, historically rooted and in being a faith based upon propitiation and thus foregrounds the necessity of bloodletting and personal sacrifice versus any foregrounding self-interest or self-preservation.

Chapter Five brings the discussion of the three works discussed in the previous chapter together by suggesting their connection to an infamous filmic work entitled *The Wicker Man*, especially with regard to articulations of paganism and the enacting a return to nature. Whereas the aforementioned texts, like those discussed in the subsequent section pit modern scepticism against alternative orthodox religions, however, *The Wicker Man* is unique in concerning itself with a battle of faiths, between the Pagan and the Protestant. In being regarded as equally efficacious, this text and its novelisation written by the filmic screenplay writer and director suggest an opening up of religious alternatives, a contemporaneous concern in terms of religious affiliation present following paradigmatic shifts in orthodoxy following the Second Vatican Council.

Chapter Six discusses two American Pagan works, *The Season of the Witch, The Dark Secret of Harvest Home* and its adaptive literary text *Harvest Home* in light of feminist philosophies both within film studies and the wider socio-polity. In this chapter, as is the case with all of the discussions throughout this thesis, simple dichotomies including traditionalism and patriarchy on the one hand, and modern feminism are problematized and complicated through an analysis of these works, the intellectual context wherein they were produced and the ways in which these texts were received by the religious and secular popular press alike.

Section One: Witchcraft and Satanism as Alternative Religious Discourses in 1960s and 1970s Horror

All the endings in my life
rise up against me
like that sea of troubles
Shakespeare mixed
with metaphors;
like Vikings in their boats
singing Wagner,
like witches
burning at
the stake--
I submit
to my fate.

From *Love Spell: Against Endings*
by Erica Jong[110]

[110] Erica Jong, "Love Spell: Against Endings," in *Witches*, ed. Erica Jong (New York: Abrams, 1999).

"Cinema gives you the chance of making a play into something that is real, and not stagey, so that it's like life… You have the weather around you, the night or the sun, you can step out of the door even if you don't want to 'open it up' as they say." Roman Polanski[111]

"When I suggested that Vidal Sassoon himself should come to Hollywood to cut Mia's hair, Bill Castle decided to hype the occasion into a spectacular 'photo' opportunity for the Hollywood Press. Bleachers were set up on a sound stage, and there in front of photographers and TV crews, Vidal removed Mia's locks. Throughout, like the true hippie she was, Mia kept up a verbal assault on the press for covering such a minor function instead of applying their investigative energies to the plight of the deprived and underprivileged American Indians." Roman Polanski on the role of commercialism during the filming of *Rosemary's Baby*[112]

Chapter One: Look Ro, It's The Pope at Yankee Stadium. Christ What a Mob: Modernity, Commodification and Spiritual Affiliation in *Rosemary's Baby*

Introduction

In the early scenes of the film *Rosemary's Baby* protagonist Rosemary Woodhouse is depicted as being wholly consumed with the setting up of her small nuclear family's domestic space. She supervises the painters as they "brighten up her home tremendously"[113] through the application of white paint to the natural dark wood that adorns the interiors; unwraps and places costly and newly purchased furnishings; hangs curtains; designs cushions; and reads edition after edition of *House Beautiful Magazine* to come up with the latest interior design techniques. The only time for pause in her homemaking comes first when she stops to watch her husband's television commercial for the

111 David Thompson, "I Make Films for Adults," *Sight and Sound 5*, no. 4 (1995): 6.
112 *Ibid*.
113 Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*.

"swinging world of Yamaha"[114], and then later when she is interrupted by a nosy neighbour, Minnie Castevet, who comes to see the apartment which has recently been vacated by the matron's dear and now deceased friend. Commenting on the brightness of the home, and its novel design, Minnie flatters Rosemary even as she questions the cost of these adornments. While sitting at the kitchen table, uniquely placed as a result of an ad in the aforementioned publication, Castevet further dons her glasses to read the price stickers on the cans that Rosemary is in the process of arranging in her cupboard. In this way, from early on in this text, the Woodhouse family seems to be wholly involved with ushering in the new, covering the old, and establishing themselves vis a vis expensive and fashionably arranged accoutrements all thanks to the support of the media which provides suggestions for what to buy and where it should go.

While this young couple relies upon these non-traditional, consumerist, and ultimately individualistic methods of identification akin to what may be deemed an ethos of modernity, Minnie and her "hubby" Roman, in being concerned with both the saving of money, arguably a characteristic of the traditional Puritan ethic, and also with the providing of a sense of community through, as will be seen in the narrative progression of *Rosemary's Baby*, the foundation of an alternative orthodox religious congregation, may be regarded as both upholding the old, the traditional, while equally espousing a Counter Culture concern with the occult. Indeed, as will be argued below, it is this essential conflict of the old versus the new, and the traditional versus the modern that is not only endemic to the film, as the conflict of the protagonists and antagonists play out as an integral part of the narrative

[114] *Ibid.*

development, but also to the culture out of which this work was formed.

With these relationships in mind, this chapter will explore the film and literary versions of *Rosemary's Baby* in light of these aforementioned contemporaneous cultural debates regarding the role and efficacy of the old and the orthodox, versus the new and the modern by offering up of a conflict between novel defining mechanisms such as commercialism on the one hand and traditional historical imperatives such as the family and religious congregationalism on the other. Equally, in providing an aesthetic concern with the Gothic, and thus foregrounding conventions such as enclosure, isolation and the acceptance of the possibility of the supernatural, all couched within a setting that is inherently modern in being an urban mecca, this work provides an embodiment of the essential debates of the era in which it was produced not only thematically, but formally as well. Indeed, as a text that rejects traditionalism in the form of historical traditional religious connectivity while equally foregrounding the stabilizing effects of historic roots, *Rosemary's Baby* acts as a tool for the dissemination of the debates, concerns and fears associated not only with modernity but equally with the entrenchment of a postmodern ethos, for as David Punter suggests, "Fear is at its fiercest when it is seen to invade the everyday contemporary world"[115].

Methodology

In order to establish the connections between these texts and their larger socio-political milieu, this analysis will offer up a discussion of the key debates formed during the era of the mid-1960s and

115 Punter, *The Literature of Terror, 4*.

1970s so as to establish a framework toward the understanding of this intellectual context. The main focus will be upon concerns regarding the end of the modernist era as forwarded by theorists writing at the time such as Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch and Marshall Berman, who while adhering to opposing political ideologies, respectively being aligned to conservative and liberal agendas, nonetheless arrive at similar conclusions with regard to the importance of traditionalism, specifically religion, history and community in establishing a cohesive culture.

Connections between these debates and the artistic output of the era will further be supported by a textual analysis of the film and the novel versions of *Rosemary's Baby* in order to locate the thematic and aesthetic concerns with the culture of commodification and the way in which spirituality functions to provide a grounding mechanism for the building of a stable sense of self agency. Finally, to achieve a discursive reading of these works, the critical responses published at the time of the film and novel's release in both the secular and religious popular media will be addressed, reviews such as those published in respected journals including *The New York Times*, and the National Catholic Office of Motion Pictures (formerly The National League of Decency) for indeed, to engage with the reception of these works in the service of textual analysis, lends insight into the way in which the film and novel alike were regarded by the culture, and the ways in which this text, as a constellation of novel and adaptive film interrogates the socio-political milieu out of which it arose.

The Old and the New: Modern Debates Regarding the Efficacy of Traditionalism

Robert Bellah argues in *Habits of the Heart* that within the context of the United States, religion was one of the most pervasive defining mechanisms that not only established a sense of self, but equally a sense of community. He suggests, "Religion is one of the most important of the many ways in which Americans 'get involved' in the life of their community and society"[116]. However, even given this tendency to establish ones-self in terms of religious affiliation, religion itself was undergoing vast paradigmatic shifts during this period away from a more traditional framework and toward a more personal approach that seemed to be more appropriate not only to the contemporaneous culture, as described above, but equally to the ethos of radical American individualism overall. Bellah goes on to assert:

> The American pattern of privatizing religion while at the same time allowing it some public functions has proven highly compatible with the religious pluralism that has characterized America from the colonial period and grown more and more pronounced…. [R]eligion is perceived as a matter of individual choice[117].

This configuration and relationship to religion as being increasingly individual as opposed to organizational, however, was not merely symptomatic of an ethos inherent to an American ideology, but also equally articulated more specific contemporaneous cultural debates forwarded during the mid-1960s and 1970s period as to whether this socio-political transition from the public to the private, from the communal to the personal would in fact result in an increased destabilization of the self, a condition that might in fact, ironically, elicit a return to a traditionalism, a looking back toward the orthodoxies of the past or, alternatively, a continued and potentially increased embrace of a forward-looking ethos that was, in many ways, an inherent element of the modern condition. On the one hand, traditionalism was regarded to possess positive

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[116] Bellah, *Habits of the Heart, 219.*
[117] *Ibid* , 225.

attributes offering mechanisms of stabilization through the foregrounding of tools of historic cohesion, imperatives such as orthodox religion, and familial legacy that sought to ground through mechanisms of unification. However, such stabilizing influences were equally regarded as being stultifying and repressive even as their rejection could potentially lead to an increasingly fragmented society and by extension the individual living within it. As Marshall Berman suggests in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*:

> This drive [to go on endlessly creating the world anew] draws all modern men and women into its orbit, and forces us to grapple with the question of what is essential, what is meaningful, what is real in the maelstrom in which we move and live[118].

For Berman, the American metropolis may be regarded as a signifier of and a locus for these debates. On the one hand, this urban environment becomes a symbol for the vigour, variety and richness of life that is celebrated by modernity and around which, arguably, this ethos crystallized and was furthered. However, this diversity could also equally breed an underlying traditionalist sentiment, as Berman goes on to suggest:

> Beneath [this] modernist text is an anti-modern subtext, a sort of undertow of nostalgia for a family and a neighbourhood in which the self could be securely embedded, a solid refuge against all the dangerous currents of freedom and ambiguity in which all modern men are caught up[119].

Within this urban landscape, not only could a nostalgia for family and neighbourhood be located, as is suggested above, but there could equally exist the potential for a concomitant establishment of orthodox mechanisms of faith which, arguably, in tandem ground both the private and the public realms[120]. Indeed, it was traditional

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[118] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso), 288.
[119] *Ibid*, 324.
[120] What is interesting from a extra-diegetic standpoint is how the very making of this film, that will be argued to be the first truly modern horror enacted the very end-result that a modern sensibility suggests, for ironically as a product of the very making of the film itself, the real-life marriage of Mia Farrow to Frank Sinatra dissolved under the guise of jealousy and suspicion on the part of both husband and wife.

religion that historically held the family together, and equally the religious congregation that provided a sense of community wherein the family could thrive. According to authors like Hugh McLeod in *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, religion allowed for the establishment of, "tightly knit subcultures with highly distinctive dogmatic beliefs"[121], thus providing a basis for a shared sense of stability.

Thus, endemic to the debates furthered and foregrounded during the mid-1960s and 1970s is the contrasting concern of the lure of new on the one hand, which allows for the freedom of self-discovery and re-invention within an increasingly urban landscape, characteristic of modernity, and the pull of the old on the other, which under the guise of a traditional ethos, has historically acted as a mechanism for stability. This dichotomy of the staid versus the novel, however, is not a new conflict either in terms of culture or its output. Indeed, as these concerns affected the era of the mid-1960s and 1970s, existing at the crux of the modern and postmodern periods, they equally became a concern at the inception of the modernist era, and it was these very themes that were articulated at that historical moment through an artistic discourse known as the Gothic.

This literary genre involves itself with an attempt to recapture history, and thus even as it provides a critique for mechanisms of traditionalism such as orthodox Catholicism, it equally acts to set itself up in opposition to the tenets of modernity. As David Punter suggests in *The Literature of Terror*, this fictional genre, "strove to eschew the contemporary world, the world of commerce and the middle class"[122]. Thus, just as the 1960s and 1970s represented

[121] McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 12.
[122] Punter, *The Literature of Terror* ,10.

an era of paradigmatic shift that debated the efficacy of the old and the traditional in favour of the lure of the new, and the novel, so too was the 18th century embroiled in a similar conundrum, an ironic modernist historical continuum. As Punter suggests:

> The 18th century was the great era of rationalism and the Enlightenment… [and] the Enlightenment saw itself as the bearer of a radically progressive philosophy. Eschewing all reliance on faith and revealed religion, it declared itself in favour of scientific progress toward knowledge[123].

With the attempt to bring everything under the rational control of that which came before, the historic traditions that once acted as mechanisms of stabilisation, were questioned as to their social, political and cultural relevance, and if in fact the contemporary world was one in which a new era of ordered rationalism prevailed above all else, then the Gothic, by ushering in a thematic concern with the chaotic supernatural, seemed to literally play devil's advocate for according to Punter, "Fear is recognised as the primary means by which the dictates of reason can be bypassed"[124].

Like these debates regarding the place and efficacy of religion as a mechanism that in involving traditionalism, and the supernatural were pitted against a rationalistic future-focused modernity, another element of ambiguity offered up at the inception and the culmination of the modernist era had to do with the role of commodification as a tool for socio-political and individual grounding. Acquisitiveness, arguably, was seen throughout the modern period as a novel mechanism toward self-identification, and it was this ability to define oneself anew that was contrasted with more traditional elements of stabilisation, namely religious, familial and generational legacy, described above. On the one

123 *Ibid*, 26.
124 *Ibid*, 45.

hand, such a freeing up of status and class was in many ways liberating for those without traditional position, while on the other, it equally offered a possibility of increased insecurity should this acquisitive impulse fail to bear fruit. As Daniel Bell argues in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, an economic ethos based upon the delayed gratification inherent to the traditional Protestant ethic, what he defines as 'bourgeois capitalism,' as it effectively surrendered to modernity, so enacted a neo-capitalist impulse that brought with it incredible opportunity for monetary growth and an increase of status even as it destroyed the "keystone of character unleashed by the revolution of the consumer-durable culture"[125]. For Daniel Bell and Christopher Lasch, religious orthodoxy is viral not only because it serves as one of the chief mechanisms whereby society is held together, and made meaningful but also because it fostered a belief in something outside the realm of the self and self-interest.

Indeed, for these theorists, not only does the faith community ground and stabilise, it also acts to provide a curb that sets limits to individual action, thus functioning as a mechanism of restraint. If there is one key to a healthy culture it is, for Daniel Bell, the establishment of limits, and the contradiction to which he alludes in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, lies in the fact that the modern culture of the mid-1960s and 1970s finds itself at the pinnacle of a trajectory that has effectively effaced all limitations that a healthy culture must necessarily establish. Without limitations posed from without by cultural norms and mores, without a moral compass and past tradition to form a basis for the comprehension of what is acceptable, arguably, human beings begin to establish their own forms of identification based upon wholly self-interested mechanisms within which the individual seeks

[125] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 295.

gratification, self-expression, and a means whereby their cultural worth can in turn be ascribed. Bell argues:

> [T]he cultural realm is one of self-expression and self-gratification. It is anti-institutional and antinomian in that the individual is taken to be the measure of satisfaction … his feelings, sentiments, and judgments [and] not some objective standard[126].

Thus, in the modern condition, the self and selfish desires begin to take precedence in the subjective structuring of identity.

This becomes problematic from a societal point of view because, for Bell, if an individual becomes ruled by wants and not needs, or when the two become undifferentiated, then there cannot be any ultimate satisfaction, for whereas needs can be sated (if one is hungry, one eats; tired, one sleeps) desires are by definition limitless. Bell goes on to suggest that it is this freedom of self-actualization that becomes the zeitgeist of modern culture as the self in a secular modernist culture can only be configured without constraint, with a denial of limit or boundary. This arrangement, finally, leads not to the establishment of a secure sense of self agency, but on the contrary, to one that is eternally seeking: for meaning, for experience and for gratification. Furthermore, any self-regulating economic system, like a free-market capitalist system, when freed from external governmental controls, Bell argues, runs the risk of fostering the self-same problematic identification that seeks to define what one is with what one has versus where one comes from or what one does, due to an increased focus on commodities.

In the past, these tendencies, at least within the United States, have, arguably, been curbed by ascetic Protestant religions, such as Puritanism which instilled the belief that the moral man was one who toiled and delayed satisfaction in order to please God and increase

126 *Ibid*, XVII.

his kingdom, rather than one who was simply acquisitive. Bell suggests:

> [T]hese appetites drive him ferociously to achieve his desires. In a modern society, the engine of appetite is the increased standard of living and the diversity of products that make up so much of the splendid colour of life[127].

Thus, for Bell, traditional religion held the radical individualist in check and hampered any hedonistic tendencies. However, once appetites had been awakened, and in turn were fostered and increased by a society that links accumulation with meaning and success, agency in and of itself became just another commodity to be bought and sold. It is thus that Americans were, for Bell and others, detached from their traditions, their faith and ultimately each other, thus becoming the very epitome of the modern man, thus bringing into question the benefits and detriments of a socio-political loosening of traditional constraints. Whereas breaking the bonds of historical imperatives such as family and religion could potentially result in an increased freedom, equally such a loosening could elicit a de-stabilisation of the very individual that would most benefit from a lack of such constraints when it comes to the role of orthodoxy.

Rosemary's Baby and the Role of the Acquisitive Impulse

These debates regarding the role of traditional religion and commodification within the modern context are, arguably, represented by the Woodhouse family, the textual protagonists in both the cinematic and literary versions of *Rosemary's Baby*. Indeed, both as an of horror film and novel, this is a text that appears to support a modernist agenda in being structured around a young urbanite couple who have ostensibly thrown off the stifling trappings of family and religion in order to establish a free and unrestricted new

[127] *Ibid*, 22.

life in a quintessential modernist metropolis, namely New York City. Guy Woodhouse, one of the narrative main characters, is an up and coming theatrical actor who has thrown off his familial legacy both by changing his name, and also by relocating to the Big Apple, while his young and pretty spouse, Rosemary, a housewife, is concerned with the forwarding of their hipster image through equally rejecting her traditional mid-western upbringing in the service of the setting up of the perfect modern home replete with all the trappings, including herself. Indeed, both versions of the text offer up a couple who are chiefly identified and gratified by their own materiality at the expense of everything else. This reliance upon commodities is revealed by a prevalence of references to advertising, which, arguably, in the absence of any other authentic means of identification, first creates and then builds upon an endless desire for acquisition whereby the individual may be judged. This relationship between acquisitiveness and self-worth is foregrounded from the moment the protagonists are introduced both in the novel and also in the film.

In one of the opening scenes of the movie, the couple are shown a vacancy in the historic and more importantly desirable Bramford apartment house. In doing so, the caretaker of the property enquires as to Guy's profession, and after finding him to be an actor, asks if he has been in any movies. Rosemary admits that her husband has not, but instead has appeared in plays, on television and in advertisements. The landlord replies, "That's where the money is, isn't it, commercials?" Guy retorts, "Yes and the artistic thrill too"[128]. Although the comment was, admittedly, made tongue in cheek, it is later revealed that it is in fact through these commercials, and not more high-art endeavours that the Woodhouses have managed to prosper. In the novel version, Levin writes:

[128] Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 5.

In 1964, Guy had done a series of Anacin commercials that, shown time and time again, had earned him eighteen thousand dollars and was still producing a sizable income[129].

This self-same success is equally revealed in the film, as described in the introduction to this chapter, as Guy's Yamaha advert is portrayed on screen.

Not only is the livelihood of this young urbanite couple derived from commercialism, additionally, consumer magazines, as suggested above, influence Rosemary and Guy both in the way that they live and also in the choices that they make. This is indicated not only by Rosemary taking clippings from *House Beautiful* for ideas in decorating, but equally by her getting the 'very in' haircut from top stylist Vidal Sassoon whose work was made internationally famous by media pop icon Twiggy. Not only is Rosemary prey to the allure of the consumerist media culture, however, Guy is also equally affected, as it is noted in both versions of the text. Indeed, not only is his income derived from adverts, his fashion choices are also made as a result of media advertising, as evidenced by his buying the latest shirt that was promoted by the *New Yorker*.

It is this connection between commodification and identification that is made manifest in the aforementioned analysis of this textual universe, and one that is specifically noted in the critical analysis of the film and literary text. In an essay entitled "Post-Fordism, Postmodernism, and Paranoia: The Dominance of the Horror Genre in Contemporary Literature," Mark Jancovich suggests:

Unlike the film, the novel is saturated with references to the media and media events. It presents a social world in which the population is constantly being… told what to think and how to behave[130].

However, whereas the novel does indeed present these issues of media influence, as suggested above, the film does so as well and

[129] *Ibid.*, 21.
[130] Jancovich, "Post-Fordism," 89.

arguably, to an even greater extent as evidenced by the film's foregrounding of a concern with commercials, television, and the press as mechanisms for the building of a self-agency, while at the same time leaving out any discussion of familial bonds, something that the novel does not do. It could, in fact, be argued that it is not the similarities, but the way in which certain elements of the filmic adaptation have diverged from the novel that are of particular interest when it comes to a revelation of these debates.

First, in changing Guy Woodhouse's big financial success from a commercial for Anacin, to one for a motorcycle, Polanski in the film foregrounds the consumerist desire not for things that one needs, like medicine, but things that one simply wants; arguably no one **needs** a Yamaha. Additionally, another deviation between the two texts occurs in the scheduled meeting place for Rosemary and her close friend and mentor Edward Hutchens (Hutch). Once Hutch discovers the fact that Rosemary might be prey to a satanic cult, he schedules to meet Rosemary at the Time and Life Building, whereas in the novel, the rendezvous point is to be the Seagram Building. Although Seagram's Gin is not a necessity of life, *Time* and *Life* Magazines are particularly significant with regard to issues of acquisition within a modern context because they represent key vehicles for the transformation and dissemination of modernist middle class values. Indeed, it is the middle-class that is most affected by consumerism as self-definition because this group is not automatically positioned in powerful roles, as are the aristocracy, nor is this group chiefly concerned with subsistence, as are the lower classes. Daniel Bell suggests that *Time Magazine* became not unlike a Bible for the disenfranchised middle class. He argues:

The genius of Henry Luce… was to take traditional American values, the belief in God, in work, in achievement, and to translate these,

through the idiom of the coming urban civilization into the creed of American destiny[131].

This transition from traditionalism to consumerism is also directly referenced with Guy's reaction to the Papal visit to Yankee stadium, when he suggests of the event, simply, "Christ what a mob… this would be a great spot for my Yamaha commercial"[132]. It would appear as if faith has become, for these characters, just another media hype wherein the Bible has been transformed into a popular media publication. Not only this, but adhering to an identification based upon cultural commodification, many socio-political theorists have argued that the result is one of isolation rather than the attainment of a sense of the communal. According to Robert Bellah:

> The family is the core of the private sphere, whose aim is not to link individuals to the public world, but to avoid it as far as possible. In our commercial culture-culture, consumerism, with all its temptations, and television, with its examples augment this tendency[133].

Thus, the family, a dominant force in the private sphere, it could be argued, is more or less relegated to this space, isolated from a larger sense of community such as that which is established by traditional institutions such as the church and other such faith-based mechanisms of social and cultural unification.

The Role of Religion and the Lure of Traditionalism in *Rosemary's Baby*

In the context of *Rosemary's Baby*, this paradigmatic shift away from orthodoxy to commodification is particularly telling, because it is, in fact, specifically traditional spiritual affiliation that acts as a grounding tool for the apparent villains of the film. Just as protagonists Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse, in the novel and the film, are

131 Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 76.
132 Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*.
133 Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, 112.

portrayed as being wholly defined by what they have as opposed to who they are and where they come from, the Castevets, as antagonists, represent the antithesis of this potentially isolating personal crisis. Roman Castevet, as revealed in both the novel and its filmic adaptation, was born in the apartment in which he currently resides, and is carrying on his father's work in attempting to conjure the living Devil. Minnie, his wife, is a devoted partner, who aids him by taking care of his physical needs, cooking cleaning and the like, and supports his spirituality through offering advice and counsel as regards important decisions made by his coven. Surrounding the Castevets, in the Bramford apartment house, are Roman's religious followers, members of his spiritual circle who unquestionably support the couple and their mission, thus forming a connected, and committed religious community. In this way, the Castevets are portrayed, as is suggested by Tony Williams in *Hearths of Darkness,* as being both spiritually and historically connected to a traditional mechanism of faith:

> Satanists [practice] another older religious order, having its own religious rites alongside the Catholic ones. The Castevets represent the historical, knowing older thespians, practicing an ancient religion… Satanism and Catholicism presented as equally conservative[134].

Beverle Houston and Marsha Kinder, like Williams, discuss *Rosemary's Baby* as articulating an analogous relationship between Satanism and Christianity as being a conflation of myth:

> The story takes the traditional Christ myth and dresses it in its equally traditional Satanic disguise. The… myth parallels the New Testament, with the divine figure as father of the child, Rosemary as the chosen vessel, the starting of the new era with the birth of the messiah, and the adoration of the child[135].

This allusion to the connectivity between Satanism and Catholicism as being orthodox faiths can, in fact, be found to be a key trope

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[134] Tony Williams, *Hearths of Darkness*, 102.
[135] Beverly Houston and Marsha Kinder, *Close-up, A Critical Perspective on Film* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 17.

throughout both the novel and the film thus furthering the debate as to the nature of traditional religion as being an efficacious mechanism for the stabilization of self and by extension society[136].

This is first revealed through the way in which the conception of the Antichrist is depicted. In a dream sequence wherein Rosemary is seduced and procreates with Satan so as to conceive the Anti-Christ, the novel relates:

> Guy came in and began making love to her. He stroked her with both hands- a long, relishing stroke that began at her bound wrists, slid down over her arms, breasts, and loins, and became a voluptuous tickling between her legs. He repeated the exciting stroke again and again… and when she was ready, more than ready, he slipped a hand in under her buttocks, raised them and, lodged his hardness against her, and pushed it powerfully in… Brutally, rhythmically, he drove his new hugeness. The pope came in… "Jackie tells me you have been bitten by a mouse", he said. "Yes" Rosemary said, "That's why I didn't come to see you". She spoke sadly so he wouldn't suspect she had just had an orgasm. "Am I forgiven father?" she asked. "Absolutely", he answered[137].

This scene is also portrayed by Roman Polanski in his film version in a way that closely approximates the original text, except without mention of the size of the Devil's member, or the fact that Rosemary has an orgasm as the result of it.

Indeed, the very fact of the Devil, a spirit, assuming a corporeal form to procreate with a mortal woman is an obvious connection to the traditional Christianity regarding the conception of the Christ, as Mary is impregnated by The Holy Ghost, and thus conceives Jesus, in a pure, virgin birth. Even though this demonic impregnation is obviously much more overtly sexualised, there still

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[136] Although whether religious discourse can be likened to a myth is another debatable issue

[137] Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 83.

remains a strong connection to its divine counterpart as is revealed in the first chapter of Luke, versus 26 through 38:

> And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou amongst women. And when she saw *him* she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS… Then Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God[138].

This establishment of Satanism as a traditional faith by association can also be drawn from the film and novel's depiction of the birth of the Anti-Christ taking place in a manger replete with gift-bearing travellers who have conducted a pilgrimage to witness the new-born saviour, a scene that resonates as being akin to the depiction of the gifts of the magi from the Bible. Finally, further cementing this relationship, yet another connection to the nativity scene can be drawn from the novel version of *Rosemary's Baby* as the literary text links the location of the birth of Jesus to the location where Adrian Castevet, Sr., Roman's father, met his death. The narrative reveals, "Do you know where Adrian Marcato died? In a stable on Corfu because they wouldn't let him into the hotel. 'No room at the inn.' So he died in the stable"[139]. In this way the birth of the Christ and the death of he who would usher in the Antichrist are conflated.

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[138] *The Holy Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 864.
[139] Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 165.

The resonance of the way in which this scene connects Satanism to Catholicism from a societal standpoint is also noted in the analysis of the film by Kinder and Houston:

> In the extraordinarily powerful scene where Rosemary conceives the son of Satan, there is a merging of images from at least three mythologies: Satan and the witches from the demonic, the Pope and Michelangelo's creation of Adam from traditional Christianity, and the Kennedyesque yachting captain from the modern myth of power[140].

However, while viewing these 'mythologies' as being inherently separate and mutually exclusive, they may actually be regarded as being interconnected, something that these authors fail to suggest. All of the aforementioned representations may indeed be seen to be archetypes of conservative traditionally grounded values, just as orthodox religion may be seen to be. The reference to Jack Kennedy in the hallucinatory dream, for example, acts as a similar reference to that of the virgin birth and the gifts of the magi: a metaphor for foregrounding the importance of faith to culture. Indeed, not only was Kennedy the first Catholic President of The United States, but once elected, continued to point to the prominence of religious affiliation at the time. In his Presidential inaugural address delivered on 20 January 1960, for example, Kennedy makes manifest his belief in tradition and traditional values:

> We observe today not a victory of a party, but a celebration of freedom -- symbolizing an end, as well as a beginning -- signifying renewal, as well as change…. The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty in all forms of human life. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own[141].

The President insisted that Americans begin to realize their potential that was inherited from the revolutionary war, suggesting that to look

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[140] Houston and Kinder, *Critical Perspective*, 19.
[141] John F. Kennedy, 1961 Inaugural Address, *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/BqXIEM9F4024ntFl7SVAjA.aspx (accessed October 19, 2015).

to the traditions of the past would secure the future of the country. Finally, by invoking the Creator, Kennedy seemed to have not only a social and political imperative, but a moral one as well, a belief that was rooted in religion as much as it was rooted in historical nationalism. Indeed, the values that the symbol, if not the man, seemed to embody are lost in the protagonists in both the novel and the film *Rosemary's Baby*[142].

It is this representation of Satanism as being conservative religious institution that has equally been alluded to, even though not thoroughly analysed, by authors such as Carol Clover and Mark Jancovich. When discussing the horror film of the1960s and 1970s period, Clover, in her seminal text, *Men Women and Chainsaws* suggests of the religious thematic of the horror film of the period overall:

> Black magic… refers to Satanism, voodoo, spiritualism, and folk variants of Roman Catholicism. A world of crosses, holy water, séances, candles, prayer, exorcism, strings of garlic, beheaded chickens, and the like[143].

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[142] This focus does not, however, lie solely in the mythology as related to the fundamental texts of Christianity, but also extends to the depiction of religious symbolism offered through artistic representation and dream condensation. First, in a scene from both the film and the novel, Rosemary falls into a drug-induced hallucination before and during her rape. As she vacillates in and out of consciousness, she begins to imagine scenes from the Sistine Chapel wherein God breathes life into Adam. Significantly, the fall of this first divine progeny results in the necessity of the second coming, an event that is doubled at the conclusion of the film with the birth of Adrian / Andrew, the Anti-Christ. This connection between faiths is also depicted in both versions of the text when Rosemary, once again teetering on the verge of reality, overhears Minnie Castevet speaking through the wall. Minnie's voice is incorporated into Rosemary's dream of her former Catholic school. The words her neighbor speaks become that of the nun in the dream. This time the conflation is one of key religious figures, Minnie, the wife of the head of the satanic cabal, and the Catholic nun, a wife of Christ. Likewise, to return to Rosemary's hallucination, yet another visual metaphor that symbolically links Satanism to its Christian other comes in the form of the Pope, leader and figurehead of the Catholic Church, who proffers his ring for Rosemary to kiss, an item revealed to be an exact replica of an ancient bauble reputed to be a satanic 'good luck charm.' This symbol also appears later in the novel version of the narrative as well, when upon confirmation of her pregnancy, Rosemary, a lapsed Catholic, desires to reconnect with her faith, thus dons the charm for protection in much the same way as a Catholic might turn to a rosary. The novel suggests of this conflation of symbols, "If only prayer were still possible! How nice it would be to hold a crucifix again and have God's ear: ask him for safe passage though the eight more months ahead… Suddenly she remembered the good luck charm, the ball of tannis root; and foolish or not, wanted it—no needed it around her neck."

[143] Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 66.

While Mark Jancovich goes on to argue, more specifically of Ira Levin's version of *Rosemary's Baby*, "The novel does not present a conflict…between the Christian values of the Catholic Church and the demonic values of the coven"[144].

Although all three of these authors: Williams, Clover and Jancovich alike, allude to the conservative nature of Satanism as it is presented in the mid-1960s and 1970s horror film generally, and in *Rosemary's Baby* specifically, they do not go into much detail with regard to why this might be considered to be so. This is because, for these authors specifically, as for the overall academic discourse surrounding this time period and the horror texts produced therein, a religious thematic does not serve as a primary concern, even though at this moment in time, the efficacy of traditional spiritual affiliation, as discussed above, was under heated debate within the United States. Indeed, rather than simply being an example of a repressive institution rejected by the ethos of modernity, a theory espoused by not only Williams, Clover and Jancovich, but equally by Robin Wood, Vivian Sobchack and Barbara Creed, it is specifically traditional religion, represented in the unlikely guise of Satanism, that is instead defined as being the chief mechanism of grounding for the Castevets. Thus, while the loss of religion, in the form of a more traditional faith, namely Catholicism, results in the isolation and unhinging of the protagonist, Rosemary, it is the affiliation to religious orthodoxy that allows for the stabilisation of the individual, in this case the Castevets, a grounding that is strong enough to potentially take over the world, thus forwarding contemporaneous debates as to the necessity of traditional spiritual affiliation for the stabilisation of not only the self, but, arguably, for the grounding of society overall.

144 Mark Jancovich, *Horror* (London: Batsford, 1992), 89.

The Religious Reception of *Rosemary's Baby*

It has thus been suggested using textual analysis that the connection between and conflation of Catholicism and Satanism is reiterated continually throughout the novel and the film versions of *Rosemary's Baby*, and indeed, when analysing the reception of the film, it could be argued that it is specifically this religious configuration that makes the film particularly controversial as is suggested by a review published in *The New York Times* on June 21st, 1968, just following the release of Polanski's version of *Rosemary's Baby*. This article reported that the film, after being reviewed by the National Catholic Office of Motion Pictures (formerly the National League of Decency) had condemned the picture for the way in which traditional Christianity was depicted. According to the reviewer, "Much more serious [than the scenes of nudity] is the perverted use that the film makes of fundamental Christian beliefs surrounding the birth of Christ and its mockery of religious persons and practices"[145]. The aesthetic value of the film seemed to pose an additional threat, as the National Catholic Office goes on to suggest "The very technical excellence of the film serves to intensify its defamatory nature. They [the National Catholic Office] feel that if the film becomes a big money maker it will mean a further decline in the influence of the group"[146]. Additionally, in a similar film review published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the film was given an "O," meaning morally offensive:

> Directed by Roman Polanski, the production values [of Rosemary's Baby] are topnotch and performances completely chilling, but the movie's inverted Christian elements denigrate religious beliefs[147].

[145] *Rosemary's Baby* Given a 'C' Rating By Catholic Office," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1968, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] *Ibid*.

Thus, the film was regarded by the religious press as presenting a challenge to traditional morality, a challenge all the more damaging given the film's standard as being a more 'high art' discourse.

The Sacred and the Profane: Destabilisation and the Demonic

Another reason for the perceived defamatory nature of this text, in addition to the way in which traditional religion is depicted and indeed conflated with its other, may rest with the method whereby this dichotomy between what was once regarded as good and what was historically seen as being evil is further complicated by the fact that there is no one truly on the side of the angels and thus equipped to do battle with the nefarious forces presented in this work, even if such forces could be distinguished.

Indeed, the novel positions the Satanists not only as adhering to traditional religion, but as thus being characters that are in many ways antithetical to the modernists that equally populate this narrative, even in the guise of the textual protagonists. The novel goes on to suggest of this faith community in relationship to the outside world around them, "The stubborn fact remains that whether or not *we* believe, *they* most assuredly do"[148]. This dichotomy between belief and lack thereof is further revealed in a moment in the novel version of *Rosemary's Baby* when one of the characters comments of the controversial *Time Magazine* article depicted in the film which featured a black background upon which the bold title "Is God Dead?" is emblazoned. This character comments of an article included in this issue:

[148] *Ibid*, 161.

His name is Altizer and he's down in Atlanta, I think; and what he says is that the death of God is a specific historic even that happened right now, in our time. That God literally died[149].

This lack of belief seems to typify the modern condition in which the protagonists find themselves. For Daniel Bell this increased popularisation of secularism and atheism within modern culture will lead of an inevitable future in which religion will once again become reincorporated. He suggests:

My concern with religion goes back to what I assume is the constitutive character of culture: the wheel of questions that brings one back to the existential predicaments, the awareness in men of their finiteness and the inexorable limits to their power, and the consequent effort to find a coherent answer to reconcile them to the human condition… I believe that a culture, which has become aware of the limits in exploring the mundane, will turn at some point, to the effort to recover the sacred[150].

What is interesting in the novel version of *Rosemary's Baby*, even given the fact of the modern condition of disbelief, is that the sacred, as described above, is in fact recovered within this text, however, only briefly. In a discussion of the visit of the Pope within the novel, Rosemary observes:

It was Monday, 4 October, the day of Pope Paul's visit to the city, and the sharing of the event made people more communicative than they ordinarily were; *how nice it is* Rosemary thought *that the so city is happy*[151].

However, unlike the city that surrounds her, Rosemary is portrayed as being in a constant state of angst with regard to her separation from the church, a spiritual community which acts as a defining mechanism for the rest of her family. This is voiced in the reception of Ira Levin's novel, for according to a book review of *Rosemary's Baby*, published in *Time Magazine*, the lack of religious connection experienced by the protagonists results in the primacy of the Catholic guilt that Rosemary experiences. Equally, this thematic concern also acts an important narrative device when it is suggested of Levin,

149 Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 146.
150 Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, xxix.
151 Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 71.

"He… proceeds to create suspense by operating on the theory that a little Catholic guilt can go a long way"[152]. This existential crisis is exhibited within the novel on both a conscious level, as is suggested by the above quotation, and on an unconscious level, as alluded to in Rosemary's involuntary actions like her crossing herself in times of stress, and in her dreams, as discussed earlier. Thus, Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse are presented in the film and novel versions of *Rosemary's Baby* as being essentially groundless, with no connectivity to any form of faith community.

It is not only traditional belief systems that suffer a loss, however, within the context of modernity. Indeed, in terms of historical cohesion, the families of both Guy and Rosemary are in a state of rupture, which, as suggested above, is in direct contrast to the connectivity which the Castevets possess. For Rosemary, this break was expressly stated in the novel as beginning when she first moved to New York City. The novel suggests of her family and her place therein:

> She was the youngest of six children, the other five of whom had married early and made homes close to their parents; behind her in Omaha she had left an angry, suspicious father, a silent mother, four resenting brothers and sisters… In New York, she felt guilty and selfish[153].

Interestingly, small towns, it could be argued, resonate culturally as being sites of social, religious and political conservatism dating back to the formation of the country itself. As Daniel Bell argues:

> If the intellectual justifications of Puritanism had evaporated, its social practices gained new strength in the small towns precisely because of fear of change. Change in this instance meant the rise of a new way of life- the life of big cities, turbulent, cosmopolitan and sinful[154].

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[152] "The Devil Is Alive and Hiding on Central Park West," *Time Magazine*, June 23, 1967, 112.
[153] Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 13.
[154] Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 63.

This schism and the break that ensues as a result of the divide between traditional small town life and that of the modern big city is articulated through the way in which her family perceives Rosemary after moving to New York City, and the ways in which this perception caused a break in familial connectivity. This rupture increased with Rosemary's marriage to Guy. As she and her husband began to set up house, she found that she had no one to turn to, to share in her joy. The novel suggests:

> They were all hostile now… not forgiving her for (a) marrying a Protestant, (b) marrying in only a civil ceremony, and (c) having a mother-in-law who had two divorces and was married now to a Jew up in Canada[155].

As is indicated in this passage taken from the literary version of this text, Guy Woodhouse is on just as shaky ground when it comes to familial ties, not knowing his father and having little connection to a mother who is almost wholly governed by self-interest. The Woodhouse family are thus portrayed in the novel more so than the film as being isolated, having only each other upon which to rely for the formation of significant human connections. This isolation, as the book suggests, creates a longing in Guy that is ironically satisfied by the narrative antagonists. As Rosemary observes:

> She saw that Minnie and Roman had become deeply important to him. It wasn't surprising; his mother was a busy self-involved chatterer and none of his fathers had been truly fatherly. The Castevets were filling a need in him, a need of which he himself was probably unaware[156].

However, ironically, it is also through this connection that the protagonists ultimately meet their downfall, although even the nature of the narrative conclusion as a downfall may be called into question. Is the fact of Rosemary's being a mother and incorporated into a group that will offer her support and guidance really a defeat? These debates which are fostered within this text,

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155 Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 23.
156 *Ibid*, 99.

indeed, makes the ending just another element that is, like the larder culture itself, essentially uncertain.

Modernity, Traditionalism and the Gothic Sensibility

Even though many textual indicators seem to suggest a foregrounding of a modernist agenda, in terms of location, and the establishment of textual protagonist and antagonist, the ending, as described above, as well as a thematic concern with the efficacy of organised religion to ground makes the allegiance of this text, between the traditional and the modern, unclear. Indeed, just as the culture at the time in which this work was conceived may be located as being embroiled in uncertainty as a result of the culmination of the modern era, so too can its artistic output be regarded as being equally unsettled. If it could be argued that Roman Polanski's work, as David Punter suggests, reveals, "The terrors of everyday life, which prise apart the bland surfaces of common interaction to disclose the anxieties and aggressions which lie beneath"[157], then this concern is one that is not only thematically, but also visually reinforced, through the aesthetic connection between *Rosemary's Baby* and the Literary Gothic.

In an early scene of the film, described earlier, a tracking shot follows the Woodhouses who are viewing the Bramford for the first time. Although this shot establishes these characters as being the protagonists by literally tracking their every move, the camera diverts away from these central figures to stop and pull focus upon a man installing a peephole in a door to one of the apartments. Significantly, this shot resonates as it remains stationary for several

[157] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 347.

seconds. This image could be read in a number of ways: first, it could be seen to foreground the notion that the spectator need look deeper and beyond the surface, that all is not what it seems; and additionally, this scene could be regarded as foregrounding the way in which the interiors of *Rosemary's Baby* will increasingly dominate over the exterior focus upon the integral modernist symbol of the exterior world of New York.

Indeed, from the very opening title sequence of the film, the iconic Gothic edifice of the Bramford apartment building begs to be considered an important, central character so unlike the Chrysler and Empire State buildings that have come to stand for a modernist aesthetic and agenda, which are indeed never pictured throughout the film. Rather than these new and shiny steel structures, the Bramford is old, antiquated, and falling apart. It is not angular and linear, but instead overly decorous, rococo, and replete with long winding corridors, mazes that confuse, isolate and entrap, the first indicator of the way in which the film seems to suggest a tendency to stand apart in a perpetual past, all the more noticeable when compared to the surrounding city. This setting can thus be located as being opposed to the modern, an inherently Gothic internal universe. When this aesthetic concern is combined with a thematic involving religion and a prevalence of the supernatural, *Rosemary's Baby*, in many ways, rejects the modern even while it equally supports key elements of the Gothic literary tradition. As David Punter defines them in *The Literature of Terror*:

> An emphasis of portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural… Gothic fiction is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed upon by unspeakable terrors[158].

On the most obvious of levels, the film and novel versions of *Rosemary's Baby* focus upon the need for a belief in the possibility of

[158] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 1.

the supernatural. Indeed, while Guy exists in the outside public world of entertainment and commerce, Rosemary, while affected by the external world of commodification, is nonetheless increasingly relegated to the interior spaces, much like her Gothic predecessors, and thus slowly driven to the brink of madness until she comes to accept the possibility of a world beyond the rational. These fears are portrayed on the surface as having a scientific basis, as the product of a woman under the influence of what is, according to Guy, "Prepartum I-don't-know, some kind of hysteria"[159]. The narrative does, in fact, follow Rosemary in her actions and thoughts, unlike any of the other characters, in what amounts to a first person point of view without the use of the personal pronoun, and information is only revealed as she is made aware of it. Thus, it can be called into question until the very end as to whether she is under threat from a satanic coven or only prey to deluded fantasies.

Equally, as suggested earlier, there is a constant questioning of appearances: the attractive husband with ugly intentions, a grandfatherly neighbour as the head of a Satanic cabal, the kindly and well respected obstetrician as being in league with the coven. Nothing is, in fact as it seems, and thus visual cue of the peephole demands a looking through, a deeper look beyond the obvious rational world and into a world wherein superstition and the supernatural housed in the Gothic castle, all abound. Herein, it could be argued, the supernatural is real, and those who believe gain strength even while those who doubt are thus weakened by their denial of this possibility. However, even while isolated aesthetically, the thematic concerns of the Gothic can be seen to be directly commenting upon its socio-political milieu, a debate furthered by David Punter when he suggests that the Gothic arose in a climate that saw a shift in cultural values toward the rational, the scientific

[159] Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, 206.

and in an attempt to "eschew the contemporary world" the Gothic became defined as privileging the primitive:

> The Gothic was the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to or was opposed to, or resisted the establishment of civilised values and a well-regarded society[160].

The drive away from faith, as David Punter points out, not only increased a focus on the hedonistic self, however, thus adding to this debate over the place of religion in relationship to the hedonism of commodification. Another characteristic of increased secularisation to be found during and following The Enlightenment, as Punter suggests, was the favouring of the rational over the supernatural. However, this obfuscation has a secondary problematic consequence equal to that which has been described above, for while science seeks to answer the question as to how the world functions, it cannot address the question as to why. Daniel Bell argues, "Culture, for me, is the effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existential predicaments that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives"[161], and for Punter, the fear that is exhibited in the Gothic results from the attempt to bring the rational to bear in control of all aspects of social and political life:

> To consider the passions and the emotions as mere subject faculties to be brought under the sway of an all-dominant reason, as the Enlightenment thinkers did, will render those faculties all the more incomprehensible[162].

This exclusion is not reducible to passions and emotions, however, but to spiritual beliefs as well. Indeed, Noel Carroll in *The Philosophy of Horror*[163], like David Punter forwards the notion that 'The Enlightenment' or 'The Age of Reason,' was in fact in direct opposition to religious faith which presumes a belief in or at least an acceptance of the supernatural. As Carroll suggests, "Reason was elevated as the major faculty and whatever hindered its flourishing

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[160] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 6.
[161] *Ibid*, XV.
[162] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 27.
[163] Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990).

was denounced. Religion was a special object of distrust because it valued faith and revelation over reason"[164]. This incredulity according to Carroll could spiral into atheism, a state of affairs that did actually occur in the 1970s. If, as Punter suggests, the Gothic was an attack against a privileging of the rational by articulating a concern with the occult and the supernatural, then a new wave of Gothic began to emerge two hundred years later in response to another cultural paradigmatic shift at the end of the Modernist era involving the nature of and affiliation with spiritual belief systems.

Andrew Tudor in *Monsters and Mad Scientists* goes on to argue that the 1970s represents a boom with regard to supernatural horror film, and indeed thus continues the deliberation regarding the importance of religion, a concern shared by Punter who writes

> And finally, we have the 1970s and the coming of a new range of films… which if we are to follow through any argument about the social significance of the forms of terror, must be considered in a more detailed way[165].

He goes on later in the same chapter:

> Alongside the development of the 'traditional' horror film there [has] arisen a genre more designed to cope with specifically contemporary perceptions of terror: what is harder to understand is that in the 1970s both of these forms appear to have been temporarily supplanted at least in terms of commercial success by a third form, which returns to the age-old themes of Satanism and possession… The first important exponent of the form was Roman Polanski himself in *Rosemary's Baby*[166].

However, such a concern may not represent a third form, but instead, to a certain extent, a shared thematic and formal sensibility reminiscent of the Gothic tradition, and equally suggestive of the integral relationship of religion to the horror film of the 1960s and 1970s.

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[164] *Ibid*, 55.
[165] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 347.
[166] *Ibid*, 369.

Conclusions

It has thus been argued that this text provides a thematic and aesthetic concern that offers up the traditional and the modern as an essential dichotomy. Within this conflict, the new is contrasted with the old, while the conclusion as to which side obfuscates the other, or indeed which is ultimately healthier for social cohesion remains essentially unclear. Thus, in many ways this text provides a locus for the essential debates of the era with regard to what will come next, a return of the traditions of the past, or a furthering of the modern concern with an anti-orthodox future focused agenda such as that fostered by the Church following the Second Vatican Council wherein a shift from institutional to personal notions of morality were forwarded and furthered, a condition symptomatic not only of this era, but of the larger ethos inherent to the radical individualism with which the United States is aligned. It has been suggested that the link to such debates is achieved not only through the thematic conflict presented by protagonists and antagonists themselves, but also in the way in which this work presents these conflicts aesthetically in terms of form. Indeed, this textual constellation has at once been linked both to the Gothic in its creation of labyrinthine interior spaces wherein chaotic supernatural elements abound, and to the modern through its presentation of an exterior universe, that of New York City, which may be regarded as a signifier of the agenda commensurate with modernity and a furthering of the individual over the communal. Thus, like the aesthetics and the thematic, this text, *Rosemary's Baby*, may be seen to span the new and the old, the traditional and the contemporary, the classical horror and the modern horror. In presenting a concern with the Gothic, the connection to the classical horror may be located, and in presenting a concern with a

radically real universe, wherein these battles ensue, the modern may be located.

This connection ties directly into debates regarding the horror text of the 1960s and 1970s posed by James B. Twitchell, and Anthony Tudor who both suggest that while the classic horror texts of the pre-1960s, represent essentially fantastic discourses[167], those of the mid and late 1960s provide a tendency toward a greater degree of realism. Thus, as opposed to the fictionalised worlds inherent to classical horror further characterised as 'Art Horror,' by James Twitchell, a realist agenda may be seen to usher in a new form of horror, specifically, the modern horror text. In the introduction to Ira Levin's novel written by Chuck Palahniuk this shift between the classic and modern horror text is argued to begin with *Rosemary's Baby*. As Palahniuk suggests:

> Before Ira Levin, horror always happened somewhere else. Regular ordinary people were forced to pack their luggage and kennel their dogs and had to leave their homes and schlep seemingly forever to Transylvania… or the Bates Motel… Horror never occurred at home[168].

Indeed, this plausibility, this design toward realism was intentional on the part of the author of the original literary text, for according to Levin in an interview published in *Opera News*:

> Since the basic material -- the premise of this young Catholic girl carrying Satan's child -- was so unbelievable, the only way to make it believable was to move it very specifically into New York and into the events of the day. The topical references, the plays and books and news events that Rosemary Woodhouse and Guy talk about, were all very deliberate. I had kept back copies of newspapers while I was writing, so I would have references for specific days, and so forth. When I checked nine months back from when I wanted the baby to

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[167] Fantastic not because they do not, themselves, give voice to their historical milieu, for as Mark Jancovich suggests in *Rational Fears*, this connection can be argued to be clearly articulated in these works. However, the monsters are essentially 'otherworldly,' whereas the monsters of the later films are more 'of us,' presenting a new level of horror as more realistic and threatening.

[168] Chuck Palahniuk, *"*Introduction to Rosemary's Baby*,"* in *Rosemary's Baby written by Ira Levin* (London: Constable and Robinson, Limited, 2011), vii

be born [in the novel], nine months to the day earlier was the visit to New York by Pope Paul VI. So I thought, 'I've got to work this in!' That's why Rosemary's baby was born in June of 1966[169].

In fact, *Rosemary's Baby* in its desire to link the fictional narrative to a realistic and historically accurate universe in order to make the story seem more plausible, and thus more frightening seemed to have a certain efficacy when it came to recorded secular receptions of the film. According to a review published in *The New York Times*, Renata Adler suggests that the filmic adaptation when grounded in the here and now makes perfect sense:

One begins to think it is the kind of thing that might really have happened to her. That a rough beast really did slouch toward West 72nd Street to be born. I think this is because it is almost too extremely plausible. The quality of the young people's lives seems the quality of lives that one knows[170].

The fact that these threats are left unresolved, for Andrew Tudor poses an additional threat, as he argues, "If the fears here represented are undefeated, then the cultures within which such narratives make sense must surely be less secure than they once were."[171] Indeed, religion and religious discourses and debates thus not only form an essential element in the understanding of the thematic concerns of the film and literary versions of *Rosemary's Baby*, but also the culture out of which they arose specifically in terms of this lack of security. This is revealed not only in the texts themselves through representations of the efficacy of spiritual affiliation, but also in the way that the film was received as a socio-cultural threat specifically in with regard to these concerns[172], and significantly the way in which both concerns interrogate and are informed by the intellectual debates of the late 1960s and 1970s era regarding the problems with commodification in the building of a stable self-agency, and the ways in which a return to traditionalism,

[169] Paul F. Driscoll, "Going to the Opera," *Opera News*, October 1997, 36.
[170] Renata Adler, "The Screen".
[171] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 95.
[172] As suggested in the introduction, this text was condemned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops specifically for its depiction and perceived defamation of religion.

even, ironically, in the unlikely guise of Satanism, could provide a solution.

With the collapse of religion, biblical references, which formerly penetrated deep into everyday awareness, have become incomprehensible… In the space of two of three generations, enormous stretches of the 'Judeo-Christian tradition,' so often invoked by educators but so seldom taught in any form, have passed into oblivion. The effective loss of cultural traditions on such a scale makes talk of a new Dark Age far from frivolous. Christopher Lasch from *The Culture of Narcissism*[173].

Given the enormous American emphasis on independence and self-reliance… the survival of the family with its strong emphasis on interdependence and acceptance is striking. The family in many ways represents a historically older form of life[174].

Chapter Two: I Don't Know If We've Got the Heir to the Thorn Millions Here or Jesus Christ Himself": Catholicism, Satanism and The Role of Predestination in *The Omen*

Introduction:

In the penultimate scene from the first film in *The Omen Franchise*, entitled simply *The Omen*, following the instructions of archaeologist, demonologist and exorcist, Carl Bugenhagen, protagonist Robert Thorn takes his young adoptive son to sacred ground, in this case a church, wherein he plans to murder his young heir in accordance with an ancient custom. In order to complete this task, Thorn has been given a series of daggers with which he will be expected to stab the child in the form of a cross radiating outward from the heart to the limbs. The whole narrative has, in fact, been leading up to this moment, wherein the narrative main character makes this final decision: whether to let what is suspected to be the Son of Satan

[173] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York, NY: WW Norton, 1991), 151.
[174] Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, 86.

live or die. This climatic moment, however ironically, is shown not to be the result of the free will of Thorn at all, but instead a decision that has been predestined since, purportedly, Biblical times. The final scene of the film confirms that this is the case as Damien Thorn is shown at the double funeral of both his parents, his mother's, who was killed by a Satanic follower and protector of Damien, and his father's, who was shot by police as his attempt to end the life of the boy, as described above, fails. The camera focuses in tight close-up upon the face of Damien as he smiles, and then zooms out to show the child holding the hands of a woman and a man. It is thus revealed that Damien is now the adoptive son of Robert Thorn's best friend, the President of the United States. In this way, the attempt to kill Damien has resulted in not only the death of Thorn, as was predicted by the Satanic Priest, Father Brennan during his final meeting with the ambassador, but also the fact that the Antichrist will arise from the world of politics, as was suggested by the poem recited by Brennan to Thorn at this same meeting. Indeed, what was initially regarded as being a difficult choice is in fact revealed to be no choice at all, but instead an inevitable outcome that will bring about the omen by which this extended text is entitled.

What this chapter will argue, in essence, is the way in which New Hollywood Horror acts as an element within and a disseminator of its socio-political milieu with regard to cultural debates involving the role of free will, a characteristic of the modern ethos, which will be contrasted with a traditional religious outlook in which determinism and predestination challenges this liberty of choice. On the one hand, this textual constellation articulates a thematic concern with the role of predestination for spiritual belief and the extent to which the family, as an agency, has a stabilising influence that extends to that which exists outside the self and the realm of self-interest. Such a focus upon conservative and traditional mechanisms such as religion, predestination and familial legacies, seems to position *The*

Omen as being highly conservative, and it is in this way that current academic discourse has regarded this work. However, in terms of the meanings constructed by an analysis of the extra-textual elements such as choice of actors and their added socio-political significance, this text may equally be regarded to possess a more liberal agenda, thus making its socio-political alignment less clear. Much like the Gothic texts that have preceded it, and the culture out of which it arises, *The Omen* may be regarded as being not only conflictual, but also conflicted. If it can be argued as Marshall Berman does that, "To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction"[175], then *The Omen* is, if only for this reason alone, indeed a modern work.

With regard to analytic methodology, the unsettled nature of *The Omen* will be revealed, through a textual analysis of the first two films of the franchise and the novelisation of the first[176]. In performing a close reading of the thematic concerns as revealed through the narratives themselves, the traditional socio-political and cultural concerns of this work as a whole will be located. Then, once a consideration of these themes have been addressed, a focus upon the critical reception of *The Omen* in both the secular and religious press will be analysed so as to locate the ways in which this textual constellation was received at the time of release and additionally to establish a connectivity to the socio-political and cultural milieu. Finally, into the aforementioned discursive analysis, a study of the filmmaking process will be interpolated, for in revealing considerations with regard to artistic choices through analysis of interviews and actor/ director histories a more overt extra-textual agenda will be revealed, one that seems to supersede or at the very

[175] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2010), 13.
[176] Although initially involving an analysis of the entire filmic franchise, given the fact that the cinematic sequels fall outside of the scope of this thesis in being produced after the methodological ending date, only the first film and its literary adaptation will be herein considered.

least challenge the thematic considerations of *The Omen* as a whole. Thus, such an analysis of this textual constellation will reveal an alternative reading to that which is popularly discerned within the field of academia, one that locates the complex nature of this text overall.

Debates Surrounding Traditional Religion, the Function of the Family and the Dichotomy of Freedom of Choice versus Predestination

In locating the ethos of the postmodern condition, discerned at the crux of the modern and postmodern eras, François Lyotard forms a key debate when he argues that a defining mechanism of this socio-political and cultural ethos is involved with the breakdown of pre-existing defining mechanisms, what he has termed 'Grand Narratives.' For Lyotard, as well as for other theorists like Daniel Bell and Christopher Lasch, once this failure was enacted, under the sway of a secular, individualistic, modernist ethos, the lure of the present and selfish desires overtook a concern with the foregrounding of the lessons of the past toward an understanding of future effect. Lyotard himself suggests:

> The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses…. The decline of narrative can be seen as an effect of the blossoming of techniques and technologies since the Second World War, which has shifted emphasis from the ends of action to its means[177].

Up until the second half of the twentieth century, arguably, two key *grand narratives* have been traditional religion and the familial legacy, the two acting in tandem to provide a mechanism for both personal identification and social unification.

[177] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 38.

Daniel Bell, in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* articulates one side of this deliberation with regard to the benefits of traditionalism when he argues:

> Cultures are the binding fidelities of consciousness rooted in history, tradition, kinship… and religion that shape the emotional consanguinity, literal or figurative, among individuals and make them one[178].

If then, the historic role of religion has to do with the way in which a communal deference to a higher power acts to bestow culture, and by extension the individual living within it, with a unifying principle, as Bell argues above, then orthodoxy may also be considered to possess an added effect in providing action with meaning toward these ends. Indeed, by focusing not upon what can be acquired in the moment, but instead what effects the choices that are made have for the future, traditional spiritual affiliation thus fulfils its role as a *grand narrative*, as defined by Lyotard. Specifically, religion divorces a concern with immediacy (the means) from action by focusing upon the consequences of these choices (the ends) for the stabilisation of the self and the ultimate salvation of the soul. Rather than being wholly future focused, as is, arguably, the modern condition, however, orthodox spirituality not only considers future affect, but equally looks to the lessons taught by past decisions which are, in turn, guided by ancient texts both of which signalling what could be defined as right-minded action. Additionally, as traditional religion looks to the past to answer present conundrums affecting future outcomes, it equally interrogates the extent to which these choices are based upon the will of the individual and ultimately the degree to which man truly has power over his destiny. In other words, religion debates whether and the extent to which these decisions and their consequences in fact made under the guise of the predestined or are they elicited by free will.

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[178] Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 332.

Although for most if not all religions, there is a belief in the bestowing of freedom of choice upon humanity, equally prevalent is a belief in a meaning and purpose to action that exists outside the self, one that is ordained by God. Christian faiths, both Catholic and Protestant alike, hold that salvation, for them the ultimate result of human action, is predestined either through conditional election, wherein God saves those whom he foresees as choosing to be faithful to Christ, or unconditional election wherein God's choice is based upon criteria outside the realm of human choice altogether. However, few traditional Christian teachings outside of more radical Protestant sects such as the Calvinists or Quakers accept the possibility of double pre-destination or the belief that one's damnation, like one's salvation, is predetermined and thus remains unaffected by human will.

When the certainty of one's salvation is called into question, motives with regard to social interaction and vocational action become altered as values intensify and life becomes increasingly regimented. In being forced to constantly monitor their state of grace, fundamentalist Christian believers in search of 'certitudo salutis' could only be moved beyond anxiety through engagement in sanctified pursuits that, if successful, would constitute an outward sign of membership among the elect. Max Weber, in the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* sees this Puritan social structuring as arising from a dogma of 'the calling' or the fulfilling of tasks offered up by the natural world with the objective of serving God, and in turn being recognised by him through success and reward. Weber argues, "Work and work alone banishes religious doubt and gives certainty of one's status among the saved"[179]. Indeed, the Puritans held a belief that the sole meaning and purpose of the world was not to acquire riches for the sake of pleasure or self-aggrandisement, but instead to serve the

[179] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: With Other Writings on the Rise of the West,* trans. Stephen Kalberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111.

glorification of God, just as the predestined Christian exists only to increase the glory of God in the world.

If the first stage of social development arising from a belief in predestination is this the systematic structuring of life around regimented work, or vocational action, which lead to an assurance of God's favour, the final stage, is to effectively eliminate any trust in the efficacy of sacraments as a means of assuring salvation. According to Weber:

> The overarching process in the history of religion—found here with the doctrine of predestination--… rejected all *magical* means for the salvation quest as superstition and sacrilege... There were not only no magical means that would turn God's grace toward believers, He had decided to condemn, but no means of any kind[180].

In terms of the sacrament of confession, this abolition meant a failure to be released from the consciousness of guilt through unconditional forgiveness, which, for obvious reasons thus limited freedom of choice when it came to action. When the sacrament of baptism was excised from Christian practice, a lack of proof or assuredness of being among the chosen equally resulted. This is due to the fact that to be baptised essentially represents being adopted by God, and therefore washed clean of sin by the water plus the word. Religion in this way acted not to close the gap between God and man, but to widen it by putting election not in the hands of God as determined by his will, but instead upon the shoulders of man as revealed by his action alone. Weber argues:

> Together with all the churches that upheld predestination, all denominations with adult baptism practiced the most radical devaluation of all the sacraments as a means of salvation. In the case of the Quakers, this removal included the abandonment of even the sacraments of christening and communion. Hence the process

[180] *Ibid*, 107.

that 'eliminated magic' from the world was placed in motion by these denominations and carried through to its final conclusion[181].

As radical Protestant sects precluded any possibility of God's representatives on earth, such as priests or pastors, being able to bestow forgiveness or offer salvation in the name of God because no one (besides the heads of the churches like Calvin for instance) was assuredly more elect than anyone else, religion became more private and more personal. Indeed, predestination can be considered to be the most extreme form of the exclusive trust in God, rather than in the helpfulness of others. The individual's relationship with the world was thus rendered impersonal, utilitarian, isolated and indeed regimented.

This resulted in the furthering and solidifying of radical individualism, an ethos came to characterise not only the Puritan tradition, and its work ethic, but in a larger context, the socio-political organisation of the United States itself, which, ironically as a result, became increasingly secular. Weber goes on to argue:

> The doctrine of predestination, in conveying this notion of believers as God's tools, forestalled a premature collapse of religion-oriented action into a purely utilitarian ethos of good works. The concerns of this world would never have been the focus of such an ethos and this utilitarian posture would never have been capable of bringing the faithful to make unheard of sacrifices on behalf of irrational and ideal goals. Moreover, in an ingenious manner, the doctrine of predestination linked absolute determinism, the complete transcendence of the supernatural realm and the belief in unconditionally valid norm. Simultaneously, this linkage was in principle much more *modern* than the milder doctrines that addressed more the feelings of the devout and subjected even God to moral laws[182].

In this way, ironically, religion and modernity seemed to share a similar concern with individual action; however, the affect was not a

[181] *Ibid*, 135.
[182] *Ibid.* 121.

strengthening of faith, as suggested above, but instead a weakening of the lure of religion for the subject in search of meaning and answers.

Not only did modernity further usher in a breakdown of religion as a *grand narrative*, however, it also elicited a similar breakdown in the institution of the family for which similar considerations and sacrifices were required, and with which a shared external focus outside the realm of the self was required. As many conservative debates argue, the de-legitimation of the family acts to bring about a moral weakening and decay which results in a subsequent breakdown of religion as a *grand narrative*, a socio-cultural vicious circle. Historically, parental authority, like religion acted not only as a mechanism for cohesion, but also as an instrument of restraint. As Christopher Lasch argues in *The Culture of Narcissism*:

> The abdication of parental authority itself instils in the young the character traits demanded by a corrupt, permissive, hedonistic culture. The decline of parental authority reflects the 'decline of the superego' in American society as a whole[183].

This may be one reason for the weakening of the traditional family in the modern era, and subsequently in the postmodern one, for indeed, any agency that limited self-expression and exploration was often denounced by the 1960s Counter Culture which sought freedom from the perceived constraints of a traditional and potentially stultifying ethos. turning away from the family as a mechanism for stabilization had to do with a turning away from the past, from tradition and from mechanisms of identification based upon posterity, genealogy and generations rather than upon self-determination and individual free will.

[183] Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 178.

The other side of the coin cast by theorists such as Daniel Bell when it comes to a more positive understanding of the opening up of the traditional is articulated by cultural historians such as Theodore Roszak, who in *The Making of a Counter Culture* suggests that the foregrounding of individual choice, rather than being destabilising, in fact opened up the door not only to the possibility of freedom of identification, but also to an alignment with alternative spiritualties. For Roszak, rather than a closing down of religion and religious affiliation, this era instead saw an opening up of these very communal connections. Roszak argues:

> What the counter culture offers us, then, is a remarkable defection from the long-standing tradition of the sceptical, secular intellectuality which has served as the prime vehicle for three hundred years of scientific and technical work in the west[184].

For this theorist, the Counter Culture offered a potential to usher in not an increased secularism that Bell associated with a break from traditionalism, and ultimately a failure of institutions such as the family and the religious congregation but instead a renaissance of religious belief that promised not to destabilise but in fact enrich culture. Whereas since the Enlightenment, the focus of radicalism has been anti-religious, when it comes to the Counter Culture youth this, arguably, for Roszak is no longer the case. He goes on to suggest:

> [The counter culture provided an] eclectic taste for the mystic, occult, and magical phenomena [that] has been a marked characteristic… [T]he key words and images are those of time and eternity, madness and vision, heaven and spirit. The cry is not for a revolution, but for an apocalypse: a decent of the divine fire[185].

Thus, the foregrounding of individualism ushered in, at least within the United States, debates surrounding the role of spirituality, historical and communal legacy from both sides of the conservative

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184 Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 141.
185 *Ibid,* 125-6.

and liberal divide both of which, ironically, fostering a belief in and an acceptance of predestination and an impending apocalypse wherein God, whomever that may be, once again becomes an active agent on Earth, a concern articulated not only in the aforementioned film, *Rosemary's Baby* but equally as will be seen below for *The Omen* as well.

The Omen as a Conservative Text

Thematically, *The Omen*, it will be argued, articulates a concern with the overwhelming power of religion, predestination, and historical imperatives through the foregrounding of the titular 'omen' a portent of events that will occur in the future and that will inevitably bring about change in the form of an adherence to a new but equally traditional belief mechanism lead, in this case, by the Antichrist himself. In relying upon a radically conservative religious mechanism that denies the potential for the efficacy of free will, this text sets itself up as being both reactionary and ultra-conservative, appearing to support a fundamentalist traditional philosophy wherein historical imperatives are upheld through a focus on determinism over free will and familial connectivity over individuality.

Indeed, when considering the reception of this work, most film historians, theorists and critics agree that *The Omen* articulates contemporaneous cultural debates with regard to the loss of traditional *grand narratives* as described above. Tony Williams in *Hearths of Darkness*, for example, supports this concern when he discusses *The Omen* as presenting, "an aura of predestination"[186]. He goes on to argue that the text and its thematic concerns are in

[186] Williams, *Hearths of Darkness*, 115.

fact dominated by, “An overwhelming pessimistic aura of supernatural pre-determinism [which] often overshadows a significant family trauma”[187]. However, other than this mention of religious dogma, a thematic that he regards negatively, as being ‘pessimistic’ in nature, academic readings of *The Omen* seem to argue for a different discursive thread that speaks not to a focus on spiritual affiliation and its affect upon the family, but instead to more generalised concerns regarding a failure of overarching systems of authority prevalent at the end of modern and beginning of the postmodern eras, of which the family and religion are merely one of many aspects. Even for Williams himself, this focus is ultimately undermined when later in the same analysis as quoted above he falls back upon popular readings of this work that deny an overarching thematic consideration of spiritual affiliation. In this way, Williams, like other film historians and theorists including Mark Jancovich, Vivian Sobchack and Robin Wood, conclude that *The Omen* is ultimately involved with the breakdown of socio-political authority into which religion is conflated as one of many systems of power along with the family and the government. Indeed, rather than regarding spiritual affiliation as standing out in a position of thematic prominence, Mark Jancovich, for example, suggests that *The Omen* is instead more concerned with societal destruction. In a chapter entitled *Post-Fordism, Postmodernism and Paranoia,* Jancovich goes on to argue that this articulation has ties to a general cultural embroilment with postmodern insecurity which results in this breakdown of epic scale. Likewise, Vivian Sobchack argues for the foregrounding of a breakdown of grand narratives, this time in terms of familial cohesion which in turn leads to the end-of-the-world when she asserts:

> From the early to mid-1970s and coincident with bourgeois society’s negative response to the youth movements and drug culture of the late 1960s… [t]he child was figured as an alien force that threatened both its immediate family and all adult authority that

[187] *Ibid*.

> would keep it in its place… The bodies and souls of such children as appear in…The Omen (1976) are 'possessed' by demonic, supernatural, and a historic forces that play out apocalypse in the middle-class home[188].

This literal demonization of the child, elicited by a prevalent phobia of the 1970s counter-culture, according to this theorist, lead or at the very least contributed to the subsequent breakdown of the traditional family. It is this cultural conundrum, rather than a focus on the ways in which this work offers up debates related to religion, that finally leads authors like Robin Wood to regard *The Omen* as being reactionary. Further in rejecting such fractious factors as feminism and the tenets of modernity, this text may be seen to be equally embroiled in ideological conservatism. Wood suggests:

> In obvious ways *The Omen* is old-fashioned, traditional, reactionary: the 'goodness' of the family unit isn't questioned, 'horror' is disowned by having the devil-child a product of the Old World, unwittingly adopted into the American family, the devil-child and his independent-female guardian are regarded as purely evil[189].

While this chapter will follow these authors in arguing for a thematic concern that focuses upon a loss of efficacy, this will be shown to be limited to the protagonist and the minor characters that surround him. It will be further asserted that while the individual working alone is in fact rendered ineffectual, collective systems including religion and the family are, alternatively, primarily efficacious. Indeed, individual agency is brought to its knees, if it ever may be regarded to in fact exist at all, only when it is self-determined, while predestination and an outward focus remains a dominant force that cannot be challenged or negated. In this way, spiritual orthodoxy will be shown to be of primary concern as it is through determined action that 'the omen' itself is not only revealed, but indeed realised, a reading that authors like Jancovich, Wood and Sobchack specifically argue against, but which will be shown to be viable,

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[188] Sobchack, *The Dread of Difference*, 150.
[189] Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 186.

especially when interpolated into the culture of which *The Omen*, as an artistic output, is an integral element.

The Omen and Spiritual Affiliation

From the outset, *The Omen's* thematic concern with familial connectivity and predestination is established first by linking Damien and his role as the Anti-Christ to Christ Jesus, and then further by suggesting that the generational legacy of both the Christ and the Anti-Christ was one not left to chance, but instead determined and defined by Biblical prophecy. Indeed, in being directly referred to as the Messiah, a similar if oppositional role to that of traditional Christianity, the narrative antagonist becomes imbued with an historical meaning and religious significance which cannot be denied or altered. According to the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, the term 'messiah' is defined as, "A leader who is believed to have the power to solve the world's problems"[190]. Thus this name refers not merely as a way of defining or categorising an individual, but a role to which one must adhere from birth[191].

In the opening scene of *The Omen*, this connection with religious and familial determinism is established as the narrative protagonist, Robert Thorn, the United States Ambassador to Italy, rushes to a Roman Catholic hospital wherein his wife has just given birth. Upon arrival, and before seeing his wife, he is told by a Priest that while his wife has survived, his child, a son, did not. The Priest convinces Thorn to adopt another child born at the same time as his dead

[190] *Cambridge English Dictionary*, on –line ed., http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/messiah (accessed August 23, 2016).
[191] Interestingly, if Jesus was put on earth to save the world, then it follows that the Anti-Christ would be, in turn charged with its destruction, giving Mark Jancovich's reading of the film more credibility from a religious standpoint.

child, suggesting, “It would be a blessing to her [his wife] and to the child. On this night, God has given you a son”[192]. In this statement, it appears as if the death and birth of the changeling are God’s will, and thus involves a chain of events that have been predetermined. Further, as the narrative progresses this collusion of the roles and representations of the Christ and the Anti- Christ makes this concern manifest.

Given the fact that the hospital in which these two characters speak is run by the Catholic Church, the fact that this hospital is located in Rome, not far from the Vatican, and that the man himself wears priestly accoutrements, the viewer is ostensibly meant to assume that the God that has bestowed the child is the Christian one, however, later in this text this assumption is proven to be a false one. In fact, the Priest is part of a satanic circle committed to the nurture of the Antichrist, the very child that has just been adopted. It is thus that the nature of the Thorn decision is revealed to be not one of free will but one that has, in fact, been predetermined, as it is later suggested through the titular ‘Omen’ that the Anti-Christ shall come from the world of politics, a world to which Thorn himself, not to mention his powerful friends including the President of the United States, belongs. Hence, the choice made by Robert Thorn, in the same way as the choice made by Joseph in adopting a child that is not his own resonates and is rendered significant not by the identity of the individual alone, per se, but by what this person stands for generationally. Thus, just as Joseph was descended from the family of King David, a fact which was foretold to be a characteristic of the coming Messiah, this Anti-Messiah also comes from a family of power and privilege, the Thorn dynasty, is a characteristic that will equally apply to Damien and which was also foretold in a ‘Biblical’ reference. In this way it is through God’s election that lineage is determined and

192 Seltzer, *The Omen* (Film).

rendered significant rather than being merely a biological accident in a chaotic world without meaning. This metaphoric connectivity continues throughout the first narrative from beginning to end, a fact that further suggests its thematic significance[193].

Equally, connectivity in terms of pre-destiny is revealed in terms of geography and a sense of place. The location that Thorn is directed to go in order to seek advice as to how to destroy the Antichrist, for example, is Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley, an important biblical location[194] wherein, according to the book of Revelations[195](sic), the final battle between good and evil is destined to take place. Hence the name of the town in Greek is translated as Armageddon. Other prophesies regarding the end of days are also mentioned in the film, one of them being a comet that takes on the appearance of the star of Bethlehem, which shone at the time and on the location of Damien's birth in the same way as the star of David did upon the birthplace of Jesus.

This doppelganger relationship between Damien and Jesus is not only suggested metaphorically, however, it is in fact directly stated, making the importance of this connection manifest. In Damien's birthday party scene, early in the film, for example, two photographers are engaged in shooting footage on the occasion of the Anti-Christ's, fifth birthday. One photographer, who remains

[193] Another example of the connectivity between the family of the Christ and the Anti-Christ is presented visually and geographically near the end of the film. In terms of a visual presentation of familial connectivity, before Kathy Thorn is killed, she is seen to be wearing a blue hospital gown over which is a white robe that, as she attempts to undress, is pulled over her head and hair. This clothing colour and configuration is similar to that in which Mary is often pictured.

[194] While the other Biblical referents in this text appear not to be correlated directly to *The Bible*, this location, Megiddo, is in fact a real place with a similar significance and history to that which is mentioned in the film.

[195] In the first film, the book of the *Bible* that predicts the end of days is referred to as 'The Book of Revelations' rather than 'The Book of Revelation' a point that was discussed by critics and scholars when devaluing the film.

unnamed turns to the other, Jennings, played by David Warner, and enquires as to why the latter is not taking the opportunity to shoot photos of the event. Jennings (Warner) in turn replies, "Just saving a bit [of film] for the canonization. I don't know if we've just got the heir to the Thorn millions here or Jesus Christ himself"[196]. This exchange is another one of many references to the primary thematic concern for *The Omen*, familial connectivity and predestination as revealed specifically through traditionally religious signifiers.

Indeed, like the individuals, Jesus and Damien, the religions that they embody are equally aligned under the sway of orthodox determinism as, Christianity and Satanism are shown to share the same 'Omens' that are alluded to in the title of the film. This is made manifest during the second and final meeting between Brennan and Thorn as the Priest quotes from a 'biblical' poem that signals the circumstances surrounding the end of days as is supposedly revealed in *The Book of Revelations* (sic):

> When the Jews return to Zion; And a comet rips the sky; The Holy Roman Empire rises; Then you and I must die, From the eternal sea he rises; Creating armies on either shore; Turning Man against his brother; Until Man exists no more[197].

Even though this poem is not figured anywhere in *The Book of Revelation*, nonetheless certain prophesies that are contained therein do actually prefigure the end of days including the opposing armies that do battle 'on either shore'. Also, although there is no mention of comets, there are other natural catastrophes including floods, earthquakes and locusts that while not relating to the birth of Christ, who was born under a star, nonetheless are connected to an earlier biblical history, that of the

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196 Seltzer, *The Omen* (Film). This quotation, while purportedly from the *Bible*, is a fabrication of the screenwriter.
197 *Ibid*.

plagues of Egypt signalling a similar prefiguration wherein God's holy people are chosen and lead out of bondage. The one thing that *The Bible* does suggest directly in this last book is the fact that these apocalyptic events are predestined to occur and are beyond the power of Man to control or alter:

> The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass… Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand[198].

These prophetic statements that are present in *The Bible* and fictionally recreated in *The Omen* suggest the nature of faith in either God or Satan as involving predestination. Indeed, each person who worships Satan is marked at birth with an indicator that does come from a Biblical referent:

> Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is a human number of a man: and his number is Six hundred three score and six…. If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand[199].

Although not on the forehead or hand, Damien possesses the mark of the Devil on his scalp, under his hair, and Father Brennan, another follower of Satan shares a similar mark on his inner thigh. Because this 666 insignia is bestowed at birth, obviously, the suggestion is that regardless of the will or actions of man, their destiny to follow the Anti-Christ is in fact predestined, and as defined above, doubly so as not only salvation, but equally damnation are decided at the time of conception.

Like Brennan, Father Spiletto, the man who bestows Thorn with his chosen son, is equally marked in a way which was, according to the text, specifically predicted. Upon narrowly escaping a fire

198 *The Holy Bible*, 1041.
199 *Ibid*, 1050.

that engulfs and destroys the hospital wherein both the Thorn son and his changeling are born, Spiletto retreats to a monastery, takes a vow of silence, and spends his last days incapacitated staring at statues of the saints from his wheelchair. As Thorn discovers him, it is suggested by a fellow Priest residing in the monastery that the nature injuries were, like the birth of the Anti-Christ, also foretold, as those who betray Christ will come to have their right arm wither and to be blinded in the right eye, signs of their pact with Satan.

In fact, the predestined deaths or disfigurements of all the followers of Satan are just as inescapable as the fate of Thorn and his son Damien, as is revealed by the camera of the photographer Jennings, who was mentioned above. Indeed, at the same party wherein the photographer alludes to the connection between Damien and the Christ, Jennings also becomes privy to the extent to which not only the Anti-Christ's life and birth are foretold, but equally the extent to which the deaths and disfigurements of the followers of Satan are beyond the scope of human action to alter. This is first suggested in *The Omen* as Jennings snaps a photo of Damien's nanny, who later at the party hangs herself from the roof of the Thorn mansion. When Jennings develops these snaps, he notices what he at first believes to be a fault in the film or the development process. The image of the nanny is marred by a dark line that seems to run around the woman's neck extending up and out of the frame a strange coincidence given her suicide by hanging. This fault, as the narrative continues, is seen to be not mere chance however, but instead an indicator of the predestined fate of the characters themselves. Equally, Father Brennan, who is already marked with the sign of the devil, possesses a fate that is similarly sealed. As Jennings shoots and then develops photos of the Priest, he finds a fault in the form of a line that runs through the man's torso, a mark that is repeated in all the photos captured

by Jennings' camera, and which signals the impending and predetermined death of Brennan as he is impaled by an iron rod outside of a church during a storm.

After Brennan's death, Thorn, who is accompanied by Jennings, enters the Priest's rooms and finds them literally wallpapered with pages from the Bible covering all the surfaces including the windows save one which looks out onto his church. Equally prevalent are a veritable panoply of crosses, forty-seven of such affixed to the door to this chamber alone. Jennings informs Thorn that Brennan was, obviously, trying to keep something out, that something being the Priest's destiny. In the same room, Jennings himself accidently takes what is today called a 'selfie' and notices a mark that severs his head from his body. It is no surprise that later in the film the photographer meets with his predestined end as he is decapitated by a plate of glass in a freak 'accident'.

The importance of the religious articulations in *The Omen*, while not given credence in academic circles, is the chief concern of its reception by both secular and religious media alike, a fact that once again alludes to the central importance of such a thematic. In terms of reception, *The Omen* was panned at the time of its release, for as Richard Eder suggests in his review of the film for *The New York Times*, "*The Omen* takes its details with no seriousness at all. It is not a put on- it's terribly solemn in fact- but it often seems like one"[200]. Vincent Canby in another *New York Times* review supports Eder's comments in the following way:

> It takes as its text a bit of hilarious doggerel that David Seltzer, the screenwriter, would have you believe comes right out of the Book of Revelations (sic). If you can possibly locate The Book of

[200] Richard Eder, "The Screen, Omen Is Nobody's Baby," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1976, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

> Revelations (sic) you might possibly locate this quote. It is nowhere to be found in the Book of Revelation, though[201].

The religious reception of the film was equally unfavourable as evidenced by the reception given by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB):

> Slick, expensively mounted [The Omen] refers to scripture and religious beliefs, [however] its only interest in religion is in terms of its exploitation potential[202].

Thus, like *Rosemary's Baby, The Omen* was received by both the secular and the religious press as articulating a thematic concern with faith and religion, regardless of the seriousness or apparent success of such an articulation; however, this concern seems to be overlooked by academic discourse. Given the social climate of the late 1960's and 1970's wherein traditional religion was culturally devalued in favour of a more modernist agenda, such an oversight becomes all the more glaring.

Formal Choices in *The Omen*

While the narrative of *The Omen* reveals an apparent and undeniable concern with predestination, and familial connectivity, themes which render this text as being ideologically conservative and traditional as suggested above, an analysis of the formal dimensions of the film suggest an alternative reading. Indeed, while this text seems to be directly concerned with traditionalism, on a less overt level, the extra-textual choices made with regard to actors show a conflicting focus that suggests a more liberal agenda.

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[201] Canby, "Film View; Hollywood Has an Appealing New Star Old Gooseberry."
[202] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Film Review of *The Omen.*

To begin, the protagonist, Robert Thorn is portrayed in the film by Gregory Peck, who although a stalwart classical Hollywood actor, is nonetheless equally associated with liberal mainstream filmmaking. Indeed, in his career, Peck is, arguably, most notably identified with his role as Atticus Finch, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*[203]. There are many reasons for this association between the actor and the liberally-minded lawyer who fought against the rampant racism of depression-era south. First, it was while portraying Finch that Peck received his only Academy Award, and also in several interviews he describes the role as being one of his favourites. This 1962 film, and Peck's indelible association with it is rendered even more significant from an ideological standpoint when considerations incorporate its release date at the height of the Civil Rights movement. Following the 1954 Brown versus Board of Education decision that symbolically (if not actually) ended segregation, and coming two years before the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the film challenged long standing cultural prejudice.

Peck was not the first choice to play Thorn, however. Charlton Heston was in fact, ostensibly, offered the role before Peck. This choice of star is equally significant because, before becoming a conservative icon[204], Heston was also aligned with a liberal agenda. In terms of his filmic career, his choice to play Moses in *The Ten Commandments*, a character that famously lead the Jews out of Egypt and away from persecution, and in taking a starring role *Ben Hur* as Judah, a character who equally fought for human rights and an end to tyranny, Heston, like Peck became aligned with Democratic ideals and a Civil Rights agenda. During a period that spanned from 1955 to 1972, he was also politically active outside of Hollywood films through his endorsement of Democratic candidates for President. Indeed, Heston became known for activism not only

[203] Horton Foote, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, DVD. Directed by Robert Mulligan (United States: Universal Pictures, 1962).
[204] Later in life Heston was known for, among other things, being a member not to mention the leader of the National Rifleman's Association, a hotbed of American conservativism.

by, ironically, signing several petitions to support the up and coming Gun Control Act, along with Peck and others, but also through his purported engagement in the civil rights campaign. Whether this was actual or merely purported, one account suggests that when in 1961 a segregated Oklahoma movie theatre was showing his movie, *El Cid*[205], for the first time, Heston joined a picket line outside, however this action was not included in the actor's autobiography nor does he make mention of it in the press[206]. While this account was never directly confirmed by the actor himself, he was nonetheless famous for picketing restaurants that supported segregation, an action that he did admit to in his autobiography. This liberal alignment, for Heston was solidified by his connection to his roles in Science Fiction genre films including *Planet of the Apes* and *Soylent Green* two post-apocalyptic works that also supported a liberal humanist agenda.

The other filmic starring role was garnered by Lee Remick. As a graduate of the famous liberal women's college, Barnard, based in New York City, Remick aligned herself with an equally liberal circle, choosing to study method acting at the Actors Studio upon graduation from university. He first film, *A Face in The Crowd* like the aforementioned *Ben Hur*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was equally anti-conservative, telling the story of the potentially insidious nature of the media's advertising industry in luring audiences into its overarching capitalist agendas.

The two British actors in *The Omen*, David Warner and Billie Whitelaw both were also regarded as being non-conformist in their native countries before ever coming to Hollywood. David Warner, as Jennings, began his film career in an auspicious manner by taking a

[205] Phillip Yordan, *El Cid*, DVD. Directed by Anthony Mann (United States: Allied Artists, 1961).
[206] This may be because the story being a fabrication, but more likely, this omission may be down to the fact of his political reversal later in life, as mentioned earlier.

role in John Osborne's *Tom Jones*, a subversive play which challenged traditional theatrical presentation by adopting a Brechtian stance that often broke the fourth wall, by engaging directly with audiences. Likewise, Billie Whitelaw since meeting Samuel Beckett, an equally subversive playwright, in 1963 became indelibly associated with not only the man but also his work. Indeed, Beckett considered Whitelaw to be a perfect actress, and it was thus that she became not only his voice, but equally a muse for whom he wrote and rewrote each play. After Beckett's death, the actress became the foremost authority on the author's work and theatrical techniques. Being an aficionado of the experimental theatre of the absurd linked Whitelaw, like Warner, to anything but a conservative agenda.

Thus, while the form of *The Omen* seems to be aligned with a more liberal agenda when considering the actors and the connotations with which they are associated, this work that is considered as being ideologically conservative in academic circles may be refigured as being more appropriately unsettled ideologically. This nature will be further enhanced once the novelisation is included into an analysis of this textual constellation, an adaptive text that seems to present equally divided articulations.

Considerations of the Novelisation of *The Omen*

In the same year as the release of the film, screenwriter, David Seltzer published a companion novelisation to *The Omen*, which although similar on many of the key narrative points presented in the film, significantly, digresses from the original text with regard to the nature and efficacy of the Thorn family, while at the same time, further privileging the religious connectivity of this work. Indeed, while both the cinematic and narrative versions seem to position

spiritual belief and familial connectivity as two equally vital thematic concerns, unlike the film that links posterity and traditional religion as successfully operating in tandem, the novel seems to offer up these two *grand narratives* as being in a state of disintegration.

This failure is first presented, in the literary version, through descriptions of the Thorn family. Both the original and the adaptive text figures the Thorns to be an inseparable married couple on the surface, a fact which ironically brings about the ultimate downfall of husband and wife as it is through this connection that Robert Thorn is first exposed to the Satanists[207]. Admittedly, this is also true of the filmic version, however, the strength of familial connection is nonetheless foregrounded in the cinematic text through: montage sequences that document Robert and Kathy's investment in Damien's early years; the photographs of Kathy that Thorn keeps in his office and by his bedside; the utter despondency with which Thorn reacts to the news of his wife's murder; and finally his desire to destroy Damien as recompense for the loss of Kathy, "Kathy is dead. I want Damien to die, too"[208]. However, unlike the film, in the novelisation the family is in a state of disintegration, in trouble from the start, their happiness described as being a façade, "The brick wall that everyone else took for reality"[209]. Likewise, in the film, Kathy Thorn is portrayed as a strong woman who becomes increasingly unstable throughout the course of the narrative, an instability that is attributed, ostensibly, to the lie perpetrated by Thorn, and the concomitant introduction of the Anti-Christ changeling. This is not the case in the novelisation, however, as Kathy is directly referred to as being insecure, and unstable from the outset. With regard to the pregnancy, in the adaptation Seltzer suggests that the birth of the child would be, for Kathy, the only mechanism to stave off an

[207] It is Thorn's concern for the feelings of his wife that leads him to adopt the son of Satan in the first place.
[208] Seltzer, *The Omen* (Film).
[209] Seltzer, *The Omen* (Novelisation), 19.

essential loss of self-agency. It also goes on to tell of the previous attempts at procreation that ended badly, a detail that is not present in the film. Seltzer writes, "It was the third time now, and Thorn knew it was the last. If this time something went wrong, it would be the end of her sanity[210]. It is this assertion that suggests why the substitution of the devil child for the lost Thorn heir is an imperative.

Indeed, the novel also describes the importance of history, tradition and familial alliance; however, as opposed to the film, this tradition is seen to be failing. The history of the Bugenhagen family, a legacy that is carried down to the character Carl Bugenhagen. is described in the following way:

> It was a Bugenhagen, who in the year 1092 found the first progeny of Satan and devised the means of putting it to death. It was again a Bugenhagen in 1710 who found the second issue and damaged it to the point where it could summon no earthly power. They were religious zealots, the watch dogs of Christ; their mission, to keep the Unholy One from walking the face of the earth[211].

In an attempt to deny his heritage and the actions his forefathers took in destroying the Anti-Christ, Bugenhagen literally buried himself up in Meggido for protection, a place described in the book as being "the site where the Bible itself was created"[212]. Later in the narrative Bugenhagen confesses as much:

> The city of Jezreel, the town of Meggido, my fortress, my prison. The place where Christianity began. Geographically, this is the heart of Christianity. So long as I remain within, nothing can harm me[213].

The other differences between the novel and the film are also significant in regard to a thematic concern with faith and the destruction of *grand narratives*. For example, while the film opens with Thorn being rushed to the hospital already being aware of the

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210 Seltzer, *The Omen* (Novelisation), 9.
211 *Ibid*, 98-9.
212 *Ibid,* 167.
213 *Ibid*, 171.

news of his son's death, in the novel version, the opening is considered a preface to the Thorn story, beginning with the comet, one of the signals that the end of days is approaching and that the birth of the Anti-Christ is immanent. Seltzer describes the dark glowing star, arriving at the precise moment as predicted in the Old Testament as indicative of the moment when the history of the earth would change, similar to the events that occurred and following the arrival of the star of Bethlehem that signalled the birth of Jesus. The novel suggests that this comet that shone in exactly in the same manner as its Christian other, except on the other side of the world above Europe where the Anti-Christ was being born was to be the final indicator of a fall of modern civilisation that had been looming on the horizon:

> Now democracy was fading, mind-impairing drugs had become a new way of life, and in the few countries where freedom of worship was still allowed, it was widely proclaimed that God was dead. [B]rother had turned against brother, father against children; school busses and marketplaces exploded daily in the growing din of preparatory lust… Clearly, it was a conspiracy of events. The Book of Revelations (sic) had predicted it all[214].

Thus, the novel seems to foreground the collusion of predestination and religion with regard to prophecy and place from the opening of text.

This foregrounding orthodoxy continues throughout the novel. For example, as the changeling is presented in Seltzer's text, the substitution is described as "God's plan"[215], and the child itself as exhibiting, "angelic perfection"[216]. As the dark star reaches its apex, the Priest, who states, "For the sake of your wife, Signore, God will forgive this deception, further convinces Thorn. On this night, God has given you a son"[217]. Finally, the religious connection is solidified

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214 *Ibid*, 6.
215 *Ibid*, 11.
216 *Ibid*, 12.
217 *Ibid*, 13.

as Thorn who as he gives the baby to his wife while she cries tears of joy quietly thanks God for "showing him the way"[218].

Although religion becomes an increasingly important thematic trope, the characters themselves, as is the case in the film version as well, are portrayed as being agnostic:

> The Thorns were both of Catholic parentage, but neither of them were religious. Kathy was given to occasional prayer and visits to church on Christmas and Easter, but more out of superstition and sentiment than a belief in Catholic dogma[219].

However, while the film also alludes to the fact that the Thorns are not religious through a failure to show them entering into a church until Damien is five years old, and even then, to attend a wedding and not to worship, the novelisation, as suggested by the quotation above, makes this agnosticism manifest.

While indeed there are many significant differences between the original and adaptive works, there are also many significant similarities between the two, specifically with regard to the representation of the conflation of Catholic and Satanic spiritual beliefs, for indeed, not only are the prophecies shared between faiths, but also the tenets and histories, as suggested throughout this chapter. In this way belief becomes a key theme in this text not only in terms of religion, but also for personal stability. This is evidenced in a description of Thorn during one of his speeches the success of which is attributed to the fact that:

> He stirred people, and they believed in him…He was the image of a champion, and more important even than his own innate abilities, was that he could make the people believe[220].

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218 *Ibid*, 13.
219 *Ibid*, 14.
220 *Ibid*, 64-5.

Indeed, Thorn is portrayed as a figure that inspires belief, but who is not himself believer. However, although agnostic, the roots of the Catholic faith still remained in Thorn, as evidenced in the book:

> It was as though they had entered the medieval ages, and the presence of God, of spiritual holiness could be felt as though it were a physical living thing… Thorn was deeply upset, his knees trembling as though insisting he fall to them and pray[221].

This seed of faith that refuses to die is represented not only in the characters, but also the locations of religious significance, equally vital to both works as being signifiers of the persistence of faith. This is revealed in passages such as, "Rome itself was a hotbed of energy; the seat of Catholicism… the core of Satanism throughout the world. The atmosphere fairly crackled with power"[222]. Further, the monastery where Tassone (in the film Father Spilletto) lives is venerated as being on historic hallowed ground:

> It had stood on its mountain here in the southern Italian countryside since the time of Herod, and persisted in standing through all the sieges that followed. At the outset of World War II, all the monks within were shot by invading German forces who used it as a headquarters and cabal. It 1946 it was mortared by the Italians themselves, a retribution for the evil work that had gone on within… Santa Benedictus was a holy place … rising upwards from the very vaults of history[223].

Finally, Cerveteri, the cemetery wherein both the mother of Damien and the murdered Thorn heir are interred, is another ancient locus described in the film, but more adequately so in the book as being an ancient Etruscan burial ground, a place that God-fearing men avoided. The location was a shrine to Techulca, the Etruscan devil-god, thus described as ancient holy sacrificial ground[224]. Indeed, it appears that just as historic Christian locations can be imbued with religious significance throughout time, so can those of a satanic nature.

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221 *Ibid*, 139.
222 *Ibid*, 96.
223 *Ibid,* 137.
224 *Ibid*, 144.

Conclusions

As discussed in the previous chapter, in being embroiled in a significant socio-political and cultural paradigmatic shift the Literary Gothic Period shared a conundrum similar to that of the 1960s and 1970s eras. Indeed, even as modernity ushered in debate with regard to spiritual affiliation and the role of historical imperatives, so too did the period that saw its inception. While that which was being ushered out, in both instances orthodoxy, was similarly regarded as being mechanisms of repression, that which was being ushered in, at least on the surface, may be regarded as being almost diametrically opposed. Although, admittedly, following the Enlightenment, science became a novel structuring mechanism for the modern period overall, in terms of historic grand narratives, there was room for significant debate. During the Gothic Literary movement, both the legacy of the Enlightenment, and equally the result of the Reformation were still being felt. It is this added focus on religion and the importance of faith that represented an apparently antithetical concern. On the one hand, the Gothic modernists, according to scholars like Victor Sage and David Punter, embraced religion in the form of Anglican Protestantism even while they rejected the tenets of Catholicism while on the other hand the counter-culturals of the mid-1960s and 1970s were alternatively defined by a decidedly secular world view.

Indeed, as the perceived socio-political conservatism of early 1950s America gave way to the purported liberalism of the early 1960s, religion still played a key role in personal as well as social definitions. As Hugh McLeod suggests in the Religious Crisis of the 1960s, “In Selma, power [was experienced] in a melding together of political

action, religious faith and morality"[225]. However, while supporting the civil rights movement, churches were more reticent to become embroiled in issues surrounding the Vietnam War, arguably a significant cause celebre for the counter-culture movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. As the church, in turn, became less significant in instigating and supporting social movements, religion concomitantly become less relevant overall. McLeod suggests:

> For most of the counter-culturalists it was axiomatic that mainstream religion and churches were part of the conventional society which they had rejected… Belief in God, adherence to any formal code of morality, or loyalty to institution were often seen as ways of abdicating the individual's responsibility for self-realisation[226].

Just as contemporary modernists rejected mainstream religion, Gothic authors derided Catholicism for the self-same reasons. Indeed, much like the counter-culturals, Gothic artists considered the Orthodox Church too restrictive, too ordered, and too intrinsically concerned with hierarchy, and hence, the Gothic world was set up as an antipathy, a disordered and chaotic universe. Additionally, through the Gothic novel, a resounding fear of the supernatural was articulated that equally seemed to fall in line with both the Protestant and Scientific Revolutions. Within the Gothic lurks, as Victor Sage asserts:

> The survival and transformation of a popular Reformation tradition, in which anxiety about 'superstition' of all kinds is a regular component, and a mortuary sensibility to which decay itself is the ultimate 'Gothic' style, endlessly at hand, endlessly renewing itself, the past is always returning in the present[227].

Thus, while the Gothic may be regarded to foreground contemporaneous debates with regard to the potential dangers and concomitant lures of the supernatural realm, while at the same time calling into question the efficacy of Catholicism and orthodoxy overall, so too did the increased secularism and the rise of alternative religions in the mid-1960s and 1970s culture, ironically, usher in

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[225] McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 92.
[226] *Ibid*, 129-130.
[227] Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*, xxii.

similar concerns with these self-same debates making these two eras not as different as they might appear on the surface.

Finally, the thematic articulated in *The Omen* that positions Satanism and Catholicism as equally orthodox faith mechanisms, ultimately begs the question as to whether or not this textual constellation provides a critique of traditionalism, or in fact calls for a return to orthodoxy overall. It could indeed be argued that the fact of the antagonists ushering in the end of the world by establishing an oppositional yet nonetheless orthodox faith relates to anxieties with regard to the retrenchment of traditional historical religion, thus falling in line with its contemporaneous culture, as the Gothic did two hundred years earlier. However, it could equally be argued that by the very fact of making this religious configuration efficacious in its goals, while, at the end of the day, vanquishing those who hold no belief whatsoever could in fact be calling for the return of the structuring grand narratives. Regardless of the outcome to this question, indeed it could nonetheless be argued that within the world of horror, religion and religious debate is an integral component just as are the other elements that define it including spirits, ghosts and even Satan himself.

We find in the great historical religions a fear of the demonic, of human nature unchecked. In effect, the culture -- particularly modernist culture – took over the relation with the demonic. But instead of taming it, as religion tried to do, the secular culture began to accept it, explore it, and revel in it. Daniel Bell from *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*[228].

The rivalry between young and adult in Western society during the current decade is uniquely critical… For better or worse what is presently happening that is new… is the creation of a youth who are profoundly even fanatically alienated from the parental generation, or of those who address themselves primarily to the young[229]. Theodore Roszak on the period of the late 1960s.

Chapter Three: Lord Satan, I Have Nothing That Is Not Thine, Witchcraft, Satanism and Christianity at the Culmination of the Modern Age

Introduction

In the final scene from the film *Brotherhood of Satan*, the antagonists, all elderly members of an isolated desert community, are depicted engaging in a ritual whose outcome promises to restore their youth. In order for this to be achieved, the apparent coven of satanic worshippers must first pledge their souls to the Devil. In return for their allegiance, at the conclusion of a ceremony held in Satan's honour, the followers will come to inhabit the bodies of the film's sacrificial victims, the youth of the municipality who throughout the film have, one by one, been abducted and imprisoned by this religious group. The central conflict of the narrative is thus ostensibly fought between these Satanists who are regarded as the signifiers of evil, as articulated by their desire to fulfil their own hedonistic drives

[228] Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 19.
[229] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 1.

at all costs, and the remaining rural villagers who, as traditional Christian families, represent what is wholesome, what is 'good'.

What is interesting about this text, and indeed all of the works discussed in this chapter, is not this thematic concern with the battle of good versus evil, which is, arguably, common to all classical horror texts, but instead the specifics of this battle and the outcomes of such conflicts. What makes these works modern, at least on the surface, is the way in which they come to challenge the tenets of traditional horror texts in offering up conclusions wherein good does not always vanquish evil. However, what is even more interesting is the way in which these films in particular seem to equally challenge a philosophical trope common to modernist theory, namely that the young are those who reject traditionalism and in turn come to privilege the novel, the new and the modern, while the old, who are regarded as being more stalwart in their affiliations, may be aligned with conservative and traditional ideological underpinnings[230]. Indeed, if it is an unsettled nature in terms of narrative conclusions that makes these works modern, it is equally this disconcertedness in terms of thematic concern that questions this self-same philosophic alignment.

When further considering the socio-political underpinnings of these New Hollywood Alternative Religion Horror texts[231] produced during the mid-1960s and 1970s, such contemporaneous debates regarding the allure and desirability of modernity are equally problematized in

[230] Indeed, this configuration is represented by the two films earlier discussed in this chapter, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen*, both of which present youthful couples who are modern in outlook, being unaffiliated to traditional faith, and at least in the case of *Rosemary's Baby* are equally unfettered by any other form of generational legacy, rejecting family or any other such grounding mechanism.

[231] By alternative religion horror text is meant a cycle of works that at the time of their release were considered to be part of the horror genre, and which equally offered up a thematic concern with Satanism, Paganism or Witchcraft, faiths that were either pitted against traditional religion, or the modern world of scepticism and disbelief.

two significant ways: to begin, as suggested in their generic distinction, these texts foreground a thematic concern with the efficacy of alternative faith and religious connectivity, while at the same time presenting characters who are shown to be motivated by an overwhelming desire for youth by which their status may be heightened even at the expense of traditional methods of grounding commonly found through familial legacy. Works such as *The Witches (*aka *The Devil's Own)*, *Race with the Devil*, and *Brotherhood of Satan*, however, cannot be seen to present a simple dichotomy of traditionalism versus modernity wherein the latter is privileged because, in the first instance, the primary textual alternative religion, Satanism, even as it rejects of the tenets and rites of traditional Christianity, will, in fact be shown to be an orthodox spirituality itself steeped in an historical imperative imbued with rites, rituals and specific practices carried out by a religious congregation, and in the second instance, due to the fact that, in most cases, adherents of this self-same 'alternative' spirituality are often rewarded for their faith by being granted their upmost desire of achieving youth, thus further bringing into question where the alliances of these texts do in fact rest.

In the service of analysing these complex and at times ostensibly contradictory thematic concerns, a textual analysis of all three films will be engaged, and also, where applicable, the literary adaptive texts upon which they were based so as to understand these works as constellations of meaning that inform and expand upon each other. Then, into this discussion will be interpolated the intellectual context of the cultural milieu as forwarded by modernist theorists including Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch, and Marshall Berman, who in writing in and of the time offer insights into such contemporaneous cultural debates. Next, the tenets of Satanism as defined by Anton LaVey in the *Satanic Bible* will be addressed in the service of discovering how these texts may be placed within this era's culture of

belief, specifically with regard to conundrums surrounding the efficacy of traditional versus alternative spiritual affiliation and how these apply more specifically to concomitant socio-political conflicts between youth versus age. Finally, to further engage with these text's cultural embeddedness, the reception of these films will be explored so as to come to an understanding of the way in which both secular and religious communities might have interpreted these films and novels at the time of their release, and thus how adequately they may be regarded as supporting and disseminating contemporaneous cultural debates.

Modernity and the Cult of Youth

One of the characteristics of the modern as defined by cultural theorists such as Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch and Marshall Berman was a tendency to look forward rather than to look back, this focus fostering debates regarding a foregrounding of freedom over tradition and privileging of the new over the old. The modern world indeed promised an inexhaustible variety of things and ideas which the human subject was called to experience. For this reason, the modern ethos glorified self-exploration and a certain radical individualism over previously accepted defining mechanisms that relied upon an historical and traditional imperative, such as religion, that constrained such self-aggrandising tendencies and which were for this very reason, during this time, equally regarded as being restrictive and out-dated. Sam Binkley defines this time period as being a period of 'getting loose' and ironically, this rejection of traditional grounding did in fact destabilise more than it solidified, leading to a double bind culturally speaking, for as Berman argues in his seminal text on modernity entitled *All That Is Solid Melts into Air,*

"[There exists] contradictory forces and needs that inspire and torment us: our desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past and our insatiable desire for growth"[232]. In *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, Lasch further suggests that this conundrum as described above resulted in a culture of hedonism which masked its inherent instability in the cloak of a glorification of the self and the resultant formation of a cult of youth.

Indeed, as historical continuity became increasingly maligned, those who were at one time seen to possess the most desirable of qualities, namely wisdom, a good family name and a sound reputation, rather than being sought after as role models, became instead objects of threat because identity and self-identification became intrinsically tied to a newly prized status symbol, that of youth beauty and power. Christopher Lasch asserts:

> In a society that dreads old age and death, aging holds a special terror for those who fear dependence and whose self-esteem requires the admiration usually reserved for youth, beauty, celebrity or charm.[233]

In addition to this concomitant focus on a cult of youth brought on, arguably, by a modern narcissistic cultural condition, as traditional religion was rent from culture by the self-same mechanism, the promise of a life beyond the grave was no longer possible which further problematized this configuration. In bringing about an intensification of the fear of death, a decreased interest in posterity resulted. No longer was the modernist concerned with the passing on of legacies to future generations through which one could achieve, if not eternal life, at least a certain vicarious pleasure in the immortality of posterity. Instead of establishing legacy and accumulating wealth and respectability whereby one's progeny would

[232] Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, 34.
[233] Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 41.

benefit, the resounding ethos was to throw all caution to the wind and live for today. Thus, just as the rejection of the past brought about a socio-political devaluation of religion, it also ushered in a challenge to the family, and indeed, just as machineries whereby an efficacious identity were achieved in the past were devalued, so the past itself was equally defiled.

Marshall Berman suggests that this narcissistic drive may be regarded as an endemic element of the modern condition since the formation modernity itself, thus providing an ironic historical continuity within a primarily forward focused ethos. For example, in Goethe's *Faustus*, a work considered by Berman to be the original and ultimate modernist text, these very debates regarding a privileging of the new over the old, and youth over the aged, are signified through the characters of Philemon and Baucus. This elderly pair is invested not only with distinctive traditional Christian values such as innocence, generosity, self-less devotion and humility, but according to Berman, they equally may be located as being archetypes for those who, because of their ties to tradition, will come to be classified as obsolete:

> [Philemon and Baucus share] a distinctly modern pathos in being the first literary figures of what will become a popular modern trope, people who are in the way of history, progress, and development[234].

This chapter will argue that it is, in fact, these inherently modernist debates surrounding the formation of the cult of youth, and the concomitant rejection of history, tradition and the elderly that seem to be articulated and equally problematized in a group of films born out of this culture.

The Witches and the Dichotomy of the Old and the New

[234] Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, 67.

The first narrative to be considered, *The Witches* (aka *The Devil's Own*), both as a film and a novel is a work that articulates a concern with a privileging of the new over the old through the presentation of an antagonist who becomes increasingly obsessed with remaining young and who relies upon the rites and practices of Satanism to achieve this end. Equally, in presenting the efficacy of satanic practices over more traditional forms of religion such as Christianity, this work in both its forms seems to reject orthodoxy, and thus, at least on the surface, speaks directly to the debates described above.

In the filmic version of *The Witches*, the efficacy of traditional belief systems, or more appropriately the lack thereof, is first clearly evidenced within the village of Heddaby itself, the setting of both the filmic and literary narrative. Like in *The Wicker Man*, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, the physical Christian church is in a state of absolute ruin, and it appears as if within the parish no one adheres to any traditional religious dogma or is a member of any such Judeo-Christian congregation except for one member of the community, Alan Bax who, like Christopher Lee in the aforementioned film, *The Wicker Man*, is the village benefactor and an apparent spiritual leader. In both the book and the film versions of *The Witches*, he is dressed in Priestly vestments and equally his study, a room to which he absconds throughout this textual constellation, is described as being filled with triptychs, crosses, and religious music which, unlike other Christian signifiers, succeeds in emanating throughout the community.

Later in the cinematic work, however, it is revealed that Bax himself is not a Priest or even a man of the cloth, having failed to be ordained, a characterisation that differs from the literary version that

will be explored later. It is thus suggested in the film that the Christian symbols, music and garb with which this character surrounds himself are used in the service of offering "a feeling of security"[235], but in fact are wielded by a man who does not have the power to do so. Indeed, although the film uses traditional religious iconography as a method for remaining in safety and holding evil forces at bay, these do not possess the efficacy to do so because Bax is not a man of God, and thus rather than being able to wield objects that are made holy through his influence, they are, like the man, impotent secular items alone. In turn, rather than exorcising evil practices, or consolidating the community around a traditional system of belief, because there is no one who authentically represents this spiritual affiliation, the village is overrun by witchcraft and Satanism, the only religion, in fact, that is truly believed and practiced in the filmic version of this constellation.

Indeed, while traditional religion is devalued in the adapted version of *The Witches*, as no one appears as its true emissary, Satanism is more efficacious as a practice, possibly for the very reason that a powerful figurehead exists to guide and nurture belief, one who seems to use the faith for that which it was formulated, hedonistic pleasure, ironically, this being Stephanie Bax, Alan's sister. Although such a privileging initially may be regarded as being defamatory to those who practice traditional faith, such as the Christian community, after considering the foundations and tenets of Satanism, such a foregrounding of practice is not hard to fathom, for in many ways this belief system seems to espouse many of the self-aggrandising modernist concerns of the era, while at the same time offering a promise of grounding and stabilisation that the modern ethos appears to lack.

[235] Curtis, *The Witches*.

Satanism as an Alternative Traditional Religion in *The Satanic Bible* and in *The Witches*

In the prologue to the *Satanic Bible* written by Anton La Vey, the 'Black Pope' asserts:

> This is the age of Satan! Satan rules the Earth! The gods of the unjust are dead. This is the morning of magic, and undefiled wisdom. The FLESH prevaileth and a great Church shall be builded (sic), consecrated in its name. No longer shall man's salvation be dependent on self-denial. And it will be known that the world of the flesh and the living shall be the greatest preparation for any and all eternal delights[236]!

Indeed, in founding a belief system that is based upon the fulfilment of the hedonistic pleasures of the flesh and a rejection of the necessity of self-denial, the Church of Satan seems to support the ethos of the era as defined by Lasch, Bell and Berman above. If any religion can be defined as being the "religion of the age," it appears in this regard that Satanism fits the bill. In fact, when analysing this 'Bible' further, it would appear as if this whole system of faith is set up in antithesis to that of traditional Christianity, which La Vey perceives as antiquated and obsolete. The document begins with The Nine Satanic Statements, which like the Ten Commandments of traditional religion set out the dictums of the faith. In these statements indulgence, vengeance, instinctual action, and physical, emotional and mental gratification are all praised over abstinence, denial, and divine spiritual/ intellectual development. The *Infernal Diatribe* goes on to suggest that as traditional religious faith has waned, man has become closer to himself and farther from God, as La Vey suggests, "Closer to the Devil"[237]. He continues:

> Times have changed. Religious leaders no longer preach that all our natural actions are sinful. We no longer think sex is dirty-- or that

[236] Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (New York, Avon Books, 1969), 24.
[237] *Ibid*, 45.

taking pride in ourselves is shameful—or that wanting something someone else has is vicious. Of course not, times have changed[238]!

Satanism calls itself the modern faith, while at the same time acknowledging that man needs something in which to believe that appeals to his emotional nature. Overall, the text and its founder concede to the fact that man requires ritual and ceremony, and that something is needed to bridge the gap left by modernity between the scientific and the religious. It is this structuring absence, according to La Vey, that will be filled with Satanism. Interestingly, even as traditional religions like Catholicism and Protestantism alike were shedding such supernatural connections especially with regard to sacraments, accoutrements and liturgy Satanism was embracing them[239]. Thus rather than being modern, ironically, the church founded by Anton LaVey aligned itself to more antiquated forms of spiritualism that pre-existed not only the Second Vatican Council, but the Reformation as well. Indeed, Satanism might well consider itself to be modern, but in fact, when looking more closely, it might well be even more rooted in antiquity than the more traditional forms of religion that it rejected for this self-same reason of being out of step with the times.

Returning to the cultural articulations of Satanism, in the filmic version of *The Witches*, another element of contradiction comes in how the power of this religion is wielded in a way that inhibits rather than bolsters freedom, identity and the self. The manipulation of one

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[238] *Ibid*, 47.

[239] During the Reformation and continuing thereafter, sacraments such as Baptism, Confession and Communion were stripped of their supernatural power. In many Protestant faiths, the personal relationship established between God and Man made the confessing of sin to the clergy unnecessary, as one could now confess directly without the need of an intermediary. Beliefs regarding Communion and Baptism were also stripped of supernatural efficacy, as Protestantism increasingly denied that transubstantiation was occurring, that the wine and bread were literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ, and the water literally filled with his presence. Instead, Communion like Baptism became a show and tell device wherein one merely affirms and reaffirms their religion. Additional reforms to tradition came later in the Twentieth Century in the service of aggiornamento, or bringing together factions of the Christian Church. The Second Vatican Council called for sweeping reforms, one of which was changing the language of the liturgy from Latin to colloquial languages, another diversion from the historical tenets of traditional Catholicism.

such religious item, for example, is a black cat, the archetypal witch's familiar, which lurks around the cottage that protagonist Gwen Mayfield inhabits, ostensibly sent by one of the members of the Heddaby witches' coven to watch over and report on the newly appointed teacher. The other diabolic object is a voodoo doll stuck full of pins which possesses the power to sicken, weaken and kill. What is interesting in the context of the modernist cultural milieu, however, is the way in which these items of 'religion' are implemented. Indeed, rather than representing the hedonistic power that can be wielded against the forces of tradition and traditional religion, these items hold a powerful and strictly malevolent force that is bent solely on the destruction of the individual, for the voodoo doll murders, literally destroying the self, while the cat, as an instrument of surveillance, inhibits agency by disallowing private individual action. When viewed in this way Satanism becomes articulated as an ideology that may be manipulated in a way that is diametrically opposed to the modernist debates involving a radical individualism as expressed above. Equally, as will be shown below, in relying upon the collectivity of the coven, this religion seems to challenge a strictly hedonistic and wholly individualist agenda.

At the conclusion of the film, it appears as if the modernist agenda rules the day. In the penultimate scene of the film, the protagonist overthrows the satanic ceremony, first in following the coven to an isolated wooded area on the Bax estate, and then in subverting the proceedings involving a ritualistic dance, and the sacrifice of a young girl whom Stephanie will come to possess. Indeed not only does Gwen finally succeed in her quest to defeat the evil that was robbing her and others of agency, she does so through the volition of her own individual action alone,[240] this subversion and defeat arguably

[240] As opposed to the ceremonies presented in the novel version of *The Witches*, those portrayed in the film are not graphic either in terms of violence or sexuality. Neither do they in any way suggest that these practices are a form of religious desecration, as is evidenced in the novel.

suggesting that collective will is ineffective when brought against the strong will of a committed individual, and it is this privileging that is suggested in the way in which the film was received by Howard Thompson, in his review of the film published in *The New York Times*[241]. Written at the time of the film's release, the critic dedicates the majority of his analysis to the performance of Joan Fontaine, linking her choice of film to the career decisions of Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland and Joan Crawford all of whom equally accepted roles in horror/ thriller pieces late in their careers. He goes on to suggest that the film was star driven, and thus, Thompson's analysis falls in line with a reading wherein the individual character assumes precedence as a foregrounded narrative concern.

Indeed, it is only in the final scene of the film that this privileging of the individual is subverted a fact that makes this film, like *Eye of the Devil*, a collective work that will be discussed in a later chapter, harder to pinpoint in terms of ideology. In what amounts to a filmic narrative epilogue, Gwen Mayfield and Alan Bax, for the first time minus his religious vestments, are pictured together, and it is suggested that if they have not already, that they are soon to become romantically involved. In classical Hollywood style, all of the narrative ends are thus tied, including Bax's insecurity and Mayfield's spinsterhood, and it is with this conclusion that the film ultimately suggests that whereas satanic congregations may be ineffectual, traditional familial bonds, such as those that exist between husband and wife are what is really necessary for a 'happy ending.'

Returning to the Old: The Literary Version of *The Witches*

[241] Howard Thompson, "The Devil's Own in Neighborhood Houses," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1967, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

If in fact the film may be read as being ideologically unsettled, at once challenging and falling in line with the debates of the era, the novel may be seen to be equally contradictory in presenting a traditional approach and conclusion, while at the same time relying upon a much more subversive descriptive thread. This notable difference in thematic concern is evidenced with regard to the role of religion and religious affiliation in the conflict of good versus evil, a battle that links the text to more traditional horror texts.

In the novel, Thorby, the village patriarch and school benefactor is a legitimate Canon, and not a character who simply uses religious vestments as a form of safety net. Equally, in the novel as opposed to the film, Gwen herself is presented as a traditionally religious figure whose faith is strong and humble. This is evidenced in her belief in the sanctity of marriage, as the character suggests, "Any woman who makes a home and brings up a child is doing the job God created her for"[242]. Also a product of her religious devotion is her guilt toward the pleasure that she takes in the material world:

> Wrong perhaps, wear- to take such pleasure in nice surroundings, to set such value on what was, after all mere material. One must remember, always, how little such things really mattered… But even that Puritanical thought could not diminish her pleasure. God had put beauty into this world- even a snowdrop was meticulously designed- and He had given his skill to make beautiful things, so, if by chance one were fortunate enough to encounter lovely surroundings, one should be appreciative and grateful[243].

Indeed, unlike the film, traditional religious affiliation plays a much more significant role in the narrative overall, affecting an essential battle between characters that represent good, who are religious and God-fearing, and those who practice the 'dark arts' of witchcraft, and who are thus seen as representing evil.

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[242] Norah Loftis, *The Witches* (New York: Arrow Books, iBook Edition, 2011) 480.
[243] *Ibid*, 109.

An example of this moral struggle is articulated in the one local family's battle with Granny Rigby, the chief antagonist and main purveyor of witchcraft throughout the novel. The power exacted by this satanic witch is seen in a wholly negative light and becomes conflated with the practice of evil within the narrative: "Would God out such power into any mortal hands"[244]? One young boy, Sydney Baines, who becomes prey to the village witches, seems to be the primary victim as he becomes caught within this interplay of innocence versus malevolence. Gwen describes him in the following way, "[A] Methodist… he had probably been reared to believe that little boys who told lied went straight to Hell"[245]. The God-fearing Baines family is the first victim of the evils of the village as Sydney falls into a coma at the hands of Rigby. In an attempt to affect a cure, Emily Baines, the boy's mother, goes to Rigby.

When Gwen speaks to Emily following this incident, this once religious woman is distant and reluctant to admit that her son was a victim of foul play, causing Gwen to discern, "Mrs. Baines has changed sides'[246]. Mr. Wesley Baines suggests of his wife's transition, "Em's took against me, and against you, and against chapel, and took up with owd Mrs. Rigby"[247]. In fact, later in the narrative, like in the film, once cured, Emily disappears with Sydney, while Wesley, choosing to stay in his ancestral home, is killed by these supposed witches during a sabot on Midsummer's Eve. Later in the novel version of the narrative, Gwen seeks Emily and Sydney out in their new home in London, where after a brief interview with Mrs. Baines, her suspicions of Emily's complicity in the Heddaby coven are confirmed:

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244 *Ibid*, 285.
245 *Ibid*, 201.
246 *Ibid*, 336.
247 *Ibid*, 491.

> I was right about her. She changed sides to save Sydney; she brought the intelligence and teachability which had enabled her to pass her professional examinations to bear upon the learning of the Black Arts. She has been disgusted by the filth. She wasn't the convert they thought they had made[248].

If Gwen Mayfield as a character can be considered an example of an active and morally conscious protagonist, then Canon Thorby's sister, Isabel (Stephanie in the novel version), acts as a character foil, not only in being morally ambiguous, but also in lacking a certain strong self-agency, completely opposite to the characterisation in the film. Indeed, the novel seems to present Isabel not as an erudite woman wholly in control of her actions and those of everyone around her as the film does, but instead as an individual with no strong sense of self. To return to the text, "Her manner was gracious, her words well chosen, her smile sweet and frequent, but it all added up to nothing. She was not there, and she somehow reduced you to nothing too"[249]. This character, it would appear, is presented as being possessed by the evil powers of witchcraft, rather than in control of them when it is revealed that after having died as a child, Isabel was taken to Granny Rigby who administered certain herbs that brought her back to life:

> When Isabel was- shall we say moribund, Mrs Thorby, who was alive then and a bit of a crank, insisted on calling Phoebe Rigby who brewed some nettle tea or something horrid and got her breathing again[250].

Indeed, rather than being a willing an active participant, Isabel is presented as a character who is beholden to practice witchcraft in order to pay restitution for being saved from death. In this way witchcraft is conceived of as being evil and agency robbing, rather than a source of power, a configuration that will be radically challenged in texts such as *Rosemary's Baby*.

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248 *Ibid*, 925.
249 *Ibid*, 143.
250 *Ibid*, 1007.

The Old and the New: *The Witches* and the Efficacy of Traditionalism versus Modernity

Like in all the texts presented throughout this thesis alternative religion whether it be Paganism, Satanism or Witchcraft is characterized as an old religion, predating all others, even traditional Christianity. Usually, in terms of these other alternative religion texts, this articulation is used to bestow an element of power and authenticity to this non-traditional faith mechanism, thus making this alternative faith, arguably even more orthodox than orthodoxy through bestowing upon it a historical legacy. In the case of the literary version of *The Witches*, however, the reason for this articulation of witchcraft as an old faith, at least when it comes to this particular text, has more to do with establishing this alternative religious practice as being outdated and uncivilized rather than historically grounded.

First, the practice of witchcraft is seen as being essentially an antiquated belief system, and unlike more traditional religious affiliation, has no connection or relevance in the modern day. In the novel, the practice of witchcraft, although suspected by Gwen, is dismissed as a nightmarish impossibility, regarded more a fantasy than fact, "His mother's strange almost distraught accusations against Mrs. Rigby seemed like some detail from a nightmare, remembered in bright sunlight"[251]. However, as Gwen comes across an effigy of the young Baines boy, her suspicions, unbelievable as they are, seem to be confirmed:

> What madness is this? This is the year nineteen hundred and fifty-nine. Nobody has believed in witchcraft for at least two hundred years; the laws against it have been repealed; and here I stand an

[251] *Ibid*, 310.

ordinary God-fearing village school teacher…. With evidence in *my hand*[252].

When Gwen tries to go to Cannon Thorby, the village patriarch, she is discredited, "If I gave one moment's credence to such superstition, I should be utterly unfit for the vocation I follow[253]. As she pursues the matter, convinced of her conclusions, she is silenced ostensibly by the very powers that she seeks to vanquish. She, like young Sydney is incapacitated, and hospitalized awaking from a coma similar to Baines' with no memory of what had happened before.

Convinced that the key to her memory lies in returning to Heddaby, she enters her cottage and not only does her memory return, but also knowledge as to its loss:

She had thought that her loss of memory was due to a blow on the head, but apparently, it had another cause, something not very far from a form of mental illness. Having cried herself out, she knelt by her bed and prayed for courage, and for faith, and for help"[254].

Thus, the text seems to suggest that witchcraft is not of the here and now, and when practiced is confined to small villages in remote locations like Heddaby.

In addition to being perceptually antiquated the novel equally suggests the nature of the sabot rituals as being a desecration to God, Christian dogma and its icons, a sinking into the world of the obscene and the uncivilized. The final scene of the novel, like the film involves the sacrifice of the young village girl. However, in this version the ceremony is held in the local church that is desecrated with ceremonial orgies, feasting and drinking, and the partaking of communion, a sacrament not involving wine and bread, but faecal matter and viscera placed into the chalice designed for more

252 *Ibid*, 370.
253 *Ibid*, 555.
254 *Ibid*, 681.

traditional religious practices. The fact that these rites are all enacted without any vestments at all, religious or otherwise, also suggests the bestial nature of these rituals, as Gwen observed, "Man's great step forward out of the animal world was not when he heaved himself up on his back legs… No, man's Rubicon had been crossed when he first covered his nakedness"[255]. Another indication of the separation between these practices and more 'civilized' rituals occurs as the members of the coven partake in a ceremonial feast, which is laid out on the altar designed for the laying out of communion. Gwen also comments upon this inversion of the highly reserved function of eating: to return to the novel," Table manners. There again, you had the conflict between the animal and the human being. To eat was to live, and the primitive instinct was to tear it with claws and teeth, gobble it down"[256].

Not only was food an object of animalistic overindulgence, but equally sex was practiced in abandon. Of these practices Gwen observes, "The books had said 'sexual orgies' and 'debauchery' and 'perversion,' but to her these had been mere arrangements of certain letters which formed certain words. They had no more prepared her for what, on this Hallowse'en, was following the feasting and the drinking… Even to look upon this scene was to be soiled for this was deliberate obscenity"[257]. Indeed, another characteristic of alternative religion texts produced from the mid-1960s onward is an ever increased use of bestial sexuality and overindulgence as a rite versus the sabot rituals that involve human sacrifice that characterise the earlier classical horror films. This, arguably, suggests that whereas the concerns of the earlier works rest with the protection of human agency enabled through religious affiliation, the texts of the later period concern themselves more with the expression of desire,

[255] *Ibid*, 1100.
[256] *Ibid*, 1106.
[257] *Ibid*, 1109.

a trope that will come to characterize not only the works produced in the 1970s, but as discussed above, the concerns of the era as a whole.

Even though all ends with good overcoming evil at the hands of a woman who is righteous, the novel, although akin to the film in many plot points differs widely in terms of theme when it comes to the efficacy of religion. In the film, religion does not play a strong role and seems to have already been vanquished at the start, while in the novel, it is religious conviction that leads Gwen to discern the true nature of Granny Rigby and Isabel, and thus overcome the evil in the village.

The second way in which the film version of *The Witches* seems to articulate the ethos of the modern era has to do with the purpose behind the rituals, for in the desire to possess the body of the young village girl, Stephanie Bax falls in line with the desire to remain young, and the fear of old age, undesirability and death. Indeed, in the film, the antagonist and head of the coven is seen to be affiliated with Satanism not as a method of achieving power from collective agency, but instead wields the dark forces under her control for wholly selfish reasons. Unbenounced to her followers, who appear to be faithful to a higher power, Bax seeks to enact the ritualistic sacrifice, a trope of the earlier depictions of witchcraft, in homage to the cult of youth over homage to Satan himself. The offering of the sacrifice is thus made not to appease, but instead to create a young and beautiful husk that she will in turn inhabit. This nod to the cult of youth is articulated not only in *The Witches*, the earliest text to be discussed in this chapter, but also throughout these satanic witchcraft constellations, as will be located later in this chapter.

Thus, in the literary version of *The Witches*, the old and the new represent a key thematic trope wherein the old is aligned not only with what is ancient, but equally what is uncivilised. What is interesting is that it is this method, one that is steeped in the archaic that is used in the service of making the main antagonist young, her greatest desire. This thematic, much like its filmic adaptation, results in making this text more unsettled than it may appear in terms of its allegiance to the cult of youth, an intrinsically modernist construct. Equally, it is traditional religion, an orthodox faith that is used to defeat the alternative faith, which even though figured as being ancient, is nonetheless also articulated as being an antithesis to traditional faith mechanisms, also calling into question this text overall position with regard to contemporaneous debates with regard to the efficacy of traditionalism versus the tenets of modernity, especially when considered as a textual constellation involving not only a novel, but an adaptive film as well. Regardless of the allegiances, however, these debates regarding the old versus the new, the cult of youth versus the benefits of the aged, and the modern versus the traditional, as will be seen below, are common to many alternative religion films during this period, thus figuring them as being not only embedded within these contemporaneous conundrums, but equally as a mechanism whereby these concerns are disseminated.

Race with the Devil and Modernist Affiliations

Another representative of this cycle of occult-based alternative religion horror films, *Race with the Devil*, according to one review, “Seems to be trying… for an archetypal confrontation between middle-American values, and bizarre counter-culture elements embodied by the Satanists,” and it is this apparent conflict directly suggested in the reception of the film that links this text to the issues

of modernity and the cult of youth as detailed above. Indeed, as the era progressed, the counter-cultural movement became increasingly aligned with the youth movement to the point where the two, arguably, became indistinguishable. Not only did its leaders like Abbie Hoffman, ironically at twenty-nine himself, warn not to trust anyone over thirty, the young people of the late 1960s and 1970s had come to adopt many of the tropes and tenets reserved for Counter Cultural adherents. According to Beth Bailey in *Sex in the Heartland*:

> By the late 1960s America's youth culture had come to look very much like the counterculture. Long-haired boys and braless girls. Psychedelic music. Pot. Sex. The counterculture and its style became mainstream youth culture, the styles and behaviour that challenged the notion of respectability became increasingly widespread[258].

However, while this alignment between the film and these debates surrounding the youth/Counter Culture movement are certainly evident throughout, as will be seen below, locating just who may be defined as Middle-Americans and who will come to signify the counter-culturists may be up for debate.

On the one side, the protagonists, two families of husbands, wives and even pet dogs, who choose to vacation in a mobile home with all the mod-cons could be seen as, arguably, being representative of middle class values, including familial connectivity and corporate success. However, they could equally be seen as signifying the Counter Culture not only by their choice to keep off the beaten track, sticking to the literal and figurative 'road less traveled', but even more significantly by the fact of the choice of the star of the film, Peter Fonda, an actor inexorably tied to the Counter Culture youth

[258] Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 141.

movement as a result of his involvement in the film *Easy Rider*[259] as an actor, writer and producer[260].

Equally, the locals that make up the Satanist sect could be seen to be on the side of middle-class American values, through their adherence to a belief system to which they are devoutly loyal, and which necessitates a sense of community responsibility. However, on the other side of the proverbial coin, the Satanists by virtue of their choice of religious affiliation could easily be seen as representative of a Counter Cultural movement, for indeed the practice of Satanism was forwarded and popularized by equally iconic youth movement figures like Rolling Stones front-man Mick Jagger and Kenneth Anger, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis. What links the Satanists to the Counter Cultural movement even more than connotations resulting from the extra-textual promulgation of their faith are the ways in which certain rites are incorporated into their religious practice, namely ritualistic sex[261]. In fact, the freeing of cultural mores regarding fornication and monogamy was a key trope of the youth culture beginning in the late 1960s[262]. While, arguably, it was not until the middle 1970s that sexuality became more freely represented in the filmmaking practices

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[259] Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Terry Southern, *Easy Rider*, DVD. Directed by Dennis Hopper (United States: Columbia Pictures, 1969).

[260] This work, made at the height of the counterculture youth movement, in telling the story of two men, portrayed by Hopper and Fonda, who opt out of corporate society, take to the open road on motorcycles to find themselves, take drugs, and have indiscriminate sex came to symbolise this movement, even though, ironically, they are doomed to die at the hands of red-neck right-wing conservatives at the end of the film.

[261] As the filmic protagonists, Roger and Frank, played by Fonda and Warren Oats respectively, look on from a distance, they witness a group of unknown persons who begin to engage in a ritual. All are dressed in robes, while the leader of cult wears not only robes but also a horned mask. All undress and the ritual appears to turn into an orgy, culminating in the sacrifice of a woman. This film, along with *Rosemary's Baby*, was one of the first to link the practice of Satanism with sex, and even in the 1968 film, although the members of the coven were unclothed, sex was a means to an end, the spawning of the Anti-Christ, rather than a ritualistic practice in and of itself.

[262] The wholesale availability of oral contraceptives once approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960, and rulings disallowing denial of prescriptions for unmarried women in 1972, when combined with the legalisation of abortion after the Roe v Wade decision in 1973 broke down the remaining barriers regarding promiscuity as women no longer had to be concerned about 'getting into trouble' after sex. With increased secularisation, the mores were further weakened ushering in an era of what was coined 'Free Love.'

of the United States, even in films that were not part of mainstream cinema like the horror genre[263], debates surrounding the use of sexuality and promiscuity as a weapon against the mainstream were, however, circulating culturally. Bailey argues that during the mid-1960s, even with the widespread availability of the contraceptive pill to married and unmarried women alike, sexuality was not a tool wielded by the Counter Cultural movement. She asserts:

> Most members of the New Left, who were in 1965, political but not cultural radicals, did not see sex as a tool of revolution. They sought political solutions to injustice and inequality; sex seemed beside the point[264].

However, as the era progressed, promiscuity and sexual openness, while still heteronormative, became a way of creating distanciation between the youth movement and the mainstream. She goes on to argue of Jerry Rubin's 'Yippies':

> Sex was a lure to youth; it was part of an attempt by the more political strand of the counterculture to tap into the youth movement, to sell a revolutionary consciousness. They reasoned that young people drawn by sex, drugs and rock-n-roll would discover a new politics through the practice of freedom. For the Yippies, however, sex was also a challenge thrown in the fact of 'Amerika'[265].

In this way sexuality was used as a form of revolt, not only by the Counter Culture movement, but increasingly by the youth movement as well, as the two converged. Thus, the direct referencing of sex as part of a practice that could be seen as being radically outside the mainstream, namely the practice of Satanism whose tenets present a dichotomy to Christianity becomes aligned with the modern sensibility which challenges older, more traditional elements of culture.

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263 Film theorists like Linda Williams notes that it was not until the release of *Deep Throat* in 1972 that representations of sexuality became more culturally acceptable outside of a strictly pornographic definition.
264 Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 155.
265 *Ibid*, 157.

However, the practice of Satanism cannot be so easily defined nor aligned. Indeed, when looking beneath the surface, this alternative religious practice, at least as represented in this and the other works discussed in this thesis, also has steadfast roots in history and tradition that could be seen to challenge its status as being alternative, and indeed revolutionary, as argued earlier in this chapter. This is suggested in *Race with the Devil*, as the presider of the satanic coven addresses his congregation with the following sentiment, "You are wakened by this rune to be silent. Any, evil you cause will be returned to you nine-fold. So mote it be"[266], he connects this practice to archaic forms of spirituality, for example ancient Germanic and Celtic faiths. Later in the narrative, these runic religious icons are directly articulated to be elements of pre-Christian belief systems, "old religions." It is this link to the past, to old traditions that are seen to be efficacious when manipulated by those who believe that makes Satanism, at least within this work, more of a traditional form of religious practice, especially when it is noted that these rites can only be enacted as a group, a coven, rather than individually. Indeed if a lack of belief in the power of religion, the foregrounding of the new over the ancient and the privileging of the individual are elements of the modern culture, then this spiritual affiliation appears to act in opposition not only to the Counter Culture youth movement specifically, but in fact to the ethos of modernity overall. Indeed, as has been argued throughout this section, not only were those who were aligned with traditional orthodox religions seen to value an adherence to spiritual belief systems, but so too the Counter Culture movement which in a search for personal enlightenment in the guise of alternative religions and alternative states of consciousness equally formed unique spiritual communities based upon this desire for personal enlightenment.

[266] Bishop, *Race with the Devil*.

Like in the texts addressed in this work as a whole, whereas the members of the coven appear to hold strong spiritual beliefs, and thus possess the power of community and communal action, the two protagonist couples, on the other hand, do not seem to be affiliated with any belief system whatsoever. The only evidence of any ties to religion comes when Roger's dog is killed, and as it is buried, the couples not only say a 'few words' over the grave, but are equally compelled to leave an offering, the dog's lead and collar. Also, whereas the community of believers seem to be quite tight-knit, allowing for the successful monitoring, terrorizing and eventual capture of the two couples, the two families are singularly isolated, having no close sense of community. This is manifested in *Race with the Devil* by a suspicion of strangers, revealed when the protagonists opt to stay in a five-star motor home park wherein, even though apparently and up-scale facility replete with swimming pool, the couples feel that they are being watched, monitored and invaded. Indeed, the protagonists possess no desire to form any connections outside of each other, and it is this double bind found in a lack of connectivity, and a lack of belief that brings about the ultimate undoing of these individuals. At the conclusion of the film, the four are literally isolated by a ring of fire, started by the Satanists, which prevents them from continuing on, going back or escaping in any way. The fact that not only the flames, but also the worshippers then come to surround these individuals, suggests yet again that in community lies strength and individualism will only lead to both spiritual and physical death.

It could thus be argued that it is this very articulation of contemporaneous cultural debates from both sides of the conservative/ liberal divide that may be the reason for the negative way in which the film was received. Indeed, like *The Witches*, reviews regarded the film as incomprehensible. For example, according to *The New York Times*, this film was regarded as a:

> Ridiculous mish-mash of a movie for people who never grew up, which is not to say it's for children. One would think that Mr Fonda and Mr Oates had better things to do, but perhaps not. American movie production is in a bad state[267].

Significantly, a reference to the child-like narrative structure further alludes to the dichotomy between the old and the new, the youthful and the aged, the modern and the traditional, and while this film does engage with these self-same debates, it seems a failure to take sides, even more than potentially controversial articulations regarding sexuality, sacrifice and alternative religious practice may be the cause for its overall negative reception in a culture that was increasingly fracturing along these self-same fault lines.

The Brotherhood of Satan and the Cult of Youth

Like in the other films discussed in this chapter, *The Brotherhood of Satan*, addresses debates surrounding the modern versus the traditional, the efficacy of spiritual affiliation, and the establishment of a Counter Cultural cult of youth. However, as alluded to in the introduction of this chapter, this low-budget film is also unique in providing an interesting point for analysis for two reasons: first, it presents, for the first time in this discussion, a true dichotomy of belief as both Christianity and Satanism are represented[268]; and secondly because it is the young that are seen as being more traditional while the old are seen as being radicals, thus offering up a reversal of contemporaneous cultural debates regarding the establishment of the Counter Cultural youth movement. In fact, ironically, it is the young that believe in the sanctity of the family and equally who believe in the power of traditional Christianity to protect

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[267] Vincent Canby, "The Screen: In Race with the Devil, Witches Are Hunters," *The New York Times*, July 10, 1975, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

[268] As discussed above, the filmic version of *The Witches*, Gwen does not hold any belief while the village patriarch only relies on the accoutrements and not practices of Christianity to protect against evil, while in *Race with the Devil*, there is no one on the side of traditional Christianity, and only Satanism-cum-traditional-religion is engaged as a belief system.

such traditional kinship formations against any evil that poses a threat. In a scene that spans the opening of the film, for example, a family consisting of a young mother, father and their two children are seen to scold their offspring for leaving the protective environs of the home, thus articulating from the opening of this work the primacy of home and hearth as a source of safety and stability over external mechanisms such as the commodification culture whereby modern characters such as Guy and Rosemary Woodhouse are defined.

This privileging of the traditional is not only expressed in the foregrounding of the private realm, however, but is shown to extend to that which occurs within these surroundings. Indeed, the families of this community are represented as leading very traditional lives, in which they take their supper with all gathered around the dining room table, and before eating, bow their heads in prayer:

> Oh Lord, we thank thee for the bounty we are about to receive for the blessings that will come our way in the future. OH Lord, we thank thee with a full and humble heart, Amen[269].

This lifestyle is not unique to this family, but indeed, seems represent the way in which family life is conducted in all the homes of the village of Hillsborough, and it is this return to tradition that is contrasted not only by the outsider protagonist family but equally by the elderly members of the town.

As will be discussed in relationship to the paganist alternative religion films of the following section, this mode of life that may be regarded to be apart from its cultural milieu, is literalised by the way in which the village is set in a remote and isolated location, this apartness acting as a safeguarding mechanism for the perpetuation of an alternative lifestyle, similar to other films of the era including *The*

[269] Jones, *The Brotherhood of Satan*.

Wicker Man and *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home.* This is further made manifest when the protagonists enter into this town, thus providing a counterpoint to this community of ingrained belief. The outsider family stands apart not only because they are strangers within a closed, tightly knit community, but also because they are not representative of tradition in the same way as the locals themselves seem to be. Whereas there is, admittedly, a father and mother figure and a young child for which they are responsible, it comes to be known that the man and woman, Ben and Nikki respectively, are not married, Ben having been recently widowed, making them a nuclear family, but not a traditional one. Likewise, whereas the child, K.T., is the daughter of Ben, she is not related to Nikki by either birth or marriage, making the youngster's situation vis a vis her family more precarious. Just as the strangers may be regarded as being other and divorced from tradition, so too, ironically, are the elderly of the community. While common for a young couple to adopt an alternative lifestyle, in presenting an aged group that does the same *The Brotherhood of Satan* seems to provide a contrast not only to the discourses of the films discussed in this thesis, but indeed to the modern ethos overall, for although both the old and the young seem to hold faith in the power of religion, the choice of faith and the reasons guiding their choice are almost diametrically opposed.

If the young families of Hillsborough hold on to their faith as a means for protection of the family unit, the safety of others rather than for individual benefit, the older inhabitants worship for the narcissistic gains they will receive. Operating from a more hedonistic perspective common to the modern culture as discussed by Christopher Lasch, the belief system held by the elderly members of Hillsborough will lead to personal reward, in this instance being made young again, at the expense of the very families described earlier[270].

[270] In this way *The Brotherhood of Satan* articulates a thematic concern that is almost diametrically opposed to texts such as *Rosemary's Baby*, the latter film presenting a youthful

In adhering to the practice of Satanism, as depicted in this work, the older members of the community are thus required not only to be subservient to their god, a commonality of all religions, but also to provide a sacrifice in the form of the children of the township so as to enact a return to youth, which unlike traditional faiths represents a decidedly hedonistic bent. This constellation of traditional and alternative practice, as is the case with *The Witches*, involves the use of the accoutrements of Christianity in the service of sacrilege. Indeed, in many ways Satanism is configured as another traditional faith in its use of candles, chalices, robes and Latin liturgy and also as with traditional religion, the members of the congregation must show subservience, by bowing, through restitution for sin, and by pledging to follow the will of their god. In a representation of one such ceremony, the coven must promise to bend to the will of Satan, "I have nothing that is not thine," using the traditional Biblical language of the church including this prayer and the Benedictus. Additionally, like in traditional religion there is the promise of rebirth, but in the case of Satanism, this rebirth is literal and physical and not merely a spiritual renewal.

The first way in which this text may be regarded in forwarding a modernist agenda comes, as is discussed in relationship to the other texts analysed throughout this study, with the fact that Christianity is not regarded to be efficacious, while Satanism, as an alternative religion, is seen to yield desired results. For example, the Priest in the community, although he prays for the souls of his parish, sprinkles holy water, and admonishes sins, is not able to save the children of the Hillsborough while the geriatric worshippers of the Devil achieve their desire in taking over the bodies of the children through the affiliation of a radical religion. Indeed, as the narrative

couple, the husband of which is willing to sacrifice his family for personal success, while the elderly Satanists, although on the surface alternative, seem to adhere to a religion that in many ways is figured as being traditional in nature, as discussed in Chapter One.

progresses, it is discovered that this community is not only geographically isolated, being in the middle of the desert, and wilfully cut-off as those who wish to leave are killed and those wishing to enter are deterred from doing so, but more importantly philosophically apart wherein the young are enacting a return to traditionalism[271] within a predominantly modernist culture while the old are negating an historical imperative that includes familial connectivity and religious traditionalism.

Indeed, when researching the reception of *Brotherhood of Satan*, it is this dichotomy of culture that is rendered incomprehensible. Roger Greenspun of *The New York Times*, who overall gave this film a positive review, argues of the scenes related to the coven, "The actual brotherhood is a pretty dismal affair, a kind of black magic golden age club to whom hooded figures serve cocktails before they settle down to do their blood and witchcraft. Much of the latter involves a parody of religious rituals… that only disrupts the mood at hand"[272]. Further, when Greenspun speaks of religious parody questions arise as to which religion is derided, Christianity or Satanism. For indeed, Satanism in existing as a dichotomy to traditional religion could be considered to be a parody, but at the same time, in presenting old age pensioners as worshippers of the Devil, a practice that, at least in terms of the media has been reserved for the likes of Mick Jagger, Kenneth Anger and Jayne Mansfield, this wholly oppositional representation can equally be said to parody this radically alternative form of spiritual belief, especially

[271] Admittedly, this was a time when ultra-conservative faiths such as the church lead by the Reverend Billy Graham was on the rise in the United States, but even though a powerful force in the religious community, it was still a minority, demographically speaking. This minority status is even more pronounced within a study of the horror texts that form the case studies for this thesis wherein, with the exception of *Carrie*, there is no representation of this faith community.

[272] Roger Greenspun, "Horror film," review of The Brotherhood of Satan, *The New York Times*, August 7, 1971, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

when in many ways the rituals possess accoutrements that align its practice to more traditional forms.

Conclusions

What this chapter has argued is that Satanism in these representative examples of alternative religion films, which are only a small fraction of the total body of work produced during this era, on the surface seem to present Devil worship as completely antithetical to traditional Christian practices. It is the use of similar ritual, liturgy, and accoutrements in the service of rejecting the tenets of Christianity and serving an antithetical God that makes this oppositional relationship all the more clearly defined. However, when analysed more deeply, it could equally be argued that Satanism, as the only religion on offer in the majority of these works, still adheres to traditions inherent to historical and familial connectivity in being a practice that relies upon congregations and supernatural mechanisms. Indeed, the title of this section, 'dichotomies of belief' takes on a double meaning in this context. Is the location of the dichotomy to be found in Satanism's relationship to Christianity, or in its connection of the modernist culture out of which it arose which negates some of the very tenets to which this faith adheres? Is Satanism a product of the modern condition inherently, or is it the way that it is used in the service of a modern agenda that makes it so?

Section Two: Paganism and 'The Old Religion' as Alternative Spiritualties in 1960s and 1970s Horror

I am the wind which breathes on the sea

I am the wave of the ocean

I am the murmur of the billows

I am the ox of the seven combats

I am the vulture upon the rocks

I am a beam of the sun

I am the fairest of plants

I am the wild boar in valour

I am a salmon in the water

I am a lake in the plain

I am a word of science

I am the point of the lance at battle

I am the God who created in the head of fire

Who it is who throws light into the meeting on the mountain?

Who announces the age of the moon?

Who teaches the place where couches the sun?

(If not I)[273]

Amergin

[273] Patrick Murray, *The Deer's Cry* (Dublin: Estate of Patrick J. Murray Press, 1986).

John Bowen… takes Norah's uncertain point of view, echoing *Rosemary's Baby* while looking forward to…*The Wicker Man*. Rarely has the dark side of British folk legend been portrayed with such fearsome precision. David Thompson's Review of *Robin Redbreast*[274]

People growing up in communities of memory not only hear the stories that how the community came to be, what its hopes and fears are and how its ideals are exemplified in outstanding men and women; they also participate in the practices – ritual, aesthetic, ethical—that define the community as a way of life[275].

Chapter Four: Searching for Sunken Sherds: Paganism versus the Modern in *Eye of the Devil* and *Robin Redbreast*

Introduction

In the penultimate shot from *Robin Redbreast*, an instalment from the BBC series *Play for Today* written by John Bowen, and directed by James Mac Taggart, protagonist Nora Palmer, who up unit this moment has been effectively held prisoner in her cottage by the local residents, turns around and gazes at what was meant to be her rural retreat for the last time. In a moment of true insight while regarding the scene behind her, she witnesses her maid, her handyman and the village patriarch alter in appearance, divulging what has come to be known as their true natures. The maid is revealed to be a witch, the handyman a magi, and the patriarch a horned Herne the Hunter.

[274] David Thompson, "Cult TV Pick: Robin Redbreast," *Film Comment 49,* no. 6 (2013): 76.
[275] Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, 154.

This, in effect, is a direct confirmation of what she had come to believe, that the community in which she briefly made her home is in fact under the influence of Paganism, the residents signifiers of this ancient religion, and she, as was suspected all along, prey to their plot. As the rural residents are revealed in their true colours, so to speak[276], likewise is Palmer who, garbed in a mini-dress, and sheathed in her expensive sports car, pregnant but unmarried, becomes as an exemplar of her nature, that of the modern woman. However, before she speeds away, her eyes have been opened, the inexplicable machinations of the spirituality which lies beneath momentarily revealed. Thus, even as she both literally and figuratively turns her back on this isolated and isolating rural world and the religious affiliation with which it is inexorably associated, she is not the same Norah Palmer. Like the revealed appearance of the locals, she herself has also changed: a transformation now defined by her connection to the Pagan realm and her concomitant inability to deny not only the very existence of the supernatural realm, but equally its apparent efficacy when wielded in the hands of those who have come to truly believe. Indeed, through this complicity she can no longer be defined as being wholly modern, and now must live with an internal conflict between belief and scepticism as she must equally live with the baby that grows inside of her, a confirmation of her brush with forces beyond her control. This self-same dichotomy of on the one hand the modern world of scepticism and on the other the pre-modern world of spirituality, as will be argued throughout this chapter, forms not only the central conflict of this work and a group of others like it but on a larger scale the very culture of the mid-1960s and 1970s which underpins this artistic output.

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[276] Ironically, the teleplay was originally produced in colour. During its telecast, however, an electrician's work to rule prevented transmission to all regions, and so the following February, the teleplay was re-aired, making this the first *Play for Today* to be repeated. As was BBC practice, there was no concern with archiving materials, however, so when re-broadcast, only the black and white version was available to air. Thus whereas the characters are revealed in their true colours, the teleplay was not.

This representation of alternative belief systems threads back into cultural concerns with regard to the efficacy of and necessity for faith that was equally prevalent in the debates surrounding the rise of the Counter Culture. Like other groups that made up the movement, the 'hippies,' searched for a more authentic existence through which the individual could re-discover the self; re-establish meaningful interpersonal relationships; and re-connect to the world. The hippies fell in line with larger counter-cultural concerns in believing that this could be achieved through a rejection of all things traditional, orthodoxies which at the time were regarded as being confining. However, even while refuting such tenets, the hippie movement equally renounced the primary mechanism whereby, contemporaneously, tradition was rejected, namely modernity itself. Indeed, the hippies argued that it was only by rejecting the urban world of forward-focused commerce, enacting a physical return to nature, and spiritually communing with the natural world that man could once again achieve happiness and a sense of fulfilment. Thus, they searched for answers by looking back to an archaic time: long before the Enlightenment, and the Reformation, long before even the birth of Christianity itself, when, as part of the agrarian landscape, man was not only figuratively, but also literally closer to his roots. As a result of this connectivity, hippies, like their forefathers, came to worship the source of the bounty by which their lives were bound: the spirits and Gods buried in every aspect of the rural environment.

This chapter will argue that this anachronistic tendency was common not only to debates circulated within the 'hippie' movement but also those horror texts that deal with alternative religion, works such as

The Eye of the Devil, *its* literary antecedent *Day of the Arrow*[277], and *Robin Redbreast*[278]. In being produced at a time that is popularly discerned as being at the height of the hippie movement, and equally at a time of an increased acceptance of viable alternative religions, such a collusion between this cultural ethos and the era's artistic output does not seem hard to fathom. However, as will be argued below, such connectivity is not as simple as it first appears. While the movement, arguably, used this return as a means toward personal autonomy and a resultant stabilisation of the individual, the Pagan horror texts, and indeed Paganism in general, instead configured this agrarianism as a highly stratified system of traditional religious faith under which historical imperatives and inescapable duty were paramount. Equally, in terms of past connections and spiritual articulations, Paganism can be seen not to be in conflict with tradition, but instead to underpin it, as this archaic religion actually becomes a foundation upon which Catholicism is overlaid. Indeed, within this "treacherous moral landscape"[279] at the culmination of the modern and beginning of the postmodern eras, these older pagan ties function not as a form of release from tradition, a 'getting loose' to coin a phrase used by Sam Binkley, but instead act as a more radical form of orthodoxy. When viewed in this way, these texts may be seen to present a challenge not only to the ethos of the Counter Cultural movement of the period, and to the concerns of the hippies more specifically, but to the modernist ethos as well.

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[277] Both the film and its literary counterpart will be herein discussed so as to provide an understanding of these texts as constellations which as a whole engage and amplify the issues on which each individually mediate.

[278] All of the texts in this thesis share a commonality in not only articulating a thematic concern with alternative religion, but also in being produced in the United States, or being funded thereby. *Robin Redbreast*, admittedly stands apart in this regard, in being produced by the BBC for the British domestic market. However, this teleplay is also considered to be a significant antecedent to *The Wicker Man*, a text which will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter, which is why it has herein been included.

[279] Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (United States: Duke University Press, 2007), xiii.

With regard to method, the film, *Eye of the Devil* and teleplay, *Robin Red Breast*, were chosen for their nature as critically discerned linked discourses and, more importantly, as representatives of larger trends within alternative religion films dealing with Paganism. These texts will thus form the basis of an analysis that seeks to discover the ways in which, as artistic output, they function within their larger socio-cultural context. With this goal in mind, a close textual reading of the films, the teleplays, and where applicable their adaptive literary sources will be informed by the reception of these texts, criticism published by both secular and religious journals which will allow for a more privileged understanding of these works as both informing and disseminating the cultural milieu of which they were an integral part.

Enacting a Return to Nature and Tradition as a Rejection of Modernist Fragmentation in the Film Version of *Eye of the Devil*

As suggested in the introduction, the period extending from the mid-1960s to the 1970s was a time of intense cultural conflict that brought about significant changes in what it meant to be spiritual for those who chose to be so. An example of this can be found through a focus on the Counter Cultural movement of the United States, which in recoiling from the destabilising forces that modernity had unleased, attempted retrenchment, not through reactionary calls for order and authority, as was arguably the case with the 1980s, but instead by adopting doctrines of self-liberation and release in the search for new objects of devotion that would fill the void left by the disintegration of old systems of belief and authority. For many counter-culturals the answer to this crisis came in ‘dropping out’ so as to find a place

wherein things could be done differently[280], and for many so-called 'hippies' such a place could be found not in the urban mecca, which became synonymous with the modern way of life at least since the industrial revolution, but instead in the rural countryside, a location that stood for its pre-modern antithesis. As Sam Binkley in *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* suggests:

> One could release oneself into the loving spirit of a replenishing earth and all of its interdependent systems, if one could sufficiently open one's mind and reform one's habits[281].

For the hippies, to find one's-self individuals, simply, had to return to nature and thus rural communes were established. These agrarian communities offered the freedom to pursue individual self-expression without the hindrance of social norms and mores. Binkley goes on to suggest:

> The country seemed the place where experiments in social change could be practiced differently, on a smaller, more intimate scale, directly upon one's self and on one's style of life. Pastoral life, for many counter-culturals, promised radical self-fulfilment in an arena sheltered from the turbulent upheavals of modern social life[282].

It was believed that this domain that was at once 'very old and very new'[283], could provide roots, and open up the opportunity for a meaningful connected existence without at the same time enacting a tendency toward restriction. Here one could be grounded and free at the same time, to have one's vegan oat cakes and eat them too. It is precisely this return to a more authentic and meaningful existence that becomes the focus of *Eye of the Devil*, a British/ American co-production made in 1966, a film which sets up a dichotomy between a modern world of scepticism and the agrarian community of belief.

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[280] There was even a deification of nature presented by 'free thinkers' such as James Lovelock who introduced the concept of Gaia wherein the ecosystem became an animate and sentient force.
[281] Binkley, *Getting Loose*, 133.
[282] Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, 41.
[283] *Ibid*

The film opens with the protagonist, Philippe Montfaucon, who is seen to be living a privileged and successful life in urban environs, specifically Paris, a city that could, in fact, be seen to be the locus of European modernity[284]. While attending a dinner party, Montfaucon is summarily called to return to his ancestral home from which he has long been absent. He is informed that the reason for the summons has to do with the surrounding vineyards which have not been yielding fruit, causing havoc not only to the village, but also the family business which sustains it. Knowing what will be required, Montfaucon agrees to leave his acquired modern lifestyle and as he contemplates the necessity of this, begins to doodle on a notepad emblazoned with the Montfaucon familial crest. As he draws an arrow through the dove in this historic genealogical signifier his fate as sacrificial victim of an ancient Pagan ritual is accepted and in fact sealed. Whilst the protagonist is quite aware of what will be required in order to reinvigorate the crops, his wife and children are not only completely unaware of the reason for the summons, but also, initially, are not invited to accompany Phillippe, they being products of the modern, the urban, and thus out of place in a world that Philippe's wife likens to being straight out of the middle ages[285]. Philippe in returning to Bellenac is thus affecting a return to the past, to historic traditions that have been all but forgotten when he assumed his modern life, and in this way the narrative seems to fit within the Counter Cultural discourse that articulated the benefits of such an anachronistic manoeuvre.

However, rather than being a return that results in self-determination and freedom, as the hippies of the 1970s suggested when rejecting the modern and instead assuming a rural, communal life, the world that Montfaucon will come once again to embrace, is diametrically

[284] Indeed, the urban is inexorably linked with the rise of modernity, for according to Max Weber, the foundation of Western rationalism was laid with 'urban revolution'. (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 321)
[285] Thompson, *Eye of the Devil*.

opposed to an ethos of 'getting loose' in the sense that Binkley suggests. Upon his arrival, the village greets Philippe with respectful awe, taking off their hats as he passes, a sign of respect for their lord and master to whom their lives depend, this suggesting a system that is not based on freedom and self-determination, but instead one that is highly stratified. Additionally, Father Dominique, the local Priest, who is waiting for Philippe, bestows upon the Landlord a pendant, an heirloom, marking Philippe as the sacrificial lamb who will be lead to the slaughter later in the film, a trinket that like the religion to which they adhere has been handed down from generation to generation. Indeed, rather than a loosening that results in the bolstering of self-agency, to return to the country, and to the Pagan connectivity with nature, for Philippe, is an engulfment in the deeply rooted traditions that bind him culminating in a loss of self rather than assertion of individuality and free will.

Catherine, who arrives with her son against the wishes of her husband, observes the ceremony that marks the complicity of the landlord in the events that will follow. The ritual that takes place in a room lit by candles is presided over by twelve men garbed in dark robes who receive an animal sacrifice in the form of a dove that has been shot through with an arrow, another symbol of the sacrifice to come[286]. When Catherine confronts her husband about these rites and his involvement therein Philippe answers that Bellenac is steeped in "strange rituals that have been practiced by his family for a thousand years"[287]. Upon returning to his ancestral home, he goes

[286] The links to the Christian can be located in the *Old Testament of the Bible* wherein offerings were often made to God as restitution for sin, these in the form of fatted calves, lambs, or even doves and pigeons. Not only this, but in the Psalms, another reference is made that not only equates the spirit of God to a bird, but also suggests that his love will protect against the sting of an arrow, 'He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. You will not be afraid of the terror by night, Or of the arrow that flies by day; Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon'. (Psalm 91) Equally, the use of candles and the donning of robes suggest a debt to traditional Christian practices of worship.

[287] Thompson, *Eye of the Devil*.

on to suggest that he has once again begun to think in terms of generations, and to embrace tradition. Further, with regard to the significance of such an adherence, James B. Twitchell in *Dreadful Pleasures* asserts of the modern age that the giving up witchcraft, which is often aligned with Paganism, was much more than an act of renunciation. He argues, "It is giving up both a sense of ourselves in nature as well as a cultural heritage that stretches back well before mythology"[288], and it is exactly this struggle between the old and the new that seems to be played out within *Eye of the Devil*.

This unhinging from the modern is evidenced further when Catherine finds Philippe praying following the aforementioned ritualistic preparations for the final sacrifice at which point she enquires as to why he is engaged in this way. Father Dominique, rather than Philippe, retorts that it is a strange and secular world that demands what it means for a man to pray[289], directly alluding to the protagonist's increasing loss of connection with what it means to be modern in the sense that Twitchell suggests above. Indeed, not only is he engaged in ritualistic practices, steeped in faith and tradition, and willing to give his life over to these, he has also now relinquished his voice, allowing The Church to speak on his behalf. Thus, the return to nature that is presented in this film is not a loosening of ties that bind and a bolstering of opportunities for personal freedom, but instead, a radical return to a deeply rooted tradition that engulfs the individual within a generational imperative. It is for this reason that this text, and equally *Robin Redbreast*, as will be discussed below, negates the ethos of the era in which it was created, foregrounding the need for a return not to the earth per se, but instead to the ancient religious traditions that attempt to restore and commune with the natural world.

[288] James B. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*, 24.
[289] Thompson, *Eye of the Devil*.

Thus, the acceptance of religious belief systems seems to be a thematic imperative of *Eye of the Devil*, as proposed above, however rather than embracing either Paganism or indeed even Catholicism, both of which may be regarded as equally orthodox, it is specifically a Christo-Pagan root alone that has efficacy within this work. In fact, although it appears that Catholicism has come to dominate Bellenac and the surrounding village, the Church is, upon closer inspection, a veneer, a coating that masks but does not dominate over the Pagan roots that undergird it. This religious configuration is evidenced in the celebration of the local festival known as 'The Treize Jours' or the Thirteen Days when translated into English. The name of the festival is in many ways overdetermined and thus the meaning behind the title potentially significant for both Catholic and Pagan beliefs. The 'Treize Jours' could, on the one hand, easily be a mispronunciation of the thirteen performers/dancers, or the 'Treize Jouers', the number thirteen being noteworthy for the Church in representing the twelve apostles plus the sacrificial lamb of Christ, who must die to bring about new life. The term dancers in this context may equally be interpreted as those who follow the steps as the apostles followed in the footsteps of Christ. Indeed, although this concept is presented in The *Apocrypha*[290] which talks of the 'Twelve dancing on high', there is no longer a biblical referent for this connection between followers of Christ and dancers. The only remaining substantial tie between Christ and the act of dancing can be found in a popular contemporary Anglican hymn entitled *Lord of the Dance*:

I danced in the morning when the world was begun
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth
At Bethlehem I had my birth
Dance then wherever you may be;
For I am the Lord of the dance, said He,

[290] *The Apocrypha* is an ancient collection of writings included in early versions *of The Bible* until the Puritan revolution of the 1600s excised it.

And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance said He[291].

What is interesting about the hymn, written by Englishman Sydney Carter[292], is the fact that whereas the tune was taken from an American Shaker song, the words have a decidedly pagan element, as was noted in the obituary of the songwriter published in *The Telegraph* newspaper. Of the song, Carter admits:

I did not think the churches would like it at all. I thought many people would find it pretty far flown, probably heretical and anyway dubiously Christian. But in fact people did sing it and, unknown to me, it touched a chord"[293].

The fact that this hymn is modern, penned in 1963, and went on to become, according to the same article, one of the most popular and celebrated religious songs of the twentieth century, potentially suggests another inspirational element in addition to the ancient Bible.

While the potential heretical elements of *Lord of the Dance* were overlooked by the real life Anglican Church, the fictional characters in the film do not react so liberally to this nod to the pagan within an apparently Catholic celebration like the Thirteen Days. Once again, upon witnessing, but not comprehending the significance of these rituals, Catherine describes the celebration of 'The Treize Jours' as, "primitive nonsense"[294], however, Philippe now wholly subsumed in these religious traditions retorts, "It is our belief in something that makes it for a moment, or forever divine,"[295] this again a signal of the dichotomy and increasing division between not only the beliefs of

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[291] Sydney Carter, *Lord of the Dance*. *Hymnary.org*., http://www.hymnary.org/text/i_danced_in_the_morning_when_the, accessed March 16, 2016.

[292] Interestingly, Carter's legacy rests not only in the creation of this potentially controversial hymn, but also in his contributions to television, and more specifically a satire series for the American ABC television network entitled Hallelujah and Don't Just Sit There for which he wrote a song, *The Devil Wore a Crucifix*. While the Lord of the Dance won him praise, apparently, according to the Telegraph Obituary, this collaboration did not win such universal approval.

[293] "Sydney Carter Obituary'" *The Telegraph*, March 16, 2004, Obituaries Section, Final Edition.

[294] Thompson, *Eye of the Devil.*

[295] *Ibid*. This quotation is also used in the original literary text, *Day of the Arrow*.

husband and wife, but indeed what these individuals represent: Catherine the modern, urban world of scepticism and unbelief, and Philippe the ancient, pre-modern world of tradition, ceremony and alternative spirituality.

As was suggested above, the roots of the festival of the 'Thirteen Days' can be linked on the surface to the celebration of Pentecost, wherein the gift of the holy spirit, the birth of the Church and the ministry of the Apostles in spreading the message of Christ is celebrated, however, as with the hymn that may have inspired it, there is also a deeper significance to this ritual. Indeed, it is suggested within the film that this divine belief system practiced in the local church and presided over by Father Dominique is not reducible to a traditional Catholic Mass held in Latin, but instead a service invoking the 'older Gods', the thirteenth member of the dancers being a living deity, but not necessarily a Christian one[296].

Any question of the efficacious nature of these rituals is rendered moot as film concludes with the sacrifice of Philippe amidst the grape vines of Bellenac which as a result will soon be rejuvenated. As he is shot and mortally wounded by an arrow, the titular arrow from the novel upon which the film was based, *Day of the Arrow*, Catherine looks on, but is powerless to stop the proceedings. The body of her dead husband is carried back to the manor and once again as the Marquis is paraded through the streets, the villagers, in awe of their saviour, cross themselves, suggesting a connectivity to the Catholic,

[296] Significantly, it was during this time that the Second Vatican Council mandated that the Catholic mass be conducted not in the traditional Latin, but instead in the local vernacular in order to make the meaning of the services more accessible to the celebrants. In this case the use of Latin not only evokes a return to a traditional mass, but also masks the significance of the celebration and the focus of the worship, articulating the need not only for a return to traditionalism, but an even older and more efficacious tradition than mere Christianity could offer.

and to the Pagan, in that both revere and believe in the efficacy of sacrifice.

This ending presents an analytic challenge because, from the standpoint of mainstream filmmaking, the message is unclear. Is good restored with the return to the traditional ways of the village, the prospering of the land, and the rites that keep this connectivity intact, or does evil win out as both the father, Philippe, and son, Jacques, were and will be sacrificed for the land in pagan rituals? If the former is true, then the film uniquely challenges the modernist ethos of the era wherein the self increasingly assumes precedence over all else making this film, like the others in the alternative religion cycle quite controversial. Indeed, in the exceedingly short review published in *The New York Times*, *Eye of the Devil* is panned as being a text that is rendered incomprehensible for its sacrificial ending. Bosley Crowther argues:

> David Niven, a wealthy vineyard owner… gets himself hopelessly involved with his peasants in some black magic rituals in order to restore the health of his grapes. In order to bring his vines back into condition, he has to allow himself to be destroyed by a silver arrow, which is enough to mystify anybody[297].

Thus, even though complicit in contemporaneous cultural debates by enacting a return to nature, the fact of providing a focus on something greater than the self through foregrounding the importance of a link to history, and a connectivity between the community seems to render this film culturally incomprehensible, suggesting a disconnect between the ethos of the era and the anachronistic drive toward tradition, a tradition older and even more efficacious than even Catholicism itself.

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[297] Bosley Crowther, “Screen: 'Eye of the Devil' Begins Run: Deborah Kerr Appears With David Niven 5 Other Films Arrive in Local Theaters East-West Twin Bill Local Double Bill,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1967, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

Indeed, as will also be seen with *Robin Redbreast,* and later with *The Wicker Man* another Pagan text, *The Eye of the Devil* does not confirm that the spilling of blood will in fact result in the future success of the crops. It is simply confirmed, in both cases, that they whole heartedly believe that it will be so as long as these traditions are preserved. The ending line from the film signals this continuation of belief as young Jacques leaves the car in which his mother, Catherine, his aunt Estelle, and his sister are departing, claiming that he has forgotten his watch. Rather than seeking the timepiece, however, the young Marquis seeks Pere Dominique under whose watchful eye Jacques kisses the pendant, the symbol of the Montfaucon legacy. As returns to the car, his mother enquires, "Did you find it?"[298] to which the boy responds, "Yes.[299]. It is obvious that here the meaning and significance of the pronoun 'it' differs from mother to son. For Catherine 'it' refers to a simple object, a watch, but for Jacques 'it' refers to the acceptance of the Pagan that exists within Bellenac, and now within himself as well. Indeed, what the young heir means is that he has in fact embraced the traditions and found belief, something much larger than the mere modern object that his mother believes he is speaking of.

Thus, overall, the genealogical return to the country articulates a concern with the way in which a meaningful connected existence may be achieved through embracing the pastoral, but in a way that is radically different from that promised by the hippie communes that were popularised in the historic milieu in which this film was made. Indeed, Montfaucon, and his son have and will return to the country, reject the city, and become one with nature. Likewise, however, this embrace is equally and significantly achieved through acceptance of

[298] Thompson, *Eye of The Devil*.
[299] *Ibid*.

tradition which results in the loss of self rather than the pursuit of self-interest, making this film diametrically opposed to the ethos of 'getting loose.'

Day of the Arrow and *Eye of the Devil* as a Discursive Continuum

The novel upon which the film *Eye of the Devil* was based, entitled *Day of the Arrow*, written by the screenwriter of the aforementioned film, Robin Estridge under the alias Philip Loraine, articulates many of the same themes as that of its adaptive text. Indeed, as in the film, the necessity and efficacy of belief, the acceptance of historical imperatives and the inescapable need to embrace tradition, are all pitted against the ethos of the modern condition, a philosophy that in both works is rendered impotent, making the original and adaptive texts appear as a continuum.

In terms of organisation and thematic concern, both the film and its literary antecedent establish a dichotomy, in which the modern city life, and the pre-modern, pagan, pastoral environment come into direct conflict. Equally foregrounded in both versions of this text is an articulation of what can be gained from making such a choice when it comes to accepting the necessity of spirituality, and historical connectivity. Indeed, as this textual constellation progresses there is an obvious connection between the modern and the pre-modern and certain fictional characters that come to represent these opposing ethos, and thus their fate becomes tied to the efficacy of these contradictory philosophies. This is revealed from the outset of the novel, like in the film, as Philippe Montfaucon seems to abandon his patrilineal duties to his ancestral home, thus initially setting him up to be a modern man, and thus similar not only to his wife Francoise

(Catherine in the film), but also his roommate James Lindsay[300]. The book reveals that Lindsay and Montfaucon once not only shared a friendship, but equally an accommodation in Paris. Philippe, the text suggests, relocated to this urban mecca to deny his provincial roots and ancestral legacy, while Lindsay, a poor Scottish[301] painter, to hone his skills and establish himself as an artist. However, like in the film, those characters that are aligned with the modern and those that are more connected with pre-modern concerns begin to differentiate themselves as the narrative progresses.

For the novel, this process of dichotomisation begins with a geographical dislocation, as Lindsay remains in Paris, while Montfaucon ends up marrying 'the girl' and embarking upon a blissful journey of self-discovery with his new wife. Even as the protagonist and his character foil seem share a modern sensibility at the beginning, this ideological connection too begins to break down, just as it does between Montfaucon and his wife. Upon reconnecting with Lindsay in Paris, Francoise de Montfaucon, who is found to be engaged in an extra-marital affair, speaks of a newly acquired attitude in her husband which has had the effect of driving them apart. Lindsay learns that the Marquis, in the interim, has not only returned to Bellac (Bellenac in the film), but has also begun to embrace his agrarian beginnings. The novel suggests that as Philippe has come closer to his thirtieth birthday, a time of transition from young adulthood[302], to adulthood proper, another metamorphosis begins to take hold this time resulting not only in a change of location, but equally a change of character. Francoise

[300] An addition to the filmic work is a literary protagonist, James Lindsay, who like Francoise (Catherine in the film) equally represents modernist tendencies.
[301] It is interesting that in the novel version of this extended text there is not only the addition of a protagonist, but in fact a Scottish protagonist. As will be discussed later, this country has a unique and specific history of religious belief that ties it to not only the foundations of Catholicism, but also the roots of Paganism.
[302] This age is also significant for the contemporaneous 'Yippie' movement, whose leader Abbie Hoffman, as suggested in an earlier chapter, warned not to trust anyone over thirty, as this was the time when adulthood and a concomitant acceptance of traditionalism took hold.

explains of her husband, “He used to laugh about it [Bellac]; he said he’d rather die than live there; he used to do wicked imitations of the people and the dialect”[303]. Now, however, this derision with regard to the Montfaucon home has completely abated as has the physical and psychological distanciation. The Marquise goes on, “He hasn’t left the valley in two years. He isn’t living in Bellac, he *is* Bellac.”[304] This is further made manifest during a conversation between the old roommates once they are reunited upon the request of Francoise. While Lindsay is seen to be a bit sentimental for his somewhat misspent youth, Philippe, by contrast, now regards his past with the same distain that he once felt for Bellac. The Marquis suggests:

> Never envy those people [modern individuals], James. Living as we did: a month here, three months there—Rome, New York, Lisbon, London, Rio—it’s like … a chain of caves; one progresses ever deeper into absolute nothingness, absolute darkness, a kind of living extinction[305].

This observation, given the climax and conclusion of the narrative, admittedly, is somewhat ironic not only because of the way in which the perceived counter-cultural thread is severed in chasing tradition over freedom, but equally because in embracing tradition, and a connectivity to history only a promise of death and sacrifice ensues. However, when given insight into what Philippe has come to believe, accept and enact, this sentiment has specific and profound resonance, for in offering himself through the spilling of blood to rejuvenate the crops, his life is transferred to the grapes that sustain the family and the surrounding village, and thus his spirit will be extended, worshipped and glorified.

In this way the groundless condition of disbelief cannot but culminate in a spiritual death, while the act of sacrifice that will bring about death in a literal sense becomes life affirming. Arguably, Montfaucon

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[303] Loraine, *Day of the Arrow*, 14.
[304] *Ibid*.
[305] *Ibid*, 41.

is made authentic by being grounded in something bigger, more significant and more real than the individual alone could ever provide. Philippe goes on:

> I stood there looking at it [Bellac] in the moonlight, listening to the owls, and dog barking miles away, and the ducks on the lake making a fuss about something. And you know… I could feel… I could *feel* all those wasted years peeling off me… I lay down on the grass. I felt… I felt suddenly that I had become myself[306].

This connection to family, heritage and an historical imperative is equally foregrounded when in describing the Marquis d'Bellac Lindsay suggests:

> [His self-assurance] came, he always imagined, from a youth spent in a world where the family was still the pivotal point, the centre of the universe, a fortress of love, all protecting—instead of the kind of incompetently run youth hostel it had become in America and England[307].

Indeed, the legacy and historical connections of 'old families' are also clearly meant to bolster a sense of belonging to something larger than the individual self while equally acting to assuage loss or feelings of being alone, thus representing an ethos that, like the geographical dislocation, stands apart from the modernist ethos.

Significantly, this sense of belonging is signified by the presence not only of the familial estate itself, a physical locus, but also the adornment of the castle walls with portraits of the Montfaucon lineage, a genealogical connectivity there to support or scorn accordingly. Even though apparently 'incomprehensible' to quote the words of Crowther, these ties that bind nonetheless hold a certain allure for the more modern and unbelieving individuals such as Francoise, who goes on to suggest of her husband and his beliefs:

> He wouldn't be the first frightened man to… to fall back on old superstitions… More than that, she said, is our century so robust—is

306 *Ibid*, 43.
307 *Ibid*, 7.

our way of life so secure—that we have no need of… reassurance about things of the spirit[308]?

In fact, as is suggested in the film as well as the novel, the role of the Montfaucon male is more than that of a landlord. The Marquis is a spiritual figurehead to be cherished and adored for the very reason of the imminent sacrifice that each will ultimately make. While the film visually alludes to this, the novel makes this relationship between lord and villager manifest, "Lindsay was watching the nursemaid, transfixed by the look which she had turned on her master- a look of blind adoration"[309]. The people of Bellac, it would seem, do not look upon the Marquis de Bellac as a mere mortal man, but instead a God, a being imbued with supernatural powers and magic.

The Day of the Arrow, like *Eye of the Devil*, foregrounds this supernatural element by linking the practice of Paganism to that of witchcraft, and also to that of Catholicism[310]. One example of this collusion can be found in the form of the sacrificial dove, a signifier for Philippe found in both the film and the novel that is, according to the literary version, regarded with reverence, as "some kind of Eucharist"[311]. Also, while the vast majority of the members of the inner circle of thirteen are male there is one female, Odile[312],

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[308] *Ibid*, 60.
[309] *Ibid*, 35.
[310] This connection is not surprising as one of the many inspirations for the novel was Frazer's *Golden Bough*, a commonality between this work and the subsequent texts discussed in this section. As with *The Wicker Man*, there was also a desire on the part of the filmmakers to portray the religious devotions depicted consistently and correctly, which is why an expert in Paganism, Alex Sanders, 'King of the Witches,' was called in as a consultant. Were such concerns equally a part of *The Omen*, potentially the film might not have received such pans from critics.
[311] *Ibid*, 59.
[312] In the film, Odile is portrayed by Sharon Tate, a celebrity, arguably famous more for her connections to famous filmmaker husband Roman Polanski and her tragic end than her career as an actress. From an extra-textual perspective, this connection proves interesting not only because it links this film to another in this cycle of Alternative Religion narratives, namely *Rosemary's Baby*, which was directed by Polanski, but also because it links this work to the pervasiveness of the spiritual and the religious cult during this time period. Indeed, the fact that Tate was killed by the infamous 'Manson Family' indelibly ties this work to the import and influence of a contemporaneous desire for community and spiritual

portrayed in both the novel and the film as having unexplained powers that result in her being considered to be a witch, like so many females before her. The novel suggests, "Oh yes… she is a witch, all right. Never underestimate the knowledge of a witch; mankind has forgotten more things, than he will ever learn"[313].

However, it is not witchcraft alone that drives the beliefs of the village of Bellac, but instead a worship that combines and undercurrent of Paganism with an overlaying of Catholicism, as is later suggested in the novel:

> But witchcraft isn't the answer; that isn't what drives Philippe. A man who spends hours… on his knees in front of the altar isn't pagan; just the opposite—he's almost too much of a Christian.[314]

This hybrid faith that combines Pagan roots with Catholic beliefs is directly evidenced by the celebration of the Thirteen Days, represented in both versions of the text, and which the novel describes in the following way:

> There were processions, fancy dress, masks; the beautiful crucifix was taken down from the church and carried around the village. Even Lindsay, with his slight knowledge of things, could see that much which happened on Bellac's day of the Thirteen Days had its roots in the religions that flourished before Christ, but then everybody knew that the early Church had been much too wise of try to eradicate the ancient beliefs, preferring to incorporate them into her own ritual[315].

Although both the novel and the film present this celebration and allude to its pagan roots, thus aligning the two texts overall in terms of theme, the novel in making the history manifest equally makes the connections between belief systems more durable.

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connection that, as is discussed throughout this thesis, is a defining mechanism of the mid-1960s and 1970s era.

313 *Ibid*, 106.

314 *Ibid*, 118.

315 *Ibid*, 119.

In fact, the literary version goes into more detail than the adaptation with regard to the basis of the celebration of the Thirteen Days as being dedicated Mithra, the Persian God brought to France by the Romans. This deity who in the novel is described as reigning over both light and darkness, protecting cattle and guarding rivers has essential Pagan roots in being connected with and ruling over the natural world. Equally, however, Mithra has connections to Judeo-Christianity when he is described as a God who preached of Good overcoming Evil in the same way as Christ had done much later in history. In offering this description, the reason for the collusion of faiths in terms of rites performed in his name makes more sense. The aforementioned dance, represented in both the film and the novel is thus revealed to have significance as a fertility ritual enacted to make the earth fruitful, as Mithra himself did when he sacrificed a bull from whose wound sprang not blood, but instead ears of corn.

Also, like the film, the connection between the observance of the Thirteen Days and the concept of the performance/dance (Jours/Jouers) is made manifest. The ritual involves not only a celebration alone, but may be regarded as being divisive as is suggested in a poem that is used as an epitaph and grave marker:

> I would be saved, and I would save, Amen
> The Twelve dance on high, Amen
> The Whole on high hath part in our dancing, Amen
> Whoso danceth not, knoweth not what cometh to pass, Amen[316].

Herein, not only is there a reference to the significance of the dance, it is made using the traditional language of the Church, once again overlaying the Pagan with the Catholic, but also the idea of

316 *Ibid*, 98.

exclusivity is also introduced, which according to authors like Max Weber may be seen to be a pre-Christian construct.

Weber argues that the significance of and emphasis on a concomitant strengthening of Western Rationalism and weakening of magic and ritual also acted to challenge insider/outsider dualisms which were common among Pagan tribes, and clans[317]. In other words, while the formation of The Church as a delineated community became legitimated by its ethos of inclusivity, charity, compassion, and universal love, clans remained closed and exclusive units[318]. This dichotomy is further suggested by the fact that the word Pagan itself means of the village, the village in this case being an entity with fixed markers and limited districts. The harbouring of this insider outsider dichotomy is further exacerbated by the modern sentiment and ethos that seems to reject everything that the Montfaucon family and the surrounding community hold sacred, signified by Francoise and Lindsay, and evidenced by Francoise as she describes her in-laws, "They're a very weird family, James—one of the oldest in France, one of the most in-bred, no one else being quite good enough for them"[319].

It is thus that both the filmic and literary versions of this larger textual constellation, Eye *of the Devil/ Day of the Arrow* respectively, present a dichotomy wherein on the one side an exists the world of the urban, signifying a modern ethos that elicits and upholds a fragmented existence that offers no meaning outside of individualistic, egoistic and self-serving action, and which ultimately brings about the death of the soul even as the body and its hedonistic drives are sustained. This modern configuration within

317 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 323.
318 *Ibid*, 331.
319 Loraine, *Day of the Arrow*, 59.

this work is contrasted with a return to the country, for indeed is to return to a rural existence is to enact a return a sense of the purposeful, wherein one becomes infolded in generations in terms of familial legacy, cohesive community and spiritual connectivity. Even, ironically, if this return ends in the death of the body, the belief espoused suggests that the soul will live on through lineage, social honour and the fruits of the land which sustain them.

Configurations of the Rural Community: The Modern versus the Pagan in *Robin Redbreast*

It is this articulation of the rural as exclusive, insular and highly invested in its own form of spirituality that is also specifically addressed in *Robin Redbreast*, a BBC teleplay produced and aired as part of a larger series entitled *Play for Today* during the supernatural programming season leading up to Christmas. Equally, this fictional Pagan community is configured as one side of an essential dichotomy the other being the modern world of spiritual incertitude, and cultural scepticism, defining mechanisms of the modern era in which this work was situated. Also, like in the aforementioned textual constellation, *Eye of the Devil /Day of the Arrow*, this archaic agrarian society though isolated from external influence is internally highly communal, which allows for a sense of purpose and meaning outside of self-interested individual action. This is contrasted with the urban world, which even while being open and unfettered, is seen to have, ironically, an isolating effect by privileging the individual over all else.

Indeed, from the outset of the teleplay, the nature of this antiquated rural community is foregrounded and then set up in opposition to the modern world which the protagonist inhabits. Before leaving London,

at a party with friends, Nora Palmer discusses her plans to relocate and establish residence in a country cottage purchased by herself and her former lover. To assuage their misgivings with regard to such a radical prospect as eschewing her modern environs, she shows the couple quaint 'before' snapshots of her newly renovated domicile. However, when asked about the 'after' shots, Palmer admits that there are none to offer, as it was her former partner who possessed the camera. It is thus, from the opening scene that the divide between the new and the old, the archaic and the modern is established and further, the antiquated privileged over the contemporary. If photos are the way in which modern man remembers his past, as is arguably the case, then the cottage will be evoked as it was before modernised, as part of an archaic landscape, when viewed and remembered in retrospect. Upon witnessing this photo, her friends are even more sceptical of her decision to leave the modern urban metropolis of London, and question her motives for doing so, especially after witnessing what they have come to believe will be what she is leaving for. Nora, as a modern woman, with wholly modern ideas, at least at this stage of the narrative, admits that this relocation will be only a temporary one. She suggests that her motivation is not a result of a desire to relinquish her connection with the contemporary world altogether, but instead a drive to escape an environment that she has come to associate with the failure of her ten year relationship[320]. In other words, she desires a momentary release from the problems and potentially isolating existence inherent to a modern ethos that revolves around radical individualism rather than a sense of the communal and the familial, a motivation that very much falls in line with the counter-culture hippie ethos in terms of enacting a return to

[320] This idea of the rural retreat, literally speaking, is one which is common to many horror narratives. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, Rosemary, in the literary version of the text *Rosemary's Baby* leaves for the country after a fight with her husband. Interestingly, however, while in this earlier work, the country is regarded as a safe haven (the city being inhabited by the coven), in this and other works of horror, the country is regarded as being the location of the frightening pre-modern world of insanity, witchcraft, Satanism and paganism, as evidenced in such works as *Psycho*, *The Witches*, *Eye of the Devil/ Day of the Arrow* and *The Wicker Man*, to name only a few.

a more authentic way of life. Thus the dichotomy between the urban world of loss and lack of fulfilment and the pre-modern arcane world that stands apart from all that is modern becomes initially established, a conflict that will continue throughout the teleplay.

This resurgence of the past and its conflict with the modern is further addressed once Nora arrives to the village in which she will live. While in the process of moving into the cottage, the protagonist is met by one of the village locals, Fisher. He is presented by Auntie Vigo, Norah's maid and village resident, as an aesthete, a man of learning, a student of and expert on many things including local history, ancient religions, and archaeology. Fisher requests entrance into the fenced garden so that he may look for 'sherds,' or fragments of ancient pottery, more accurately 'potsherds.' He suggests that he has a gift for finding such sherds He has, as the teleplay suggests "a nose for it"[321]. Norah grants him permission[322], but suggests that she has never seen any such antiquities, even after the dirt and landscape have been disturbed and uprooted in the process of renovating the cottage. Indeed, she argues, the only things that he might find amongst the underbrush are broken bottles and old beer cans left by the workers. These expectations of what lies beneath the earth are significant as signifiers of the ways in which the characters may be defined in relationship to their environs that in turn define them. Fisher's expectation is one of buried ancient treasures of religious and historic significance, as a result of the world of ubiquitous spirituality in which he lives, while Nora's is of rubbish and the disposable relics of modern commercialism based on her experience of modern London life. Thus, the landscapes by which the individuals themselves are defined, equally become sites in this war between the modern and the traditional pre-modern world.

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321 Bowen, *Robin Redbreast*.

322 For a horror aficionado, this request is redolent of more classical horror texts, namely the vampire narrative in which, according to superstition, the Evil One must ask permission before being allowed entrance to any location.

Indeed, according to one review by Vic Pratt, Fisher and his community, like the sherds he seeks may be seen as being aligned, fragments of an antiquated past long buried. Pratt suggests:

> Such sherds [are] fragments of ancient, rural tradition, pieces of cultural, folklorish pottery that Fisher and his mischievous associates gather together and strive to preserve amidst… a time of great change, pessimism and uncertainty[323].

If Fisher can be read as being a symbol of the old ways, then Norah Palmer, like Catherine/ Françoise Montfaucon, may be equally regarded as a thoroughly modern woman. This is evidenced not only by the aforementioned connections between character and location, but also, and more significantly, by the actions that are normalised as a result of the mores (or lack thereof) established and encouraged within these environs. In fact, the world of the modern is located as a universe of sexual freedom and inherent cultural scepticism, a condition that was also determined in *Eye of the Devil/ Day of the Arrow* as Catherine/ Francoise, in the previously discussed textual constellation, aligns herself with the modern at least with regard to her existence in Paris. Even though married, and defined by this union[324], she is also engaged in an extra-marital affair, possibly made feasible by her connection to this quintessential urban mecca. If then Catherine/ Françoise may be regarded as modern, then in turn Norah may be defined as being even more so. Indeed, the protagonist of *Robin Redbreast* is, in many ways not merely a modern, but an ultra-modern woman: she has lived with a man openly outside of wed-lock; she engages freely and regularly in sexual intercourse, as suggested by her possession of a diaphragm; and is involved in the seduction of a partner almost ten years her junior. Not only this, but as a result of this fleeting physical union she has become pregnant and thus must make an equally modern

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323 Vic Pratt, *Hunting for Sherds* (London: British Film Institute, nd), 1.
324 Indeed, not only does she assume his family name and title, she is also dependent upon her husband financially.

decision: to either have an abortion, or to raise the baby as a single woman.

Another connection between Palmer and the modern is her choice of profession. In being a script writer for television, Norah aligns herself with all that is contemporary, not only the world of the media, but more specifically, television, the most modern media of them all, at least at the time in which the teleplay was written. Indeed, Nora is defined as a successful independent individual. Unlike her fictional predecessor, Palmer, as a result of her job, she has become financially solvent on her own, possessing the ability to maintain both a London flat and a country cottage, even after separating from her mate.

However, equally like the Marquise de Montfaucon, this way of life, this privileged ultra-modern existence, leaves her feeling at a loss, empty in a way that those who hold belief and a sense of community do not. Lost to her is not only the ability to form lasting relationships, but also the ability to believe in anything greater than herself and this apparent freedom afforded her by links to the modern, urban world. If it could be argued, as Daniel Bell does in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, that the problem with modernity is a problem of belief[325], then indeed, Norah Palmer seems to be its chief spokesperson. She holds no belief in tradition, as can be evidenced by her lifestyle, and equally she holds no belief in traditional religion, as made evident when channel surfing during Easter: when bombarded with religious programming she shuts off the television, and states that this (the Saturday before Easter Sunday) is not even a good night for television.

[325] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*.

Like in *Day of the Arrow*, there also exists a counterpart, a modern male, Rob. Although having grown up in the countryside, this figure is set apart from the rest of the village in which he lives. To begin, Rob does not share any familial connections to the rural community: he was not born into it, but instead adopted by Auntie Vigo. The only element suggesting a genealogical connection between Rob and his 'family' is his name, but not only his family name, his given birth name also which was changed from Edgar to Robin by Vigo who insists that there always has been a Robin in the village. Although not her son, Vigo took it upon herself to raise Rob, treating him as one of her own, actually better than her own, by offering him, unlike her other children, the opportunity to attend grammar school and then agricultural college. This preference has nothing to do with Rob's aptitude, however. On the contrary, he does not appear to have a great deal of intelligence at all. Instead, the privileging afforded Rob is as a result of the role he will come to perform. Although unaware of the reason behind this status, Rob nonetheless is affected by it, viewing his education as a sign of elevation.

Indeed, if the pre-modern man judges his worth as a birth right, either in terms of nobility, or birth order, Rob, considers himself above his community as a result of his knowledge. Ironically, it is this that in Rob's eyes establishes a commonality between himself and his modern female counterpart, who is also not really from 'around here', and is most certainly educated. It is, however, a sentiment that is not shared by Norah, who perceives Rob not as her equal, but instead as a means whereby she can, in effect, scratch an itch using someone whom she considers dull and dumb, but nonetheless 'dishy.' Indeed, the one thing that Rob does seem to have going for him is his outward form. His face is as attractive as is his body, which he chooses to keep in peak condition, more for the opportunity of

attracting a mate from outside than for anything else. However, even as he, like Norah, engages in actions that he feels are products of his freedom of choice, it turns out that his personal maintenance, like Norah's promiscuity allows him to be even more suitable for the part he has been chosen to unwittingly carry out, a role that, like Norah's, is at the very heart of this rural community's spiritual belief system.

Equally, Norah Palmer in her appearance and conduct makes her an ideal representative of Pagan Goddess Diana. First, Norah, not unlike Rosemary of *Rosemary's Baby* sports a short haircut as a sign of being 'with the times'. However, possessing shorn locks was also, historically speaking, a symbol of allegiance to this ancient fertility goddess. In ancient times, women would sacrifice their hair to Diana, for this offering provided both an outward sign of their complicity, and a sacrifice toward a successful harvest: the self-same shorn golden locks standing for the reaped golden crops come autumn. Further, terms of conduct under the guise of sacrifice, to give of one's virginity and to engage in sexual intercourse mimicked the desired fecundity of the harvest. Sir James Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, suggests of the fertility maiden and her worshippers:

> They were expected to fecundate themselves by contact with the divine source of fecundity. And it is probable that a similar motive underlay the sacrifice of their chastity as well as the sacrifice of their hair… to strengthen the divine beings to whom it is offered by feeding or fertilising them[326].

Thus, although not purposely so, Palmer's actions as a modern woman open to the whims offered by a complete freedom of choice also make her an ideal Diana figure, and her getting pregnant from a man other than a husband rather seals the deal. Indeed, as is suggested by Frazer and reiterated by Fisher in the teleplay, while

[326] Sir James George Frazer, *The Illustrated Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 28.

assuming the role as a representative of a goddess, this character is by no means an angel, and rightly so.

If embodying a modern ethos makes Norah an ideal representative fertility goddess in this play within a teleplay, then in turn Rob is also made into an ideal harvest king. Not only is his physique one that seems appropriate to his station, he also gives of himself what is required, although like Norah, unwittingly. Frazer suggests that if the woman must sacrifice her chastity and her hair, the male must sacrifice his flesh both his seed through the sex act and his blood through the sacrificial rite. This is exactly what Rob does, although again not of his own volition. Following their coupling, and Norah's return to the country in the final stages of her pregnancy, Rob comes to the cottage. This time it is not out of amorous intent, or even an intent to kill rodents[327], but instead out of fear. Norah, who is equally unsteady, after firmly coming to believe that she has been trapped in the village and must remain until Eastertide, does not let him in at first, until he admits that he is unaware of any plot the village has concocted. Also, like Rob, Norah is scared, ironically the basis for letting him 'in' the first time, both literally and metaphorically speaking. During this second meeting, the cottage is infiltrated by Fisher and the Handyman. Norah passes out from fright, and Rob is killed off-camera, as is evidenced by his scream, a sound to which Nora is not privy. The next morning being Easter, and the sacrifice being accomplished the night before, Norah is allowed to leave, and although told that Rob has left for his long awaited journey to Canada, she is aware, more unconsciously that consciously, that he has become a victim of the village, a sacrifice for the fertility of the crops, for as Vigo suggests, the spilling of blood is man's work, a task not meant for women.

[327] The first time the Norah and Rob are introduced it is for the express purpose of his killing the field mice that have invaded the cottage attic. Again, like in all the other cases this meeting and indeed even the infestation was prearranged with a specific goal in mind.

Indeed, Diana, according to Frazer could only be appeased by blood offering. He goes on to suggest that the Gods needed worshippers as much as the worshippers needed the Gods. Indeed, without followers, the Gods would cease to exist, and without the Gods, those who lived off of the fruits of the land that the Gods provided would also die[328]. This reciprocity is alluded to by Vic Pratt in his review of the teleplay when he argues, "Bacchae… in my reading represents the conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian ways of living more than the mere tearing to pieces of a Sacred King"[329].

In fact, as was suggested at the beginning of this chapter, and alluded to throughout, while the ethos and the religious affiliation of the village become a foil to the modern world to which the protagonists align themselves, the machinations of this world are hidden, but like the sherds are not buried too deeply specifically because knowledge of and reverence for the Gods was just as necessary to maintain the Pagan way of life as the sacrifices made on their behalf. It is this fact which allows for the plot and the character's unwitting complicity within it to be revealed. Norah, as discussed above, in being a modern woman, at first refuses to accept the possibility to the supernatural, holding firmly to her connectivity to the modern world of the rational. However, incrementally this ignorance, this denial begins to break down.

The first indication of this process of awakening is the half-marble that she brings into the cottage, and then transports home with her, hidden in her luggage, and again without her knowing. Vigo, upon seeing it comments that it looks like an eye, and indeed, the name for

328 *Ibid*, 27.
329 Pratt, *Hunting for Sherds*, 1.

this type of marble is a 'tiger's eye" or "cat's eye". Equally, white marble amulets were used by the druids as symbols of power throughout the Celtic world. Even though Norah brings this eye, this symbol of pagan power, indoors, she is unaware of its meaning: it is only half an eye after all, and in being inherently incomplete, becomes a symbol for Palmer's own lack of vision, or inability to see beyond the surface to what is really taking place regarding the actions of the villagers, even though they make their intentions manifest.

Indeed, this figurative blindness actually becomes a trope with regard to Norah's character throughout the text overall as the villagers continually challenge Norah to awareness, by directly stating their intentions and referring to what has happened just out of her field of vison. For example, after the night of her coupling with Rob, she notices that the drainpipe on the outside of her cottage has been dislodged. Norah comments upon it to Fisher and Vigo, to which Fisher responds, "I should say it was somebody on your roof"[330]. As Vigo retorts with the comment, "Careless"[331], this exchange confirms what was suspected all along. Namely, the chain of events leading to the impregnation is confirmed as being a setup, beginning with the bird that entered her house via the fireplace, causing Palmer to scream, and finally in turn leading Rob to the rescue and the ultimate seduction. Later, there is a similar occurrence when Norah's car is mysteriously rendered out of service. Again when Palmer questions the means whereby the car has ceased to function, Fisher responds by directly implicating the village and its villagers. He states, "One would be bound to notice. To crack the rotor from the outside, as it were. With scissors, say." However, as a modern woman, she is blinded to that which lurks beneath the surface. It is, in fact this very scepticism that leaves her open to being used by the villagers as she

330 Bowen, *Robin Redbreast*.
331 *Ibid*.

not only completely rejects even the possibility of a plot based on spiritual connectivity, but equally the prospect of ritualised sacrifice which rests as the culmination of these actions. This blindness continues until the very end of the narrative, as discussed in the introduction, when her eyes are effectively opened.

These visual signifiers when combined with dialogue makes manifest not only the fact that the rites that are alluded to are religious in nature, but more specifically, Pagan in the sense defined by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. Thus, like the larger textual constellation discussed above, *Robin Redbreast* offers this belief system not as an offshoot of Satanism, as is suggested in classical horror texts as discussed in earlier chapters, but instead as a unique and distinct spiritual practice. This representation as alternative versus merely evil and wrongminded aligns these spiritual paradigms to culture out of which it arises, one in which there was an opening up of spiritual affiliation to extend beyond the realm of monotheistic representations of good (Christian) versus evil (any other faith). As reviewer Vic Pratt suggests of Fisher and his community of believers:

> [H]is beliefs are not quite as unusual as all that. Robin Redbreast reflects a cultural moment when witchcraft and the occult were no longer ludicrous. Increasingly, it would seem, people were turning back to the old ways. In the face of a modernity devoid of authenticity and meaning, ancient superstition were… a viable alternative[332].

However, even when pinpointed as being culturally contiguous in retrospect, *Robin Redbreast* did nonetheless experience some controversy. For example, when John Bowen first submitted the script for this *Play for Today*, he was told that the thematic connection between ancient pagan fertility rites and the celebration of

[332] Pratt, *Hunting for Sherds*, 1.

traditional Anglican Church observances such as Harvest Festival would be, "too much for the powers that be"[333].

Indeed, even recent reviews discuss this teleplay as being more prone to controversy not only because of its depiction of sexuality[334], but more importantly because of its alternative religious discourse that may be linked not only to *Rosemary's Baby,* but also *The Wicker Man* in terms of its concern regarding pagan sacrifice. What is interesting and indeed frightening about these implications is the fact that *Robin Redbreast* offers that which *Rosemary's Baby* does not, specifically a realisation of the very fears that Rosemary felt, with regard to the purposes of the coven with regard to her unborn child. As suggested in Chapter One, Rosemary believed that the satanic cult was concerned with her pregnancy because of the privileged status of infant sacrifices in ritual practice. This turns out not to be the case in this instance, as the Satanists desperately want to keep her baby alive, being that it is the Antichrist that they have sought for generations. However, for *Robin Redbreast*, the purpose of the conception is precisely that which Rosemary feared. Although admittedly not as horrific as the concept of infanticide, the baby that Norah carries, like his father before him, is desired as an adult sacrifice, male blood in its prime being the most suitable sacrifice known to the community, as is equally revealed in *The Wicker Man*.

Conclusions

[333] This is additionally surprising given the fact that the episode was to be screened in the weeks leading up to Christmas, a time during which the BBC commonly aired supernatural programming like the annual British television event, A Ghost Story for Christmas, for example. Thus, it would appear that cultural connectivity and televised precedence were not enough to assuage censor doubts.

[334] The direct depiction of premarital sex, the mention of the contraceptive cap, and the discussion of a couple living together outside of marriage being three examples of the moral compass of this teleplay.

Thus, it could be argued that debates regarding the efficacy of the modern world of radical individualism versus the archaic pre-modern world of traditionalism and religious faith may be located not only in certain horror texts that articulate a concern with Paganism as a viable alternative religion, but by extension the culture out of which works such as *Eye of the Devil/ Day of the Arrow* and *Robin Redbreast* arise. Ironically, the modern world, while promising a stabilisation of the self, indeed offers up a continuation of life, but, at least as suggested in these texts, a meaningless one filled with scepticism and solitude. With the pre-modern world, however, belief acts as a means toward the solidification of a community which although physically apart is by no means isolating for those who enter in. Even the concept of sacrifice, which literally results in a loss of individual life, makes death meaningful as this apparent existential forfeiture instead results in a magnification of the sacrificial victim through the crops which sustain the community. In turn, by safeguarding the persistence of belief communities the continuation of the Gods who protect the crops is ensured, forming a circle of belief that results in a tenacious efficacy of faith.

While this conflict between traditionalism and a modernist ethos is confronted in the aforementioned works, like the sherds for which Fisher searches, this thematic lies beneath the surface, alluded to rather than being directly stated. However, just as this belief that lies below influences the manifest world above, this connection between belief and sacrifice will resurface and be addressed in another important Pagan Alternative Religion text that will be discussed in the following chapter, namely *The Wicker Man*. Indeed, unlike *Eye of the Devil/ Day of the Arrow* or *Robin Redbreast*, the concept of religion will be foregrounded through a direct depiction and elucidation of the very rites and ceremonies that remained mysterious and unknowable in the earlier works. Additionally, *The Wicker Man*, as will be argued in the following chapter will locate its central conflict regarding

spiritual affiliation not as involving a belief versus lack thereof scenario, but instead a battle of wills between those who truly hold faith, thus making these three works a discernible continuum of narrative and cultural development embroiled in a process of becoming aware as, like the culture of which these texts are an integral part, belief once again rises to the surface.

"I look forward to a time when we are all pagans again. I think we would have a much better time of it. We would have a lot more faith, a lot more belief." Anthony Shaffer, author of *The Wicker Man*[335]

"There is a touch of paganism in all of us in so far as we do all of us depend on the elements which have been there since the dawn of time and without which we could not exist." Christopher Lee[336]

Chapter Five: Sumer Is A-Cumen In: Paganism and the Underpinning of Christian Beliefs in *The Wicker Man*

Introduction

In the final scene from *The Wicker Man*, written by Anthony Shaffer and directed by Robin Hardy, it is revealed that the apparent abduction and murder of a young resident of an isolated island in the Scottish Hebrides was part of an elaborate plot designed to lure the film's narrative protagonist, like a literal as well as figurative lamb to the slaughter. Village patriarch, Lord Summerisle, along with the members of his community ensnare Sergeant Neil Howie, painstakingly prepare him for his role as sacrificial victim and then lead him to his fate, as Summerisle puts it, "His date with the wicker man"[337]. As Howie witnesses the structure, a gigantic wicker edifice shaped like a man into which animals such as goats, lambs and pigs have been trapped, he realises what will be required of him. He will be a martyr to the crops, burned along with the other sacrificial animals as a form of propitiation to ensure a successful harvest come autumn. As this dawning awareness washes over him, he cries out,

335 Andrew Abbott and Russell Leven, *Burnt Offering: The Cult of the Wicker Man* (United Kingdom: Nobels Gate, 2001).
336 *Ibid*.
337 Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*.

"Oh Lord, Oh Jesus Christ"[338], an utterance that may at first be regarded as an explicative, a curse commonly used in modern times. However, this is not the case in this instance. Howie is not merely taking the Lord's name in vain. Indeed, he is not sinning, drawing away from God by breaking one of his commandments, but instead calling upon his saviour, as a man of belief would call upon one whom he firmly believes has the power to grant salvation. Howie goes on, "I am a Christian and as a Christian I hope for resurrection and even if you kill me now, it is I who will live again, not your damned apples"[339]. Lord Summerisle retorts further confirming the extent of the belief to which Howie prescribes, "That is good, for believing what you do, we confer upon you a rare gift these days, a martyr's death"[340].

In this scene two things become clear: first, the thematic concern of this film is not related to a conflict of modernity versus traditionalism, as are the majority of texts discussed within this thesis, but instead a struggle between two systems of belief, albeit one being more traditional than the other; and second, that the outcome of this skirmish will remain unclear as to the nature of the victor, as was the case with those narratives discussed herein including *Rosemary's Baby, The Omen*, *Eye of the Devil, Day of the Arrow* and *Robin Redbreast*, to name a few. Regardless of the outcome, however, it would appear that both faiths depicted within *The Wicker Man* are equally and uniquely efficacious not only because they share a common root, as will be seen below, but even more so because they are firmly believed, even to the death.

338 *Ibid*.
339 *Ibid*.
340 *Ibid*.

It is this series of contemporaneous cultural debates that will be explored not only within the film version of *The Wicker Man*, but to a certain extent its supposed literary antecedent, the novel *Ritual*, written by David Pinner, and its subsequent novelisation, also entitled *The Wicker Man*, penned by screenplay writer, Anthony Shaffer and director Robin Hardy. After a close analysis of this textual constellation is performed so as to locate these primary thematic concerns, a subsequent analysis of the cultural and intellectual context of the era will be interpolated so as to arrive at a discursive analysis of *The Wicker Man* in all of its forms. As has been suggested throughout this thesis, these alternative religion horror texts, discussed herein, are rendered significant not only in their ability to produce interesting and engaging narratives in and of themselves, but indeed, to yield insights into the contemporaneous cultural debates which are not only fostered but indeed furthered and foregrounded by these texts as integral parts of the era in which they were formed. Finally, in order to make this socio-political connectivity manifest, the reception of *The Wicker Man* will be interrogated so as to locate in what ways this work was regarded and received at the time of its release.

Legacies of Monotheism and Discourses of Diversity within Contemporary Horror

As the aforementioned discussion alludes, faith can be located within a series of debates that not only prefigure modernity, but equally continue well into the modern period. For example, historically speaking, a primary spiritual conflict, namely what may be regarded as good versus what could be defined as being evil, established a series of dichotomies arising from the function of religion overall: to reward and sustain the right-minded while punishing the wrong-doer. In an attempt to wage this battle, from the perspective of

monotheism, either the 'true' Judeo-Christian God is recognised and revered, or the religion practiced, and by extension the worshipper is, regardless of the guise of Non-Christian belief, deemed Evil. Indeed, as long as orthodoxy dominated, there was, arguably, no room for viable alternative Non-Christian faith mechanisms within western civilisation so long as it was under the throes of this overarching theosophy and continued to be none until the near the end of the modernist period which, according to cultural theorists such as Hugh McLeod and Max Weber could be described as a watershed moment with regard to an increasing acceptance of diversity by those who were spiritually affiliated. Hugh McLeod in *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* argues:

> [T]he hatred of institutions and structures, the love affair of many radical Catholics with Marxism, and their idealisation of the Third World in general… all had a devastating effect on the Catholic Church[341].

Briefly, such examples of this paradigmatic shift in terms of religious connectivity within the western context include a rise in the followers of Hinduism, brought about by iconic figures such as The Beatles' George Harrison, and a popularisation of Islamic faiths, especially amongst African-Americans as a result of activists like Malcom X, and the recently deceased Mohammed Ali. In addition, the counter-culture movement, through an attempt to reject the confines of conservativism also elicited an increasing focus on the pursuit of a more authentic existence, achieved through enacting a return to nature, and thus began to adopt a form of Paganism as their spiritual calling wherein Mother Earth was celebrated, honoured and revered, as was discussed in the previous chapter.

Within this era of spiritual awakening and exploration, the horror cinema provided an arena for such contemporaneous theological debates, as well as popular avenues for their dissemination, just as it

[341] Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 11.

had from its ostensible inception within the Gothic, and its apparent instillation in the form of classical horror. This is to say that whereas the Gothic arguably upheld an overarching cultural privileging of Protestantism by, as Victor Sage and David Punter suggest, vilifying Catholicism, and the classical horror cinema up until the 1960s[342], espoused traditional belief systems by articulating a conflict of good versus evil which, in almost all cases, culminated in the defeat of those who practiced alternative faiths[343] by those who came to accept the possibility of the supernatural in the form of a more traditional religious affiliation[344], modern horror films increasingly articulated a concern with the opening up of efficacious alternative systems of belief. Indeed, when looking more deeply at contemporary horror, for example certain British/ American co-productions of the mid-1960s and 1970s, it is striking to notice the ways in which these texts represent the viability of an alternative spiritual belief system, namely Paganism, as a distinct faith rather than aligning it with Devil worship, as both American and British classical horror texts of the previous era were want to do.

In these works, Paganism differs from Satanism not only in its configuration vis-a-vis its Christian counterpart, but equally in its primary focus of worship. The Pagans practiced a faith and engaged in rituals that were not represented as being the antithesis of the Christian, but instead incorporated a unique spiritual practice based

[342] Many film historians such as Andrew Tudor, and Steven Prince, argue that the first truly modern horror film was *Psycho*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1960. However, while I suggest elsewhere that there are problems with this definition, and that indeed *Rosemary's Baby* may in fact be considered the first truly modern text, the fact of the release of this later work in 1968, nonetheless does not question the timing of the advent of the modern horror cinema, by either estimation, placing it still within the same decade.

[343] In this case the majority of films pitted those who practiced Satanism-cum-Witchcraft against those who came to accept Christianity, and the Christians aided by their icons always came out victorious.

[344] Beginning with the first horror films, Evil was defeated using implements of Christianity, such as the cross, and holy water. However, those weapons possessed no efficacy unless those wielding them believed in their power to do battle against Satan, and thus a prerequisite to the ultimate conclusion wherein Evil was vanquished, was an acceptance in the power of the Christian God over all.

on the reverence of the Gods of nature versus the Devil[345]. Equally, rather than articulating a case of 'us versus them', or 'good versus evil', Pagan horror reveals this alternative faith to be an undercurrent that in many ways informs and underpins traditional religion, rather than having an undermining effect upon orthodoxy, as was suggested by works such as *Eye of the Devil* and *Day of the Arrow*. In other words, if Satanism, the name historically given to any belief other than the Christian, is configured as a relational dichotomy by traditional culture, Paganism, in these modern contexts is re-conceived as the fundamental faith, an under girder atop of which rests the veneer of Christianity. Thus, rather than presenting a dichotomy of faith, these horror texts of the mid-1960s and 1970s open up the possibility for a continuum of belief that in tandem act as a challenge to, on the one hand, an ethos defined by a lack of belief in even the possibility of the supernatural, as is the case of modernity, or on the other, a traditionally oriented religious philosophy that rejects an acceptance of a panoply of efficacious religious affiliations, as is the case with orthodox Christianity.

What is interesting with regard to these horror texts is specifically the fact that whereas they rely upon a communal ethos in order for faith to thrive, they must exist as a community in isolation, for in being signifiers that apparently reject both traditional and modern systems of belief; they must either divorce themselves from these contexts or cease to exist at all. Although alternative, Paganism in these texts is also configured as being highly stratified and traditional, an ethos that challenges not only modernity but orthodoxy as well. Not only this, but to practice the rituals inherent to this faith, evidenced in these Pagan horror films as being human sacrifice, is seen as inherently wrong, evil, and an action that must not only be stopped but equally

[345] When looking at horror texts such as *The Witches*, for example, the rites of Satanism were depicted and discussed as being in direct conflict to those of traditional Christianity. This defamatory nature of alternative religion is discussed and indeed, problematized in Chapter Three.

punished. Thus, *Eye of the Devil* and *Day of the Arrow* are set in an isolated village in the French countryside, *Robin Redbreast* and *The Witches* are located in rural English hamlets miles away from any main thoroughfare, *Harvest Home* exists in an area of the United States known for religious deviation[346], and is equally separated from the rest of the world by a rickety covered bridge, and finally, *The Wicker Man*, ostensibly the most isolated of them all, is set on the outermost island in the Scotch Hebrides.

Spiritual Affiliation and the Role of Distanciation in *The Wicker Man*

The opening scene of the controversial theatrical version[347] of *The Wicker Man* literalises this divide between the thematic concerns of the film and the philosophical concerns of the modern condition through a foregrounding of the distance between the mainland, and that of Summerisle, the most outlying island of the Scottish Hebrides. This scene involving Howie traveling by plane over a watery expanse runs for almost two minutes, and thus makes manifest the apparent physical distance between the familiar world and the world that will come to inhabit the narrative. Upon arriving, the purposeful psychological separation of the island is equally revealed in the novelisation of the film by the two local 'travel' posters. Both of these public service announcements, while seeming to denote the modern

[346] In this work, it is suggested that Cornwall Coombe is located in rural New England, home to radically orthodox religious sects such as the Amish and the Mennonites.

[347] *The Wicker Man* faced a number of problems when it came to the film's distribution. At the time of production, British Lion film productions was undergoing a takeover by EMI, and as a result of this, the film's producer, Peter Snell was fired and replaced by EMI producers Michael Deeley and Barry Spikings. Christopher Lee argues that Deeley hated the film and was responsible for re-editing it to run as a second feature as part of a double bill. When Lee went to the film's theatrical release, he remembers questioning the producer about this new edited version, and equally remembers being told that Deeley thought the film one of the ten worst films he had ever seen, which may have resulted in the lack of support for the distribution of the film, and for the original negative of *The Wicker Man* being unaccountably lost, barring restoration to the full director's cut. Thus, when re-edited, certain background scenes were cut from of the film, and only a few of them, like the receiving of Communion, survived in the theatrical release as flashbacks limiting their efficacy at revealing the nature of the main character by turning them into subtext.

desire to see other lands, actually function as a warning against this sensibility and the dangers it posits. Indeed, their written messages: "Want to travel to the world outside"[348]? and "Want to emigrate to the USA or Canada like your forefathers"[349]? respectively, when considered, in conjunction with the images that accompany these texts, possess altogether opposing connotations as the 'travel' picture is of a Glasgow slum on a rainy day, and the 'immigration' poster depicts a particularly salacious section of the Bowery in New York City. In both cases, the subheading, "Consult Lord Summerisle for free advice"[350], solidifies the message that the desire to leave if not prohibited is greatly discouraged. This apparent divisiveness of Summerisle runs in both directions. On an island without a convenient and readily available means of traveling back and forth, and equally without electricity, radio or television, communication between the outer world and the island is effectively severed. Indeed, not only are the people dissuaded from leaving, but there is an equally strong desire to keep anyone from the outside from intruding into this isolated outpost as well. The threat of the outsider is expressed by Lord Summerisle in the novelisation as follows:

> I must say the mainland must be becoming more like a police state every day. When you're not interfering in education, you're poking your nose into religion. Sad that it has to be such an ignorant nose at that[351].

It would thus appear that such isolation is maintained out of a perceived necessity that at least on the surface seems to jibe with the Counter Cultural ethos of dropping out and returning to nature. In other words, like the hippie commune, Summerisle exists in seclusion, or else it would cease to exist at the hands of an external population that has either come to hold the belief that the rites of the pagan were evil, as will be seen is the case with followers of Christ like Howie, or by those who will destroy it out of a lack of

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348 Robin Hardy and Anthony Shaffer, *The Wicker Man* (London: Pan Books, 2000), 37.
349 *Ibid*.
350 *Ibid*.
351 *Ibid*, 202.

comprehension of any system of belief whatsoever, as is prevalent in those who adhere to the ethos of modernity. On a deeper level, this trichotomy between the Pagan, the Christian and the Modern is collapsed in a divide even greater that the physical distance between Summerisle and the outside world, as the novelisation directly suggests in the following passage:

> Howie knew he was beaten. He'd seen English and American tourists standing baffled and argy on the quayside of Portochlie, with a fist full of money in their hands, trying to persuade a local fisherman to take them out on the Sabbath… These people here might have a different religion, but they were of the same blood. His own blood. Stubborn, a bit hypocritical, and very proud[352].

Indeed, what makes *The Wicker Man* unique and is not the fact that it pits two opposing faiths against one another, one configured as evil and the other as good, as is common in classical horror cinema, but instead that it suggests of those who hold faith of any type, when pitted against a secular and unbelieving world, are equally devalued and denigrated. It is not an issue of good versus evil, but instead, as is the case with the narratives discussed throughout this thesis, one of belief versus scepticism. It is this dichotomy that is equally suggested in the reception of *The Wicker Man*. Lucius Shepard, for example, in his review of the remake of the 1973 classic points out the novelty in presenting a film dealing with the nature of belief at all, "One refreshing quality of the original film was that it preserved paganism as a religious choice…and presented Christianity as an equally reasonable (or unreasonable) choice"[353].

When considering the way in which this film was received, *The Wicker Man* could be seen, on the surface, as addressing the popular debates of its cultural milieu with regard to freedom of belief and the opening up of choice vis a vis an adherence to traditional

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[352] *Ibid*, 207.
[353] Lucius Shepard, "Something Wicker This Way Comes," *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction 112*, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 128.

doctrine that had dominated the pre-modern world. However, as with *Eye of the Devil* as discussed earlier, and *Harvest Home*, which will be addressed in the subsequent chapter, the connections between these works and the ethos of the counter cultural era are only valid until one scratches beneath the surface. Indeed, while choice became the byword for this generation, consolidation around a specific religion was found to be lacking, or at the very least waning. The quest of the religious seeker, which according to McLeod characterised members of the baby boom generation,[354] was to discover their own individual spiritual path, and while this may lead toward the formation of organised groups, and/ or the practice of collective rites, the ethos of rejecting systematic rules for behaviour often led away from rather than toward organised religion. McLeod suggests:

> There was a modest increase in the numbers of those professing other religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam, or stating that they had no religion. The main novelty was that those who rejected Christianity were increasingly ready to say so loudly and openly[355].

This rejection of orthodoxy was characteristic of the eco-naturalist movement that brought about a revival of pseudo-paganism, and a worship of nature while at the same time rejecting the age-old traditions inherent to this faith, and its hierarchical system, both of which were challenged in the service of a desired 'freeing up'. Indeed, the inspiration for *The Wicker Man*, as a film, and later as a novel was, for screenwriter Anthony Shaffer and the film's director, Robin Hardy, to get closer to the truth regarding the actual practices of paganism[356] which are far more grounded than the shopping-cart-style personal spiritualism so prevalent at this time. The importance of historical connectivity and rootedness was made manifest by the filmmakers through the choice of location, genre and inspiration

354 McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 244.
355 *Ibid*, 1.
356 Abbott and Leven, *Burnt Offerings*.

through which the story is conveyed all of which suggest that Paganism, like Christianity, is equally traditional.

The Role and Efficacy of Traditional Religion within the Novel and Film Versions of *The Wicker Man*

To begin, Scotland was selected as the site of the narrative because the Hebrides and more specifically the island of Iona has a specific and unique spiritual history being not only one of the oldest and most important religious centres, wherein the monastic tradition of Celtic Christianity was born and disseminated but also, for Hardy, because Scotland harboured an ancient Celtic culture that has kept Pagan traditions alive, thus alluding to an apparent connectivity between these faiths, at least in terms of location. Further, in using horror as a vehicle, the authors wanted to explore and indeed explode the genre, by undermining representations of the classic villains which were portrayed by Hollywood and Hammer Horror as maleficent satanic witches, who, in the words of Hardy, "Dance around pentacles with conical hats"[357].

This more authentic articulation of paganism was then not only contrasted with but connected to traditional Christian beliefs in the film and novelisation alike. Hardy goes on to suggest that by avoiding a reliance on generic stereotypes *The Wicker Man* instead began to explore deeply religious issues with complexity. This argument was made not only by the director himself, but also by critic Allan Brown, who in the introduction to the novelisation writes, *"The Wicker Man* was among the first mainstream features to use religious

357 *Ibid*.

faith as subject matter"[358][359]. In other words, while most classical horror films up until this time, arguably, seem to articulate a conflict of good versus evil, this textual constellation instead acts to complicate this trope by suggesting that no brand of religious faith has a greater claim to authenticity than any other, that is to say, those who practice Christianity are not, for that reason alone, wholly good, while those who follow paganism or any other non-traditional religion cannot be defined as being evil. Indeed, the narrative antihero, Lord Summerisle, and his people are not truly villains, while Sergeant Neil Howie, the protagonist, is not exclusively virtuous. Andy Boot in his analysis of *The Wicker Man* seems to share this reading when he argues, "Woodward and Lee make fine sparring partners, one apoplectic and the other implacable, both as bigoted in their religious views"[360]. Indeed, what makes *The Wicker Man* an interesting focus of study is the way in which, unlike the other films of this alternative religion cycle, there is no one who falls on the side of unbelief, who strives for the bolstering of self through following the path of individualism which in many ways becomes the zeitgeist of the era, except, possibly by extension the culture out of which it is given birth, and which is divided both philosophically and physically from the world of the narrative as will be discussed below.

On one side of this spiritual divide of holistic belief, Protestant-affirming Sergeant Neil Howie is portrayed as being driven to follow Jesus and a Christian ethic above all else. Not only is his single-minded faith foregrounded in both the director's cut and the theatrical versions of the film, but this ethos is also more overtly articulated in the subsequent novel written by Hardy and Shaffer which further

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[358] Alan Brown, Introduction to *The Wicker Man*", in *The Wicker Man*, written by Robin Hardy and Anthony Shaffer (Glasgow: Pan Books, 2000), xi.
[359] This does not take into account other horror films from the period that deal with spirituality such as ***Rosemary's Baby***, and *Eye of the Devil*, both of which preceded *The Wicker Man* by more than five years, not to mention the myriad other films that are discussed within this thesis.
[360] Andy Boot, *Fragments of Fear: An Illustrated History of British Horror Films* (London: Creation Books, 1999), 236.

elucidates the totality of his spirituality. This is revealed from the outset of this text though the general actions and demeanour of this character, and more specifically the way in which the protagonist's personal conduct affected his choice of profession, a role which assumes a identificatory prominence only second to his faith:

> Knowing the law, in Christian Scotland, to be based on the teachings of Christ, he saw his work in the police as an opportunity to give a practical expression to his faith and convictions[361].

Indeed, his faith in the law which underpins his role as a police officer and his religious faith, both require an acceptance of a strict code of conduct, and an adherence to a set of laws which cannot be broken without penalty, especially as an officer of the law sets an example through actions that are meant to be mimicked by the populace. On the other side of the coin, the inhabitants of Summerisle, an isolated agrarian community also exist within a cultural system of mores and customs strongly connected to their own form of religious belief, and which affects their chosen social roles as well. Because their livelihood is chiefly based upon the export of apples to the mainland, the practice of Paganism, in their eyes, ensures that the Gods will be pleased, their crops fruitful, and thus their way of life preserved.

Although these two faiths come into conflict within the narrative construct, the efficacy of equal and total adherence to each respective system of belief cannot be denied, and so long as these religious practices are observed, there is a promise of reward versus punishment. Surprisingly, even given direct statements with regard to authorial intentionality, this complex thematic concern with religion seemed to be downplayed in the secular press at the time of the film's release, as *The New York Times* reviewer Janet Maslin argues:

> They [Robin Hardy and Anthony Shaffer] seem to have meant this as a tale pitting Christian values against pagan ones, concluding on

[361] Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 5.

a note of terrible irony. Is God Dead? Is God wearing antlers? Ask yourself. See how far you get[362].

However, while the secular press devalues the reliance on faith and belief, this downplay was not taken by the religious press at the time, and *The Wicker Man* was rated offensive by the United Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for exhibiting what was perceived as being blasphemous concerns by the Catholic Church. However, in concluding the review with a discussion as to the film's depiction of excessive nudity, the review makes it unclear as to whether the offence chiefly rests in the depiction of religion, or in a perceived appeal to spectatorial prurient interests.

The Role of Sexuality in Textual Articulations of Paganism

One cannot dispute the fact that sexuality plays a substantial role in the film and in the novelisation when it comes to depictions of Pagan practice. Indeed, while Howie's passion is for Christ and justice, resulting in an adherence to an incredibly ascetic existence, Lord Summerisle and his people reverence something else altogether and it is this focus on the fecundity of nature that comes to underpin the beliefs of the inhabitants of Summerisle, for, according to the novel:

Sex seemed to be the ruling passion of this strangely fecund island… his mind was suddenly obsessed with the idea of earth being the conduit of seed to the womb[363].

While this depiction of sexuality can, admittedly, be seen to be a thematic underpinning, making this text apparently controversial, such representations nonetheless extend beyond the merely salacious, a characteristic the Hammer Horror films of this period, which, arguably, embraced exploitation as a means of garnering

[362] Janet Maslin, Screen: "'The Wicker Man,' About a Fertility Cult: Strange Happenings," *The New York Times*. March 26, 1980, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.
[363] Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 64-65.

audiences[364]. Indeed, although potentially titillating, sexuality, within *The Wicker Man* is in fact directly linked with the ensuring of fertility which is redoubled in Summerisle's verdant landscape.

One such ritual involves the youthful members of the community engaging in sexual intercourse out in the open, upon the earth. This scene not only appears in the film, witnessed by Howie with a lack of understanding, if not a feeling of disgust, but is also depicted in the novelisation in the following way:

> A dozen pairs of young lovers were coupling on the grass… In every case the girl sat astride her young man, who lay on his back. Their sexual rhythm was unfaltering[365].

This portrayal of the primacy of ritualised sexuality is further articulated in two scenes involving Willow, the 'landlord's daughter.' In the first scene, which was later excised from the theatrical version of *The Wicker Man*, Lord Summerisle is shown leading a young male to the Green Man Pub, where Willow resides. After a ceremonial exchange, the young man is bid to enter and as he engages in his first sexual encounter in Willow's second-floor bedroom, the villagers in the pub look up toward the ceiling and sing in unison a ballad meant to commemorate this occasion, a song entitled "Gently Johnny." Given the ritualistic and routinized manner in which these events occur, it is suggested that this is a common occurrence, a rite of passage for the young males as they enter into adulthood. Another scene mimics the first, involving Neil Howie who is later revealed to also be a virgin.

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[364] Such films like *Lust for a Vampire*, *Countess Dracula* and *Twins of Evil*, the filmmakers admit, were created to be not simply works of horror, but equally soft-core pornographic films and it was the latter interest, they go on to assert, that brought in audiences.
[365] Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 62.

This scene of attempted seduction, arguably taken from a novel by David Pinner entitled *Ritual*[366], once again alludes to the strength of belief that Howie possesses and his resolve in not giving into actions that he believes would be sinful, this challenge thus being a pivotal moment of the narrative as these two belief systems clash. In *Ritual*, David Pinner writes:

> David [Howie] listened with his groin. Nothing moved in her room. He felt himself drawn towards the wall. He refused to be magnetised. He knew her hot body demanded through the stale mortar… She amused herself, knowing David was stroking the wall. David slid his hands over his side of the wall, lingering where the subtle incline of her navel would be… Her left breast was Anna's favourite. She flexed it towards the wall. With disgust David found that he was licking a faded dancer off the wallpaper. She whispered his name over and over, but he did not come[367].

As portrayed in the film and novel versions of *The Wicker Man*, Willow, portrayed by Britt Ekland, attempts to 'initiate' Howie by performing a ritualistic dance, naked against the wall of their adjoining bedrooms. Under the influence of this lure the Sergeant is almost driven to copulate, but like in the novel quoted above, resists this temptation[368]. In the novelisation of *The Wicker Man*, this act is further revealed to awaken not only sexual longing in Howie, but also panic, as he questions whether his desire for acquiescence is not in fact a sign of God's abandonment of his soul:

> Panic was not an emotion that Sergeant Howie had suffered much before. But now the thought that there might, just possibly be, coursing through his veins an agent that could twist or bend his will, turn what he regarded as the base desires that he shared with every

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[366] David Pinner's novel *Ritual* was one basis for the film, although obliquely. While the rights to the text were acquired, *The Wicker Man* cannot be said to be an adaptation of *Ritual*, for director Robin Hardy never even read the book and Anthony Shaffer states the novel "Could not be made into a movie." This is only one of the two elements that found its way into the final version of the film, the other being the idea of transmutation. As Rowan Martin, ostensibly becomes a March hare in the film, in the opening of Pinner's work, a young girl who is also potentially murdered comes back to life as a butterfly.

[367] Pinner, *Ritual*, 116-118.

[368] Interestingly, in the film, the scene is framed so that the actress, as she sings, directly addresses the camera, thus, arguably, attempting to seduce the spectator as much as the character within the narrative. This begs the question as to whether or not we as the audience would resist her wiles as Howie, through prayer, has managed to do, especially given an apparent lack of belief in anything beyond self-interest, a condition intrinsic to the modern world and its inhabitants, as discussed by Hardy and Shaffer above.

other man, but with God's grace had learned to control, into a lust that he would be powerless to deny… that thought was the stuff of panic for Howie[369].

However, this is finally denied as the faith that Howie cherishes above all else reasserts itself, allowing him to deny this sexual attraction and keep true to his virtue:

God, he felt suddenly, was with his and all at once he was able to shut out the song and fell to kneeling by his bedside as he had done every night since he was a child[370].

This is the only time, ostensibly, where Howie acts based upon his own initiative, and is thus a narrative turning point, however brief, as will be discussed below.

The Lure of Sacrifice and the Connectivity of Traditional and Alternative Belief

In *The Wicker Man*, although unbeknownst until the end of the film, Lord Summerisle and his people have specifically lured Howie to the island by concocting the story relating to a young island girl who was said to be missing, suspected to have been abducted, and awaiting her ritual sacrifice to ensure the fertility of the crops. In fact, it is not the young girl who was the desired sacrifice, however, but Howie himself, who in coming to Summerisle of his own free will as a representative of the King[371], a virgin, and as a fool[372] unwittingly makes for an ideal sacrificial victim[373], for as Lord Summerisle suggests in the novelisation:

You see our research had told us that you were just the man we wanted and we were determined to get you here. Of course we were

[369] Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 197.
[370] *Ibid*, 182.
[371] As a police officer, he is not only a symbol of authority but equally an individual acting on behalf of the laws of the land, issued by the sovereign.
[372] In order to infiltrate the May Day Festivities, Howie renders the village publican unconscious, and steals his costume, a Punch figure the ceremonial 'King for a Day'.
[373] It should be here noted that the screenwriter, Anthony Shaffer, also the author of *Sleuth*, possesses a fascination with intrigue that is equally present in this work. Throughout Shaffer's oeuvre people play games and plot against one another.

equally determined to control your every action and thought once you had arrived[374].

Indeed, the hunter becomes the hunted in this textual constellation as Howie is first made to believe that he will succeed in leading the vulnerable young girl to safety, foiling what he believes to be Summerisle's evil plot, while in fact his actions from the start were controlled by the village under Lord Summerisle, to keep him on the island until the May Day festival when he would inevitably "Keep his date with the wicker man"[375].

According to Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which unlike *Ritual*, was a key influence of *The Wicker Man* in all its forms, the pagan belief system is indeed based on propitiation, culminating in the carrying out of a sacrifice designed to mollify the Gods to bestow upon the agrarian community continued agricultural success. In articulating a thematic concern with sacrifice, Anthony Shaffer suggests that the film presents something unique to the thematic concerns of the English films of the period[376]. Sacrifice is, however, not a uniquely pagan concept, but instead is also common to Christianity in both the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament, sacrifices and burnt offerings were made to God for mercy and forgiveness, while in the New Testament, Christ negated the need for these rituals by his own sacrificial death and resurrection, a freeing of sin which is bestowed upon the Christian at baptism and which is celebrated in the sacramental feast of Holy Communion.

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374 *Ibid*, 265.

375 This concern with plots and plotting is not unique to the conventions of the horror film and is also present in *Rosemary's Baby*, wherein the protagonist believes that there is a plot against her baby, and in fact this is the case as everyone around her, husband, neighbour and even obstetrician are in league with Satan. However, rather than desiring it as a sacrifice, the coven have, unbeknownst to Rosemary, impregnated her with the spawn of Satan, and desire not the baby's destruction, but its safekeeping.

376 Abbott and Levin, *Burnt Offerings*.

This connection between the Pagan and Christian belief in the power and necessity of sacrifice is articulated in the novel as the pagan rituals of May Day are seen to be akin to those of the Christian celebration of the Easter season, as island schoolteacher, Miss Rose, explains:

> [May Day] is a feast of fecundity, celebrated in the form of an ancient dance-drama… There is the sacrifice whose death and resurrection, or course, is the climax of the dance… The victim is as symbolic or not as the Christian's bread and wine. You eat it at communion, do you not? And the Roman Catholic Christians believe it is turned miraculously to the real thing in their mouths. Others believe it is symbolic… a matter of taste, if you'll forgive the pun[377].

Thus, the first scenes of the director's cut wherein the protagonist, Sergeant Howie, is seen taking communion, a rite that is enacted to remind Christians of this sacrifice of God's son, bookends the final scene wherein Howie becomes a burnt offering, both ceremonies foregrounding the customs that are shared by the older religion and the newer one that is laid atop of it. *The Golden Bough* further makes this connection between the pagan spirit of the corn and Jesus:

> If Adonis was indeed the spirit of the corn, a more suitable name for his dwelling place could hardly be found than Bethlehem, 'The House of Bread' and he may well have been worshipped there at his House of Bread long before the birth of Him who said 'I am the bread of life[378].

However, whereas sacrifices are no longer made in the name of Christianity, as Jesus, for modern Christians, became the perfect sacrifice to atone for all sin; this is not the case for the pagans on Summerisle. To ensure strength, fertile crops and health, sacrifices of animals were first made to the most holy of all objects on the island, the mistletoe covered oak tree:

> The bones of long since decomposed 'victim' sacrificial animals lay everywhere, but among them were something more unexpected.

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[377] Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 202.
[378] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 135.

Close to the tree, upon the side that faced the lake, were hundreds of crudely carved hands and feet, hearts and ears, et cetera. Some were made of wood and others of clay. Scratched upon them were names like Jonquil, Maize, Peony, Yew, Poplar, and Sycamore. People's names, as Howie had learned to recognise them. Howie had read somewhere that the Roman Catholics went in for something like this at shrines where saints were supposed to preside over miracles. But where they simply placed candles to burn- exactly as he made offerings as a sideman at Saint Andrew's to support the church- these Summerisle people, if you could grace them with that human name, clearly offered up the suffering animals so that the goddess would grant their requests[379].

Further, according to *The Golden Bough*, the oak was revered among the pagan worshippers due to its essential utility. The wood of the oak could be used for the lighting of fires, the construction of buildings, roads and canoes, as well as a source of acorns for feeding livestock. Frazer argues:

No wonder then, if the tree from which they received so many benefits should play an important part in their religion, and should have been invested with sacred character[380].

While all oaks were revered, those upon which mistletoe grew were particularly sacred because it was believed that whatever grows on these trees is sent from heaven, signalling that the tree was chosen by the gods. For this reason, mistletoe and the tree on which it grows is regarded as a universal healer, effectual for almost any ailment, and hence it was to this tree that the sacrifices and prayers for healing were made in the novel, *Ritual*. Later in the novelisation of *The Wicker Man*, the connectivity between Christianity and paganism is further alluded to through the symbol of the tree:

He [Howie] contented himself with gazing up at the great Gothic arches the trees made above them and imagined himself in some vast cathedral in a golden age, sometime before the 'fall' of Eden[381].

This connection between the Christian edifice and the forest is one that is suggested equally in *The Golden Bough*, which makes the connection more manifest by tracing the etymology of the term

379 *Ibid*, 196.
380 *Ibid*, 74.
381 Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 118-119.

sanctuary, which is commonly used to refer to the purposes and ultimate mission of the traditional Christian Church:

> Amongst the Celts, the oak worship of the Druids is familiar to everyone, and their old word for sanctuary seems to be identical in origin and meaning with the Latin *nemus*, a grove or woodland glade[382].

Like their representative religions, there are also additional connections to be found between faiths, as their textual representatives, Lord Summerisle and Howie, share an apparent reverence for nature.

Howie, in the novelisation, is revealed to be an ardent bird watcher, and the opening of this text is devoted to his pastime. For Howie, this love supports his spirituality, the beauty of nature grounding his belief in the goodness and beauty of God as revealed in his creation. For Lord Summerisle, spirituality is equally tied to a reverence of nature, only more directly. As a Pagan, it is his belief that nature is animate and sentient, each element having a being, and a soul to which propitiation must be made. The successful result of his piety is revealed in the landscape, the verdant crops, and the diversity of nature. However, for Howie, this belief is seen as being antiquated and misguided, and while the connections between faiths are registered, they are not fully recognised or appreciated, as Howie observes of Lord Summerisle in the textual version of *The Wicker Man*:

> God sometimes chose the most mysterious vessels for His Divine will, he thought. Any family that could have guarded such a secret for four generations [as to the presence of the great auks, who were considered extinct] received at least some of Howie's respect. But he could not help the somewhat ungenerous reflection that the Lord Summerisle and the great auks of this world had a certain amount in common. Evolution was against them[383].

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382 Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 58.
383 Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 135.

Ironically, this could equally be said of Howie himself, a relic of an age that was based on tradition and religion in an increasingly secular age.

Modernity versus Traditionalism

As Sir James Frazer suggests, in *The Golden Bough*, magic and religion are both belief systems that, under the dual influences of the Enlightenment and the Reformation, have been, arguably, eclipsed by rationality and an affinity to science, a condition that in fact exemplifies the modern age overall. For Frazer, this supposed evolution of human thought has been one that initially embraced magic as part of a holistic world-view that incorporated spirituality. Over time, however, a theosophy was adopted that under the guise of the more orthodox Protestant faiths came to reject supernatural elements as an integral component of faith before finally coming to rely upon on scientific theory, what Frazer as a modern thinker regards as the culmination of human reason. According to *The Golden Bough*:

> Magic is gradually superseded by religion, which explains the succession of natural phenomena as regulated by the will, the passion or the caprice of spiritual beings, like man in kind, though vastly superior to him in power… Religion, regarded as an explanation of nature is displaced by science…It is probably not too much to say that the hope of progress—moral and intellectual, as well as material—in the future is bound up with the fortunes of science, and that every obstacle placed in the way of scientific discovery is a wrong to humanity… In the last analysis magic, religion, and science are nothing but theories of thought, but science has supplanted its predecessors[384].

It is this 'evolution' from superstitious to scientific belief that is revealed on the island of Summerisle, but ironically in reverse, as is

[384] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 248.

suggested by Lord Summerisle's familial history. To return to the novelisation:

> And so you see, 'Lord Summerisle was saying, 'with typical mid-Victorian zeal, my great-grandfather set to work. But of course, almost immediately, he met opposition from the fundamental ministers, who threw tons of his artificial fertilizer into the harbour on the grounds that if God had meant for us to use it, He'd have provided it. My great-grandfather took exactly the same view of ministers, and realised he had to find a way to get rid of them. The best method of accomplishing this, it seemed to him, was by giving them back their joyous old deities, so he encouraged, as it were, a retreat down memory lane; backwards from Christianity, through the Age of Reason and Belief to the Age of Mysticism[385].

In this way the people of Summerisle ostensibly underwent a process of regression from scientific method to acceptance of the supernatural realm of religious ritual. Summerisle's grandfather a 'worshipper of science,' realised the necessity of an agrarian lifestyle for the survival of the island and its residents, and thus adopted and furthered a religious doctrine, paganism, to support the successful conversion of the villagers to this lifestyle choice. Interestingly, what began as a rationally and scientifically grounded decision became an ingrained spiritual system of belief, an example of *The Golden Bough* in reverse. In other words, what began as an expedient way of maintaining his experiment, a method for the furthering of scientific inquiry became a more firmly rooted belief system not only for the people of the island, but for the first Lord Summerisle himself:

> What my great-grandfather had started out of expedience, he continued because he truly believed it was far more spiritually nourishing than the life-denying God-terror of the kirk. And I might say, Sergeant, he brought me up the same way- to love music and the drama of the rituals of the old pantheism, and to love nature, and to fear it, and to rely on it, and appease it where necessary[386].

The novel also reveals a connection between the history of the British Empire, and the practices of paganism on the island of

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[385] Hardy and Shaffer, *The Wicker Man*, 136.
[386] *Ibid*, 147.

Summerisle as Howie looks upon the face of Rowan Morrison for the first time:

> It was a sunny, smiling face with the fair Scandinavian cast to the features that is often found in the outer isles where, in the dark ages, the Vikings raped and pillaged leaving little but their blondness and their place names behind[387].

The novel, in this passage foreshadows the nature of the people of this, the most isolated of the Hebrides islands by suggesting this Viking connection, the culture responsible for bringing the last onslaught of Paganism to Britain. Ironically, it would appear as the narrative continues, the fair hair and place names were in fact not the only vestiges of the Viking invasion for the people of Summerisle, their religion also remained. It will be this long standing historical connectivity to religious faith that will be pitted against Howie, who as his plane flew over the island of Iona:

> Could see below the restored monastery from which most of the Celtic west had been brought the news of Christ reborn. Howie was proud as a Scottish Celt, that this church had long preceded Rome in converting the heathen English[388].

This view of the Celts as being associated with the spread of Christianity is complicated by the views of the people of Summerisle who seem equally connected to their Celtic forefathers as pagans for according to Lord Summerisle:

> The tradition of the arcane and the mysterious cleaves to the people of this island with a tenacity that makes it seem an inherent and inalienable possession. They're Celts after all[389].

This contradiction alludes to the historical war for religious dominance between Pagans and Catholics which infiltrated the island until the 11th Century, and was eventually resolved not by overtaking one belief system with another, but instead overlaying them, a war

387 *Ibid*, 13.
388 *Ibid*, 32.
389 *Ibid*, 132.

which has long since passed on the mainland, but one which has been won by paganism on the isolated island of Summerisle.

Conclusions

Within the narrative structure of the textual constellation known as *The Wicker Man,* Paganism and a worship of the Gods of the Earth came to dominate an isolated fictional Hebridian Island known as Summerisle. Therein, as a result of an unwavering adherence to this spiritual affiliation by the local inhabitants, not only their religion, but by extension their way of life became efficacious, productive and harmonious. Likewise, Sergeant Neil Howie through his steadfast belief in Christianity equally comes to uphold the enduring power of religion which in turn renders his life and his work meaningful. While on the one hand, Christianity is regarded, culturally speaking, as being a faith that is inherently traditional in nature and on the other, Paganism is equally located, socio-politically, as a radical alternative faith mechanism by the contemporaneous culture, within the world of *The Wicker Man* itself, alternatively, these two faiths while narratively oppositional, are shown to share many similarities. Both spiritualties are invested in the power of sacrifice, and the Gods of both faiths are also reverenced by enacting a series of rituals and rites rooted in a strong historical imperative. This connectivity is revealed in the final shot of the film, as Howie, who has been given the uncommon honour of a martyr's death calls to his God for strength and solace during a time of incredible adversity, as do the people of the island who sing to their collective Gods during a time of equal suffering and loss, thus intermingling these two religions in a unified voice. Indeed, while seemingly in conflict within this text, these two faiths are really not so different after all. The film concludes with the burning of the wicker man as the sun sets sun in the distance, rather than alluding to whether or not the Summerisle crops will be re-instilled with

fecundity, or whether or not Howie will equally be reborn, for as was seen in the case of *The Eye of the Devil, Day of the Arrow,* and *Robin Redbreast*, and as will be noted in *Harvest Home*, those who hold on to religion as a defining mechanism firmly believe that this will be the case, which is ultimately all that is required for a faith to be rendered efficacious. Thus, just as Howie firmly believes he will be resurrected, the Pagans believe the same of their crops. Such unremitting acceptance of the power of the supernatural, however, holds no sway in the modern world of unbelief and scepticism creating both a literal and figurative divide between these two realms. *The Wicker Man,* like the other texts within this alternative religion horror cycle, is thus received as a work that is rendered incomprehensible and/or unacceptable by its socio-political milieu as is revealed by popular reviews of this text in the secular and religious press alike. In addition to critical reception, the way in which *The Wicker Man* was butchered by a production company that found it to be out of step with the times, seems to suggest that whereas the battle for belief may be said to have been won within these narratives, the war for acceptance at the time of their release appears to have ultimately been lost within a modernist world that, arguably fails to believe in anything outside the primacy of self-interest.

I thought-- jealously, perhaps- -how much greater was the legacy of Cornwall Coombe than was ours, we who had lived half our lives in the city. Here, all around us was the richness of heritage… what [the] forbearers had bestowed[390].

The Mother was the goddess. The goddess provided fertility. Fertility was needed. Without it, there would be no corn. Without corn no money for food. Without them, people died. Mother; fertility. Hope; belief. They all believed. All the village[391]

Chapter Six: What No Man May Know and No Woman Tell: Paganism, Feminism and the Search for Self in *Season of the Witch* and *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*

Introduction

At the conclusion of 1970s horror film *Season of the Witch,* protagonist Joan Mitchell, an unhappy and unfulfilled suburban housewife, whether accidentally or purposefully shoots her husband who has returned home early from a business trip. Claiming that she believed him to be a burglar, Joan is not only ultimately exonerated of all criminal charges, but also becomes the recipient of a hefty insurance policy that will ensure her financial independence for the remainder of her years[392]. In the final scene of the film, the protagonist is shown to be at a cocktail party surrounded by her friends from the local community, who show support and sympathy regarding her newly acquired widowhood. While most of the women, apparently, regard Joan's situation as one of loss and impending

[390] Thomas Tryon, *Harvest Home* (London: Coronet Books, 1980), 167.
[391] *Ibid*, 351.
[392] Whereas this is not directly stated in the film, it is suggested in a voice over. Responding to the call of a domestic disturbance, the police detective suggests, "Whether she's lying or not, she'll get away with it. We'll run a check on insurance. Goddamn women, they get it all in the end. They wind up with everything.

loneliness as the result of losing a life-long mate, one woman, who is new to this story, regards Mitchell differently. This character, shown to be very much as the protagonist herself was at the beginning of the film, another *Jack's Wife* who is equally repressed and unhappy, walks up to Joan and inquires as to whether or not the rumours about her are true. Facing and addressing the camera Joan retorts, "Yes, they are. I am a witch"[393]. The final static close-up shot frames the main character smiling into the camera, with the other woman out of focus in the background looking on in awe. Arguably, this final narrative exchange signals a process of character development whereby the females of this conservative suburban community will be awakened and empowered not by merely adopting a contemporaneous politically-oriented feminist agenda, but instead by adhering to a radical alternative faith that is inherently female-centric, thus establishing a community, a support network within a potentially isolating and male dominated universe, the privatised domestic world of the upper middle-class American housewife. As this scene suggests, Joan herself by the end of the film, has become an emblem of the freedom to be gained through a self-realisation that ostensibly could have never been achieved through traditional means within such a phallocentric culture. Indeed, she is now a witch, and a member of a coven: a woman both powerful and connected.

As the above analysis suggests, the texts that thus form the central focus of this chapter, the film *Season of the Witch*[394], directed by George Romero, *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*, a television miniseries produced by Universal Television and its adaptive literary antecedent, the novel *Harvest Home*, by author Thomas Tryon in

[393] Romero, *Season of the Witch*.

[394] This film has several titles: during production, *Jack's Wife*, which is the title that the film's director had chosen for this project. The film was renamed at the time of its 1973 release by promotion agents to *Hungry Wives*, a title that they felt would be more marketable. Finally, *Season of the Witch*, by which the film is now referred, was conferred when released following the success of *The Crazies*, a film that Romero himself considers as having conferred an element of legitimacy and professionalism not experienced since the making of his first feature length film, *Night of the Living Dead*.

many ways share similar tropes and thematic concerns with the earlier British-American co-productions of the same era, as discussed in the previous chapters within this section. All of the texts addressed offer up dichotomies between: the rural and the urban, traditionalism and the modern, and finally between belief and scepticism. However, unlike their British counterparts, those texts produced exclusively in the United States equally articulate concerns regarding feminism in presenting significant female characters who are enabled as active agents both in terms of the narratives themselves and within Pagan religions which are therein depicted. If the aforementioned Anglo-British texts based on the work of Frazer, a modernist who writing at the height of the period tends to foreground the rational world that has critically been regarded by many theorists and psychoanalysts alike as privileging patriarchy and the role of men over women, then these texts provide an alternative view that diverges from these precepts. More specifically, whereas these other alternative religion Pagan horror texts such as, *Eye of the Devil, Robin Redbreast* and *The Wicker Man* present predominantly male spiritual leaders within narratives that are on the whole dominated by male agency, the American texts that will be discussed below foster feminist debates by positioning women in powerful key roles both textually and spiritually. Not only this, but as discussed in the introduction, by configuring the Pagan as pre-Christian, existing at a time, arguably before religion became patriarchal[395], active matriarchal agency can in fact be realised and potentially enacted.

This foregrounding of female agency in many ways ties not only into feminism and a demand for equal opportunity by women for women, but also to larger cultural paradigmatic shifts with regard to contemporaneous cultural debates related to the efficacy of historical

[395] Catholicism has often been derided as privileging men over women as only men can assume positions of power within the Church. Whereas male clergy can become Priests, Bishops, or even Pope, women can only achieve the status of Nun, a wife of God rather than an active agent with regard to the dissemination, articulation and enactor of His word.

traditionalism and a contemporary ethos based on gender equality. Indeed, this cultural awakening resulted, arguably, from the culmination of a process whereby significant changes with regard to familial roles, gender positioning and religious affiliation were manifesting both in the public and private realms thus fostering a climate ripe for these discourses to come to the fore[396].

With regard to method, in order to address the ways in which these texts may be regarded as fostering the socio-political concerns of their historical milieu, as suggested above, first the thematic concerns of both *The Season of the Witch* and *Harvest Home,* both as a teleplay and an adaptive literary source will be examined and engaged. Into this discussion the inspiration by which these works were conceived and their overall means of production will be interpolated by considering interviews of the directors and actors so that not only the textual but indeed the extra-textual elements can be foregrounded thus arriving, ostensibly, at a more privileged understanding of these works by tracing their artistic inception. Once this textual analysis has been achieved, the concerns of the culture specifically with regard to feminist ideologies and concurrent socio-political debates regarding the roles of traditionalism within spiritual affiliation and familial cohesion will be suggested so as to provide a link between the intellectual context of the era and the artistic output of this period. Finally, this connectivity will be solidified and made manifest through regarding the reception of these works in popular secular and religious publications.

[396] Significantly if not unproblematically,, following the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the mid-1960s was popularly discerned to be the beginning of the Second Wave of the Feminist Movement This periodisation, admittedly, is not without flaw for a number of reasons, one of them being the fact that Friedan herself not only garnered many of her ideas and primary research from female-oriented popular magazines, but published in the same before coalescing these articles into a single monograph, but equally as is suggested by June Meyerowitz in her book, *Not June Cleaver*, second wave feminism could be considered not to be a secondary movement subsequent to the first wave, but instead a socio-political struggle that never ceased, a fact that can be noted when considering the working and lower-middle classes.

Paganism, Witchcraft and the Role of Matriarchy

Historically speaking within the context of the United States, Paganism and Witchcraft have oft been allied not only in terms of filmic representation, but equally in terms of cultural derision. According to historians such as Owen Davis, in *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft after Salem*, even before the founding of America, during the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692, not only were women in a vast predominance executed under the suspicion of being practitioners of witchcraft, but equally following the trials themselves, a number of Native-Americans who by practicing their individual poly-theistic faiths, were also regarded as being in league with the Devil and thus executed on similar grounds. According to Owen:

> Catholic missionaries also instigated witch trials… in the northern New Mexico settlement of Abiquito some fifty miles from Santa Fe… that led to the most extensive and complex witch trials involving the Inquisition and secular authorities[397]

However, even though equally persecuted by Christians as being in league with the Devil, whereas Satanism, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis was contiguous and coterminous with Christianity, even as it was antithetical in practice, Paganism and polytheism predated both faith mechanisms and thus could be considered to be in many ways the root that lies beneath rather than an anathema to traditional religion.

Indeed, whereas Christianity and Satanism were configured as being monotheistic and thus reductionist in terms of belief, as has been suggested throughout this thesis by existing within an us-versus-

[397] Owen Davies, *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft after Salem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

them relationship of respective a right and wrong-mindedness, to be pagan was to prefigure this and in certain ways to reject this essential dichotomisation. Equally, to be rightminded, ironically for both Satanists and Christians, was to engage in the praising of phallocentric Gods who either fathered the world, or alternatively fathered Evil within the world. Witchcraft, on the other hand, may be, as was suggested by Robin Hardy not to mention Sir James Frazer, more appropriately associated with the Pagan, what is referred to as Wicca within a more modern context. However, unlike either Hardy or Frazer's understanding of this religious configuration, what is understood under Wicca to be reverenced is not a God who created and bestowed life upon the Earth, but in fact the Earth itself, which is almost always regarded as gender specific, as Mother Earth. Following this argument, it could also be asserted that while Christianity and Frazerian Paganism are equally male-oriented, Wicca or witchcraft may be regarded as being female-centred in not only allowing for the possibility of the worship of a Goddess or series of both Gods and Goddesses, but equally the possibility of an active female religious agent, the Witch, or Wicca practitioner. These discussions of the foregrounding of female versus male active spiritual agency in turn represent the very debates that are disseminated within the films, novels and teleplays that will be analysed in this chapter. Further, it is these very considerations that will be, by extension, located within contemporaneous debates that circulated at the time of the making of these works with regard to not only the foregrounding of matriarchy, a cornerstone of the feminist movement, but equally the ideological fears of the period with regard to the dangers that the unhinged female agency may possesses.

Cultural Shifts, Feminist Debates and the Role of Traditionalism and Modernity in the 1960s and 1970s

According to Beth Bailey in *Sex in the Heartland*, the post war era was in a state of flux when it came to cultural conventions. She argues:

> As America mobilised for war, national goals often conflicted with 'the way we do it here,' and though local ways often triumphed, the needs of the wartime state frequently challenged local custom. Most of these challenges were unintentional… [n]onetheless, they sometimes undermined existing social hierarchies. In spaces created for federal action, other Americans contested the status quo, whether by demanding civil rights, or by defying definitions of 'respectability'[398].

Those affected by these paradigmatic shifts were, as Bailey alludes above, those who were in marginalised positions including people of colour and women, thus ostensibly eliciting a call for civil rights and socio-political equality[399]. For African-Americans this resulted in the formation of activist organisations under the leadership of congregational churches, which alongside groups such as the NAACP not only inspired cultural debate from within these communities on a private level, but equally enacted change on both local and federal levels, thus impacting the public sphere as well. For women, 'Second Wave' Feminism, spearheaded within a more secular society by individuals such as Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan as well as political organisations including The National Organisation for Women also brought into focus debates surrounding gender inequality in what was increasingly being defined as a society based not only on patriarchy, but more specifically an Anglo-American patriarchal system.

With regard to enacting cultural change and socio-political equality there seemed to be three choices with regard to addressing this situation. The first of these involve eliciting transformation from within by a process of personal awakening. Through education and

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[398] Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 14.

[399] Such a call was by no means novel, beginning in the middle 1800s, as a platform for the American Civil War and the first-wave American Feminist Movement's Seneca Falls Convention.

the internalisation of alternative methods of self-definition and stabilisation, it was believed a cultural shift could be enacted one individual at a time. Texts including *I'm Okay You're Okay*[400] and other such self-help manuals by authors the likes of Nancy Friday assisted in this road of awakening. The second process also involves instigating change from within through the formulation of legislation, guided by activists and organisations including not only Martin Luther King, Jr and The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, but also Betty Friedan and The National Organisation of Women.

Whereas the aforementioned in concentrating on equality, may be regarded as being more conservative methodologies, the final strategy may be considered to be more radical, involving not merely a call for equality, but in fact a holistic rejection of the system that was regarded as being unjust, the goal being to foster a new society by repudiating old traditional one. This was a road forged by activists including not only Malcolm X, at least in his earlier years, and the Black Panthers but also Shulamith Firestone and the Women's Liberation Front.

With these choices in mind, it would appear, at least upon the surface, as if the first film to be discussed in this chapter, *The Season of the Witch*, opts for the former as the main character, Joan Mitchell, the titular *Jack's Wife*, attempts to enact change from within herself and her middle-class suburban community. Through adopting a position of power achieved through an affiliation to a coven of witches, as was discussed above, she succeeds in changing perspective one individual at a time. The second text,

400 Thomas A. Harris, *I'm Okay, You're Okay* (London: Arrow, 2012).

Harvest Home, on the other hand, both in its filmic and literary forms, seeks solutions by forming an isolated, divisive community wherein, under the guise of literally and spiritually returning to nature, a more female-centric ethos could be adopted from without. Indeed, whether from an internal or external perspective, these two texts, like the larger civil rights movement in which feminism grew and flourished, appear, at least on the surface, to turn the traditional establishment on its head[401].

Season of the Witch, and the Role of Spiritual Affiliation and Belief for Sustaining Self-Agency

In the first text to be herein considered, *Season of the Witch,* debates of the era regarding feminism, modernity, spiritual affiliation and a break from tradition are articulated as the titular *Jack's Wife* enacts a sexual and spiritual awakening that frees her from what is regarded by the film to be the confining and punitive socio-cultural conditions of her middle-class suburban milieu. This thematic concern is reiterated throughout the film as Jack Mitchell repeatedly chides *his Joanie* by telling her to go back to sleep, both literally and figuratively. Indeed, he wants his wife to leave him alone and to equally ignore the latent desires that are being repressed not only by him, but by the larger society over which he exerts control. However, as is revealed in the many dream sequences presented throughout the film, while her situation is at least initially accepted outwardly, this patriarchal system within which she lives has never been wholly internalised. Sigmund Freud suggests in his seminal work, *The*

[401] What is interesting is that in both cases the desire to transform society is more conservative and does not involve a radical overthrow of the contemporary culture. Whereas both *The Season of the Witch* and *Harvest Home*, respectively call for change from within in the case of the former, and without in the case of the latter, even when an alternative society is established this is done apart from the mainstream, either through the adoption of an alternative faith or the setting up of an isolated rural community. Indeed, the only films that call for a radical overthrow of society are not the pagan films discussed in this section, but the Satanist films which are analysed in the previous section.

Interpretation of Dreams, that dreams are expressions of unresolved material from daily life, what he calls wish fulfilments[402], and if this is in fact the case, then Joan is not only introduced in relationship to these unfulfilled needs, but also becomes increasingly defined by her desire to break from the status quo of waking life, and actualise these longings.

In the first of many dream sequences, Joan is shown as being wholly associated with her traditional position as wife and mother. This is more of a nightmare than a dream, however, as she is equally pictured walking behind her husband, following and serving him, while he appears to take no notice of her presence. Her ubiquitous role as caretaker and unseen companion is solidified as her husband, upon coming aware of her, attaches a lead around her neck and forces her into a kennel cage. Indeed, she is not viewed as a person, but instead as just another and potentially more useful 'man's best friend.' Her fears of getting old, ceasing to be able to serve her husband both sexually and otherwise and of being ignored are all results of a lack of a strong sense of self-agency, which is lost but nonetheless desired. Not only do Joan's dreams involve her looking into a mirror wherein she appears as a crone, but this concern also enters into her waking life as she speaks to her best friend, Shirley, and thus learns that the prospect of being past one's prime, at a time when, according to her friend, "She is not done yet" are shared within her community. This enlargement of concern from personal to societal thus furthers the era's feminist debates. Indeed, in a trailer for the film, at the time entitled *Hungry Wives*, the female narrator suggests of the narrative universe:

> On a diet of men, everything women would want out of a marriage, except the one thing they crave most: Joan, available; Shirley, drowning her problems in drink; Marion, dabbling in witchcraft. They are all hungry wives. With an appetite for diversion, gambling with

[402] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1997).

life and death, hungry wives lead normal lives, or do they? What goes on while their husbands are at work? *Hungry Wives*[403].

While facing these concerns regarding the demonization of and active female agency born out a traditional view of women, Joan's teenage daughter, a product of the late 1960s and early 1970s, acts as a character foil for the middle-aged women in the film. Unlike her mother, Nikki openly breaks these moral boundaries not only through her overt sexual promiscuity, but equally her desire to continue to fornicate while at the same time remaining unbound to any obligations inherent to more traditional relationships, like that of her mother and father. What is interesting within the narrative structure is that when Nikki disappears half-way through the film, Joan, arguably, assumes her role and becomes a foil to traditionalism in the same way that her daughter did in relationship to her and the world that Mitchell used to inhabit.

Joan's quest to become in the words of Romero, a "complete member of society"[404] is, in fact, finally achieved through her becoming affiliated to an alternative religion, namely witchcraft. In the world of the film, this seems to be a religion that aligns a concern with a need for efficacious feminine subject-hood to an equal need for effective and female-centred spiritual connectivity Although in one interview, George Romero denies an overarching concern with religion, there are many indicators that suggest otherwise, especially as the director equally concedes that much of what happens in the filmmaking process is instinctual and/ or unintentional. Indeed, elsewhere, Romero discusses how while he was working for public television in Pittsburgh, he not only became aware of the feminist movement, which challenged the efficacy of traditional social positioning, but also became interested in exploring the occult at a

[403] *Hungry Wives* film trailer, DVD. Directed by George A. Romero (United States: Jack H. Harris Enterprises, 1973).
[404] Williams, "An Interview with George and Christine Romero," 403.

time when traditional spiritual affiliation was also undergoing a cultural devaluation. The filmmaker discusses his views on modern spiritual connectivity, when he suggests in an interview with Tony Williams:

> What's the point of just going to church every Sunday? In our neighbourhood, we live near this Presbyterian Church and I don't think there's any sort of mystical thought going through anybody's head. They're all out there looking at each other and seeing how they're dressed and doing what they need to do to get into heaven by showing up every Sunday[405].

It is this question about the spiritual efficacy of traditional religion when it comes to grounding self-agency that is in fact presented in *Season of the Witch*. Within this text traditional religion is compared and contrasted with alternative faiths. While the former of these represents a mechanism that has lost the power to establish and sustain belief in forces outside the self, and equally to provide an effective curb to moral action, the latter is seen as being spiritually grounding, community building and identity sustaining. It is through these thematic concerns that *Season of the Witch* reveals and disseminates debates that circulated during this era of the late 1960s and early 1970s with regard to a breakdown of traditionalism and the grand narratives such as orthodox religion that supported it.

Traditional versus Alternative Religion in *Season of the Witch*

Joan Mitchell, herself a Catholic, as she becomes aware of alternative faith mechanisms, is initially frightened by them, possibly because she already practices a faith that is based upon an acceptance of the power of supernatural forces[406]. However,

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[405] *Ibid.*

[406] This acceptance of the paranormal is inherent to the Catholic rituals such as Communion wherein it is believed that the ceremonial wine is literally transformed into the blood of Christ, and baptism a sacrament in which it is believed that the water becomes possessed by the Holy Ghost.

although Joan continues to practice her faith, after meeting a witch and discussing the tenets of witchcraft begins to question the role that religion plays in her life. This internal struggle is magnified by the community around her. Indeed, if she is a believer, her friends and family provide foils for this, as represented by the actions of her daughter, as discussed above, conversations engaged between Joan and her friend, Shirley, and the way in which Catholic rites and rituals are observed by her and her husband. One of the failings of the church in the modern period has been to pass on belief between generations, and this is certainly the case in *Season of the Witch*. Although Joan and Jack Mitchell are both practicing Catholics, at least at the beginning of the film, their daughter is most assuredly not: this lack of belief confirmed by her promiscuous sexuality, as described above. To follow religion means to follow its rules and strictures, and if one of the main conveyor of these is the Ten Commandments, then Nikki Mitchell has sinned in spades by committing adultery, an action that involves sexual intercourse with anyone outside of the covenant of marriage. Not only is action against God regarded as being abhorrent however, because for Catholics even contemplation of sinful action is regarded as if it were in fact committed. This is revealed in a conversation between Joan and her best friend. The protagonist admits that she has considered engaging in sex outside her marriage to her friend, Shirley, but veils this by equally suggesting that it is an interest that is merely academic, and will not be actualised. Her friend retorts, “You’re a Catholic, sweetie. Isn’t *academic* just as bad as doing it for you people”[407]? In this way, traditional faith is articulated as being restrictive and constraining, and thus antithetical to the spiritual and sexual awakening that Joan will come to experience by the end of the film.

[407] Romero, *Season of the Witch*.

As Joan increasingly goes through this process of enlightenment, she breaks such constraints first by opening herself up to witchcraft as a viable form of alternative religion, and it is this acceptance that, as will be discussed below, leads to her equally experiencing sexual freedom and gratification. After borrowing and reading from a primer borrowed from Marion, the local witch and soothsayer, Joan decides that she will explore this faith in greater depth. While her husband is at work[408], Jack's Wife makes a pilgrimage into the city to buy the paraphernalia that is associated with occult practice. This is the only time within the narrative when she is seen to leave the confines of her suburban universe, for it is only within a modern urban environment that she may be allowed, initially, to explore alternatives to traditionalism in relative anonymity[409]. Returning late in the afternoon, she takes out her small cauldron, candles, incense and other implements, and begins her first ritual. She is so involved that she forgets the time, and her duties as a mother, as a wife and as a Catholic, roles by which she is defined within her suburban community. As she hears her husband approach, she just has time to put away her purchases, and to reach into the fireplace to smear ashes on her forehead. Ironically, she is so involved in practicing this new alternative religion, that she has forgotten her duty as a Catholic, to go to church on Ash Wednesday to receive the ashes that mark the beginning of lent, the coming of Good Friday, and the death of Christ on the cross. Her fatigued and irritable husband enters, and upon seeing her with the mark of the ashes, realises that he has also forgotten this traditional religious observance. Complaining at having to go to church, he comments, "Well gotta get some ashes. Jesus, I hope that church isn't too crowded"[410].

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[408] This appears to be one answer to the question posed in the trailer for *Hungry Wives*: What does a wife do while her husband is at work? Apparently she buys implements of the occult and begins to practice witchcraft.

[409] This articulation of the city as a modern environment with a positive affect is unique to these texts discussed throughout this thesis. Indeed, the other narratives present the urban as being a groundless world that robs the individual of essential subjectivity.

[410] *Ibid*.

Indeed, traditional religion appears to have lost its efficacy, being a practice that is not believed, but merely observed outwardly, a trope that was also discussed in relationship to Joan's acceptance of her role as a traditional wife and mother. With regard to larger socio-cultural concerns, this scene is an example of two of the debates described above: on the one hand, the need to maintain an outward sign of belonging to the status quo, and on the other, a failure to believe in such social expectations, a rejection that increasingly entered into the public forum during this period.

While Catholicism is thus figured as an ineffectual religion, witchcraft is positioned as its opposite, thus establishing another theoretical textual dichotomy. Unlike Catholicism, witchcraft is articulated as not only being efficacious, but also self-sustaining, and thus worthy of adherence. Indeed, it is female dominated, allowing for a certain freedom of expression that up until this time was disallowed Joan and the other wives of the community. Equally the practice yields results. When it is called upon, things happen, even if these results are merely conferring licence toward action, another element that is equally denied Joan as a Catholic. In fact, when Joan once again meets with the leader of the coven, this time with the intention of joining, the witch comments "I thought you were intrigued by it when you were so afraid. Being afraid is necessary for believing"[411]. To this Joan replies, "I know that it is real, that it works, I've actually caused things to happen." The Wicca responds, "It isn't a question of interest it is a question of knowing, believing"[412].

411 Romero, *Season of the Witch*.
412 *Ibid*.

It is this efficacy guaranteed by belief that is also discussed by Joan, her soon to be lover, Gregg Williamson and proved, although unwittingly, by Joan's friend Shirley. In another scene from the film, the group is sitting in the Mitchell living room discussing whether or not occult practice could be used as a means toward self-fulfilment. Williamson argues that the only thing really necessary for the practice of any faith is acceptance. Joan questions this, challenging Greg by suggesting if she were a witch, would her conjuring work simply because she believed it would? Gregg is sceptical, and with this doubt in mind, he conducts an experiment with regard to the power of belief. While Shirley is out of the room, Williamson takes a cigarette, rips off the filter and rolls it up to resemble a marijuana cigarette. When Shirley returns, Gregg offers her a hit off of his joint. As she smokes it, Shirley really believes that she is getting high, as is revealed through her speech and actions. Although this experiment is not related directly to spirituality within the universe of *Season of the Witch* belief is key.

In another scene from the film, Joan uses witchcraft to conjure Gregg for sexual purposes. After performing the ritual, she prepares herself for the meeting, but he does not arrive. Finally, tired of waiting, she phones him, and requests his company for the evening. Because she is convinced that the ritual will yield result, she is equally confident that he will not deny her, and when he does agree, she credits witchcraft for the result. Even if it is unclear as to whether or not her ritual had any effect within the world of the film, like in *Eye of the Devil, Day of the Arrow, Robin Redbreast*, and *The Wicker Man*, all that is necessary is that the efficacy of the religious practice is believed by the practitioner, unquestionably. Indeed, alternative religion is presented as having its own mysteries, tenets and historical connectivity. Because it is an alternative, however, this belief system seems to be more suited to its cultural milieu, a

moment that was imbued, as is suggested elsewhere in the thesis with an opening up of boundaries and alternatives.

Season of the Witch Feminist Concerns and the Role of Belief versus Scepticism

One example of this otherness lies in the genealogical connectivity of witchcraft. While orthodox historical underpinnings for familial and religious connectivity run patrilineally, in the case of witchcraft, the lines of historical spiritual affiliation are matrilineal in nature, and thus more feminist and female-centric. This is suggested by a quotation voiced by, Marian, the filmic Wicca practitioner who suggests:

> It's a religion, really. My mother was a witch and her father belonged. And in today's age where anything goes, people are beginning to take it seriously. Everyone knows there's something out there that we haven't got the power to define[413].

This quotation speaks to the need for belief, for grounding in through lineage, and for the acceptance of the supernatural, all of which are integral for Joan's spiritual and sexual discovery not only as an individual, but as a woman.

Even though the narrative centres on Joan, and her increasing acceptance of this female-empowering faith mechanism known as witchcraft, those around her do not equally accept the necessity of faith as a tool for grounding, which may be why, arguably, they are not awakened in the same way as Joan. Indeed, although traditional socially and politically, the suburbs are still located within a culture that is defined by the end of the modernist and advent of the post-modernist period. Herein a final dichotomy is established, that between those who believe, and those who do not. Clearly, Joan is

413 *Ibid*.

isolated in a family of unbelievers, as discussed above, but this scepticism infiltrates all those around her as well, with the exception, of course of those members of the coven to which she will belong... Indeed, her friend, Shirley, does not seem wholly convinced of the inherent power of witchcraft, possibly because she herself is an unbeliever in any religion whatsoever. Although she goes to Marion, the witch, for a tarot card reading, she does not accept the faith that allows for this potential for second sight. Shirley, in fact, divorces this practice it from the real world by linking it to fictional depictions of witchcraft. She describes what will become known as a viable "kind of religion" as "The whole *Bell Book and Candle* routine"[414], and equally dismisses the fear experienced by her friend with yet another intertextual reference, "If the mousse tastes chalky don't eat it. You know the *Rosemary's Baby* bit"[415]. These references, while on the surface suggest a lack of belief on the part of Shirley, also on an extra textual level, suggest the centrality of alternative religious practice for this narrative, a fact that Romero himself alludes to when he argues "You can feel when borrowing is intentional because it's very distinct, very accurate"[416]. Indeed, although the two films referenced in *Season of the Witch, Bell Book and Candle* and *Rosemary's Baby* are essentially diverse in terms of their genre and tone, they nonetheless share a central focus with the occult and its effect upon women, which is equally a concern with this film as well.

Hungry Wives: Season of the Witch and the Actualisation of Sexual Awakening

In addition to an opening up of the power of spiritual connectivity for the establishment of female selfhood, *Season of the Witch* equally

414 This is a reference to another film that articulates the efficacy of the practice of witchcraft for the actualisation of female desire and feminine power.
415 *Ibid*.
416 Williams, "An Interview with George and Christine Romero," 406.

opens up the possibility of a sexual awakening as well, especially as the main mechanism of what was considered repressive morality by modern culture was associated with traditional religion, which holistically denied the possibility outside of the realm of marriage. In the film, as in the larger culture, when religious orthodoxy lost its function as a cultural grand narrative, so did its function as a curb for action, as discussed earlier in this thesis in relationship to *Rosemary's Baby*. Indeed, alternatives in religion resulted in alternative lifestyles configured around other mechanisms for self-identification and grounding, including commodification, feminism, and naturalism, all of which also fall in line with the Counter Cultural movement, wherein through rejecting traditional beliefs and mores, the individual was allowed to open up to a vast panoply of experiences, both physical, existential and sexual.

This opening up is referenced not only through the narrative in which the protagonist, Joan, transforms from *Jack's Wife* to an independent and sexually aware witch, a fact that she admits at the end of the narrative, but also in the critical reception of the film. In a review published in the New York Times, film critic Vincent Canby suggests of the film:

> *Hungry Wives* has the seedy look of a porn film, but without any of the pornographic action. Everything in it, from the actors to the props, looks borrowed and badly used... The woman frequently drifts into low budget fantasies that are even more drab than her real life experiences. These should drive her to the brink of sanity, but they don't[417].

Thus, the critical reception, while not concerned with the religious depictions of *Season of the Witch*[418], nonetheless recognises other elements that make this film a socio-cultural challenge, namely the

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417 Vincent Canby, "Thalia Twin Bill," *The New York Times*, December 12, 1980, Arts and Leisure Section, Final Edition.

418 This is not uncommon with the secular reception of these works, wherein either the religious downplayed as being an incorrect depiction, or simply indecipherable and confusing,

reference to an opening up freedom of sexual expression in the cinema at a time when, only one year before, the pornographic film became, arguably, more socially acceptable following the release of *Deep Throat*[419]. Indeed, this thematic regarding depicting a sexual awakening that up until this point was associated with pornography is redoubled in the aesthetics of *Season of the Witch* in likewise being a low budget picture, a fact that Romero himself lamented with regard to production limitations, with actors that are at best semi-professional, muted colour, and the sets and props from real-world locations rather than being made specifically for the film. With this connectivity in mind, the way in which everything from the acting to the props are perceived as being robbed of colour and efficacy may further allude to a challenge to the status quo of Hollywood filmmaking, a media production model not only with its own strict morality, but also its own internal prejudices, being predominantly male-centred, arguably in this way an inherently traditional discourse. Indeed, this lack of desire to maintain a façade of 'legitimacy', could in fact suggest that these mores, rather than the film itself are restricting, futile and unfulfilling. However, rather than regarding these divergences as being positive indicators of social subversion on the part of a director known for his sardonic approach to filmmaking, the thematic and aesthetic concerns of *Season of the Witch* are seen at face value and thus discredited as being amateurish and ineffectual[420].

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[419] Jerry Gerard, *Deep Throat*, DVD. Directed by Jerry Gerard (United States: Bryanston Pictures, 1972).

[420] It may also be interesting to note that at this time, a situation comedy entitled *Bewitched*, which aired from 1964 until 1972 on American television network ABC, also dealt with similar themes involving a witch who had to assimilate into a suburban lifestyle. However, whereas *Season of the Witch*, arguably, attempted to address feminist concerns such as an attempt to break free of patriarchal entrapment and the desire to achieve sexual fulfilment, *Bewitched*, alternatively, seemed to conform more readily to existing socio-political norms. These more specifically surrounding the establishment and maintenance of nuclear families and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles given the fact the husband remained the primary breadwinner while the wife, Samantha-the-witch remained a housewife.

The Dark Secret of Harvest Home: The Role of Traditionalism for Belief

In the final scene of *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*, the male protagonist, an artist and photographer, for the first time in the narrative is robbed of discursive agency. Indeed, while in the film and novel versions of *Harvest Home*, the story is told through his eyes, at the end of the film, if not the novel, he is talked about rather than being actively engaged in the storytelling process. Alternatively, his wife, now in a position of apparent control, she prepares to leave their house, enters the room where her husband is seated off-camera, sets down his lunch on a tray near his chair, and puts the needle on a phonograph album. Significantly, another narrator begins to speak through the hi-fi system, telling his own tale in a proto-recorded book. As the woman bends to kiss her husband goodbye, for the first time in this scene, he is revealed, shown to be inert, unresponsive and wearing dark glasses. Although not directly stated, connections are drawn between Nick Constantine and others who throughout the narrative have in one way or another incurred the wrath of the women of the isolated community in which the film and novel are set. Thus, it is made known that Nick, like his neighbour, has been blinded for seeing what he should not, and struck dumb, like Jack Stump, so that he may not tell what he now knows. As an artist who relies upon his sight for inspiration and for his profession, he has been castrated. As a man, in not being able to actively engage, equally he is rendered impotent.

The fact of this character's blinding, enacted by a powerful female agency, as described above, ties into contemporaneous cultural debates with regard not only to socio-political feminism, as was discussed earlier, but also feminist film theory, which with the publication of analyses regarding the male spectatorial gaze by

authors such as Laura Mulvey[421] and Mary Ann Doane[422], questioned the efficacy of female agency within a filmmaking process inherently crafted by and positioned for a male subject. Indeed, patriarchy, within feminist film studies like the larger culture out of which it arose, is regarded as being inherently restrictive and repressive, and challenging this traditional ethos thus very much falls in line with the Counter Cultural movement, and the feminist ethos if not the era overall.

It is these concerns regarding inverted gender positioning, that will be discussed in this section as relating not only to *Season of the Witch*, but also another narrative made six years later in 1978, a work that had a much larger potential audience in being aired on national American television. However, while on the surface *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home* may be read as relying upon similar feminist debates involving a strengthening of feminine subjectivity enacted through a rejection of traditionalism and an adoption of alternative religious connections such as witchcraft and paganism, when regarded more closely this work may be located as offering up an almost antithetical thematic concern. The teleplay *Dark Secret of Harvest Home* may in fact be regarded as falling in line with the other films discussed in the thesis in articulating less of a concern with the culture out of which it was produced, for this film, like *Rosemary's Baby, Eye of the Devil, Robin Redbreast*, and *The Wicker Man,* offers up an orthodox religion that is deeply entrenched and rooted in both historical connectivity and strong socio-cultural positioning. Indeed, except in its promotion of feminist concerns, evidenced through the articulation of a religion that is female-cantered, *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home* offers up more of a concern with the

[421] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975).
[422] Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator," *Screen* 3, no. 4 (1982).

efficacy of traditionalism in a world that appears to lack grounding mechanisms for the stabilisation of self-agency.

Once again, like in *Season of the Witch* and *Rosemary's Baby* certain dichotomies arise including old versus new, the country versus the city, and faith versus a lack of belief, and, in this case, the former are privileged. Even given this connection to the traditional as opposed to the modern, there is still, however, a concern with the feminine dominating over the masculine. This is tied not to an opening up of alternative belief in a modern context, however, but instead, as in *The Wicker Man, Eye of the Devil,* and *Robin Redbreast,* it is a connectivity to an archaic universe that excludes itself from its contemporary social and political milieu that renders femininity efficacious. Equally in being led by a woman as opposed to a man, the community in *Harvest Home*, unlike those pagan communities based upon Frazer's *Golden Bough*, is anything but phallocentric. Indeed, it could be argued that the titular 'dark secret' involves the extent to which this foregrounding of feminine agency exists within this antiquated and isolated community, and what becomes of those men and less often women who challenge it.

The Urban, the Rural and the Modernist Affect

As with all the other texts in this section, the opening of *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home* is initially set within an urban landscape[423], and like in the narratives analysed herein, this modern world is not a happy or fulfilling environment. The teleplay centres on a nuclear family, the Constantines, who, at the beginning of the narrative,

[423] Although one might argue that this is not the case with *The Wicker Man*, as the theatrical version opens with the protagonist flying to the island, in the director's cut, Howie is shown in an urban environment on the beat in the big city.

reside in New York City. At the opening, Nick, the husband and father, is introduced as having deep regrets regarding an extra-marital affair to which he has recently confessed. The wife and mother, Beth, is sexually frigid as a result of her husband's indiscretion and going through therapy, unsuccessfully, to try to cope. Finally, the daughter, Kate, lives in fear as a result of a local gang that is extorting her for money in order to grant her permission to walk down the very street on which she lives. Upon attending the funeral of Beth's father, a conservative Puritan minister, the family happens upon a covered bridge that leads them to, essentially, another world. The inhabitants of the village across the 'Lost Whistle Bridge' are connected to the land, to their own traditions and to a sense of community that sustains them. This connectivity extends not only throughout the community, but also throughout history, as is evidenced in a local cemetery where the headstones tell the story of a collective past centring on familial generations. Every grave seems to hold the name of Penrose dating as far back as the foundation of the nation itself. Not unlike the Amish, the locals are antiquated in dress and in technology, preferring to use old machinery to till the land. When asked, one member suggests that this is not a religious choice, unlike the Amish. They believe that to rely on hand-tools as opposed to mechanised equipment fosters a sense of the communal, and establishes a greater connection to the land. He states that the seeding of the soil is in fact an act of love and must be done by hand for this very reason.

Indeed, Cornwall Coombe lies apart both physically and philosophically, and this apparent separation, at least initially, has a positive effect on the family. Nick, an artist, takes photographs of the landscape and its residents. They explore the countryside together, laughing and joking around. Their environment is contagious, and if it is unified, and unifying then, for once, so are they. Realising the change that is taking place and after seeing a house that is vacant,

the family enquires as to whether or not the property is for sale. In turn, they are informed that the property is owned by village matriarch, Widow Fortune, who is not likely to sell to anyone outside the community. Downhearted, they leave after giving their phone numbers to a local couple who will speak to the Widow on their behalf. Upon returning to New York, the effect of the community of Cornwall Coombe does not altogether dissipate. Beth continues to discuss it with her therapist above all else. Nick pitches a publication idea to the agency for which he works, a coffee table book comprised of drawings of the antiquated country life inherent to this community. After receiving a call suggesting that the rural home is theirs should they still want it, it seems as if their fate is sealed, and a return to an agrarian lifestyle eminent. Once arriving, the change is altogether positive. The Constantines continue to function as a team while refurbishing the house. Beth foregoes any further therapy sessions, and Kate has lost any of the fears she once possessed. Indeed, it seems as if the country air is good for what ails you with regard to modern life.

The Dark Secret of Harvest Home: Cornwall Coombe, Community and The Role of Tradition

However, not everything is as idyllic as it appears on the surface, for like in the contrast between the urban and the rural that open the teleplay, there is equally conflict within Cornwall Coombe between the modern and the traditional. Although the traditions, the 'Ways', by which the community functions are irrefutable, and ingrained, leading to a definite desire, like in *The Wicker Man* to live absolutely apart., this separateness is not regarded by everyone in the community as a positive. This is first evidenced by Worthy, a representative of the new who wants to bring modernisation to the community, a desire that is stopped dead in its tracks by the Widow

who argues, “Why would we want to improve things when everything is just the way we like it”[424]? Indeed, Widow Fortune is regarded not only as the head of the community; she equally assumes the roles of spiritual head, doctor, teacher and counsellor. Given her many specialities with both the physical and the psychological, there appears to be no reason to leave the Coombe, and to do so is, in fact, strongly discouraged. In this way the teleplay is similar to the other pagan cycle films, but indeed, unlike *Robin Redbreast*, *Eye of the Devil* and *The Wicker Man*, this closed isolated spiritual community is ruled by a woman, a powerful leader and spiritual figurehead to which everyone is beholden. This role and the duty of women overall becomes clearer as the narrative develops and as the Cornwall Coombe annual cycle of festivals is revealed.

In the home purchased by the Constantines there is a fireplace with a tiled mantelpiece detailing the various festivals celebrated by the community over the course of the year. The family arrived to the community on planting day, and indeed, this is the first celebration, one in which the earth is fertilised by seed, a task achieved, for obvious reasons, primarily by the males. The next observance, Ages Fair is one in which the Harvest King is chosen. Although a male picked for his strength, good looks and community spirit, he is chosen by a woman, a young girl, Missy, possessed with the gift of second sight. Other festivals include The Day of Seasoning, essentially a Church service not unlike Anglican Harvest Festivals lead first by the local male preacher and then, once the offerings are bestowed, by the Widow who assumes his place at the altar. Even in this more traditional religious environment, that of the local parish church, it is she who receives the offerings as a spiritual representative. Other observances include: Tithing Day, Sheaving Tide, Husking Bee, and finally Corn Play, wherein the fertility of the

[424] Tryon, *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home* (film).

earth is acted out by the Harvest Lord, the Corn Maiden, his female counterpart and the children of the community. The ultimate festival, Harvest Home, however, is not only the most important, but the most female-oriented of them all.

As with The Day of Seasoning, this festival begins in the church and once again is led by Widow Fortune with the community Reverend present, but not leading the observance. As night falls, the preacher is locked in a room in the church and the widow passes out farming implements to the female residents. No males are in attendance. Each woman is also given a white robe with a hood to cover her face. Together they form a procession to the woods, chanting as they walk. Once arriving in a remote spot, they form a circle and the Harvest Lord is brought in blindfolded. His feet are anointed similarly to the feet of Christ, the Harvest Lord's Christian counterpart. The Lord is presented with the Harvest Maiden, and they engage in sexual intercourse on the earth, in a similar fashion to the community in *The Wicker Man* and for similar purpose, to infect the soil with fertility. At the culmination of the sexual act, the Harvest Lord is separated from the Maiden and beheaded by her using a scythe as a murder weapon. It is thus that he is sacrificed, while his blood, ostensibly like his seed, runs into the earth.

Although practiced with reverence by the female members of the community, Nick, like Worthy and as is later revealed Constantine's blind male neighbour, has come to question the ways, and to in fact fight against them. He sneaks into the field and witnesses their rite, seeing what no other man is allowed to witness and live. He not only sees the ritual, but also becomes aware of the fact that the Harvest Maiden is in fact his wife, Beth. The screen goes blank as the female members of the community descend upon him. Indeed, the fate of Nick is uncertain. With the question as to what has become of Nick

left temporarily unanswered, the culmination of the narrative begins with the rest of the family preparing for a picnic. Beth is pregnant, and Kate has been chosen as the new Corn Maiden. Obviously, they have completely adapted to their community.

As suggested in the introduction to this section, in the end, even though the protagonist and narrative storyteller may be regarded as being Nick, as it is through his eyes that the plot develops, at the end of *Harvest Home*, he is robbed of this agency. In being blinded and without speech, he can no longer record or even express what happens around him. As discussed above, his extra-narrative function as storyteller ceases. In the same way his narrative role as artist and recorder of village ritual is also robbed him. He no longer has agency to affect the world, and instead is as isolated from the external world as Cornwall Coombe is isolated from the modern world which surrounds it. He has been effectively castrated, robbed of this patriarchal agency and rendered complicit at last.

Harvest Home: The Novel and the Role of Religion, History and Feminine Connectivity

Like in the film version, Nick Constantine is the central narrator, only more obviously so because the narrative is presented in first-person. Also, like in the teleplay, this character is associated with the modern world. Indeed, there are many similarities between the novel and its adaptation, the first of these being the narrative conflict between the modern and the traditional. This dichotomy is configured, for both versions of the text, as, on the one hand, an acceptance of the efficacy of spiritual affiliation and on the other, an inherent scepticism and disbelief that ultimately on both a literal and figurative level results in a loss of agency and a strong sense of self.

To begin, like in the teleplay, the traditions of Cornwall Coombe are articulated as being ingrained and spiritually motivated. The novel suggests:

> There was a sense of veneration for that which had gone before, a rigid disciplined effort to preserve things as they were—even perhaps, a reluctance to acknowledge things as they are[425].

Venerated in the community are the land, and the 'Ways' which bestow Cornwall Coombe with fertile crops, a connection to history and a strong sense of community. Whereas this is common to all of the pagan texts discussed in this section including *Eye of the Devil, Day of the Arrow, Robin Redbreas*t and *The Wicker Man*, unlike these, the village is run by a woman, this being another similarity between the novel and the teleplay. Indeed, although Nick may be regarded as the protagonist, it is the Widow that functions as the central character within the world of the narrative. In the novel, the Widow Fortune is described in the following way, "The Widow Fortune… was the oldest inhabitant in Cornwall Coombe, a sort of matriarch whom all the villagers respected to the point of reverence"[426]. If the land and the ways are reverenced, as suggested above, it is the Widow who sustains them both, making her equally a figure of veneration. So strong, in fact, is the role played by the Widow Fortune that upon reading the text, equally venerated Hollywood actress, Bette Davis, purportedly, expressed a desire to portray her should the novel ever be made into a film. However, if the Widow Fortune is discernible as being in a position of power, narratively speaking, equally, the power that she wields like the reasons behind it are cloaked, at least until the end of the narrative, when all is made clear, made manifest.

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425 Tryon, *Harvest Home* (novel), 31.
426 *Ibid,* 35.

Tradition and Historical Connectivity: The Novel versus the Teleplay

As in the teleplay, the traditions like the Widow herself are articulated as being ancient, and historically entrenched. However, even though there is a separation between this narrative and those British co-productions such as *The Wicker Man,* and *Eye of the Devil*, and *Day of the Arrow* in terms of gender positioning, nonetheless, the shared history between America and its motherland, England, is foregrounded in the novel, unlike in the teleplay where this connection is alluded to, but not clearly addressed. Tryon provides a connectivity between this textual community and their British roots, not only in terms of the name of the community, **Cornwall** Coombe, but also in terms of its shared history, a heritage as well as a shared belief in the supernatural that arose from a common pagan past:

> Most of the villagers…were descended from farmers who had come from old Cornwall, in England more than three hundred years earlier, and the Cornishmen didn't live who wouldn't trust to charms and omens[427].

And again later in the novel, with regard to the etymology of the word Coombe and Lost Whistle Bridge, this historical connection is again made manifest:

> It's an English word, Celtic actually… Means a valley or a sort of hollow. I suppose it implies a certain remoteness, which we are given to hereabouts. There are a number of throwbacks around here, like certain of the names which have an ancient and venerable history. Take the 'Lost Whistle Bridge,' for instance, which is a corruption of Lostwithiel, one of the towns in old Cornwall[428].

Thus, in the novel the bridge may be regarded as spanning not only space but equally time, something that is again alluded to but never directly articulated in the teleplay. Indeed, to cross the Lost Whistle bridge is to cross from a modern world of isolation, discontinuity and loss, as is suggested above and into a shared and collective British/

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[427] *Ibid*, 61.
[428] *Ibid*, 183-4.

American history, an antiquated nature that defines Cornwall Coombe, and equally its pre-modern ethos in which history and tradition are revered. In other words, this nature as coming out of the past also results, as was discussed in the film, as being a rejection of the new, of the modern, "You get plenty of resistance around here to new ways…. Cornwall Coombe has always been a world unto itself"[429].

It is this opposition between the modern and the pre-modern, between historical tradition and a loss of the self-same defining mechanisms that can be located in both the literary and televised texts that make up *Harvest Home*. Although expressed differently, this is a common thread that binds the two texts thematically speaking. Indeed, if this concern may be located in both works, then arising from this dichotomy is yet another common trope to these alternative religion narratives, namely an acceptance of the power of spiritual connectivity. As is discussed elsewhere, there is a connection between the pagan and the Christian, especially with regard to more antiquated beliefs such as those taken from the Old Testament. Indeed, Harvest Home itself quotes from The Bible:

> Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and of honey, that ye may live and not die[430].

Another connection that binds faith has to do with ritual, and the meaning and significance behind these observances. This idea ties to *Eye of the Devil,* and thus to the importance of the sacrifice for the sake of the community, a shared belief in *The Wicker Man* and *Robin Redbreast* that is expressed here as well. All of these texts are ultimately concerned with, as Lord Summerisle suggests, the true

[429] *Ibid,* 88.
[430] *Ibid*, 105.

meaning of sacrifice, and sacrifice forms the basis, arguably, not only Paganism, but equally for orthodox Christianity.

Indeed, to be Christian is to revere Christ who died on the cross, a sacrifice to propitiate the sins of humanity. However, whereas in Christianity, sacrifice in the New Testament is for the sins of the world, in *Harvest Home*, like in *Eye of the Devil, Robin Redbreast*, and The *Wicker Man*, sacrifice is practiced so as to ensure fertility, thus benefitting the harvest and those who live as a result of that which is sown. Thus, the pagan and the Christian, like the American and English cultures in which they are practiced, have common roots, and do not necessarily exist in opposition. To return to the novel:

> When they came from Cornwall to the New World, the original settlers were a deeply religious sect… They were forced to adapt to circumstances, to learn new ways in order to survive. But in learning the new, they refused to give up the old, a faith based on the moon and the stars and the tides, and on ancient deities they could turn to for succour in time of stress… They raised themselves up and prayed for help, but not in church, but in the fields, inviting the blessings of the old gods. And the gods answered them. The church and the law have learned that it's a lost cause trying to censure such beliefs. How can you hope to fight them, when it's proved that the old Cornishmen arrived here with the same gods the Indians already had[431]?

However, even while these two faiths may be argued to form an historical continuity wherein, like in *Eye of the Devil*, the pagan is not forgotten, but instead rests underneath the newer Christian faith, these two spiritual affiliations increasingly become regarded as being dichotomous, especially following the Reformation wherein the supernatural element that was in many ways foundational to the Catholic Church was rent from practices of worship. It is this is more modern form of religious observance, such as that found within Puritan sects, that is then contrasted with more antiquated forms of

[431] *Ibid*, 184-5.

belief, which, as is suggested elsewhere, is more efficacious as a faith not only for stabilisation of the self, but also for the building of a cohesive community. Nick suggests of his wife and her faith:

> She had never been religious, she did not love her father. She had never experienced any warm stream of affection as a child… In the Puritan ethic… to be happy was by extension to be sinful, and until we met I do not think Beth had ever been very happy[432].

Indeed, like in *Season of the Witch* these modern faiths are regarded as merely having a restrictive power without any ability to ground or cohere.

Feminism and *Harvest Home*

If the 'Ways' presented in *Harvest Home* can be regarded to represent an alternative belief system that is rooted in spiritual connectivity and historical imperatives, as was argued above, then it may also be suggested that this faith is one that, like in *Season of the Witch* and unlike the rest of the films discussed in this section, is at centre female oriented. This is shown in the film not only through the casting of Bette Davis as the Widow Fortune, a powerful and venerable Hollywood actress assuming an equally reverential role, but equally suggested in the narrative itself as the women assume key positions within the community and the sole positions in the rituals that are shown to sustain the village[433].

Like the Paganism out of which the 'Ways' were formed, not only is the role of women ancient, and connected to the soil, she equally

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[432] *Ibid,* 139.

[433] Admittedly, there are men allowed to take part in the rituals of Harvest Home, just as they are allowed to take part in similar observances in *Eye of the Devil* and *Robin Redbreast* and *The Wicker Man*. However, in *Harvest Home*, the only make present is the Harvest Lord whose sole role is to provide the blood that will nourish the land and restore fertility to the crops. Thus, whereas in the former work, the male sacrifice knowingly resigns himself to this fate, the men in *Robin Redbreast, Wicker Man* and *Harvest Home* are unwitting sacrifices, and thus assume a less active and more passive role in the rituals.

comes to represent the earth in taking the role as the Earth Mother, an essentially feminine position that involves giving birth to the crops, and thus to life itself. The novel argues, "The Earth mother was older than Crete, older that Babylon or Egypt, as old as the dawn of time"[434]. Thus, like the religion out of which this role was born, an ancient worship that predates all other faiths, so too can the female as being in a position of power equally predate the phallocentric culture that is currently in control of the modern universe. Indeed, it is suggested in the text that whereas men are currently in positions of power, this was not always the case, and certainly is not the case currently in the community known as Cornwall Coombe. To return to the novel:

> There was something in her, a deeply ingrained sense of something primitive, of the Woman Eternal, who demanded to be served- not just between the legs, but to make man utterly subservient[435].

It is exactly this result that is enacted in both the *Season of the Witch* and *Harvest Home*, both as a novel and a teleplay, as was suggested in the introduction to this chapter, traditional society is turned on its head as the male dominated culture becomes subservient to a female-centred society based of faith, ritual and community and grounded in an agency building ethos.

Conclusions

In a culture that was embroiled in a series of vast paradigmatic shifts, a time of history that saw the loss of the grand narratives that once provided meaning and social cohesion, the rise of the feminine and the loss of male dominance within the socio-political realm indeed seemed to be one of many possible outcomes. Indeed, this was a time, according to Marion the Witch, in which "anything goes." What

434 *Ibid*, 179.
435 *Ibid*, 252.

is interesting about these texts, however, is not that they merely present the rise of the female at a time in which feminist philosophy was in full bloom, but instead how this rise of women was couched and facilitated by spiritual affiliation. Indeed, if religion does offer the glue that binds cultures together, then to find a female-centric religion, could equally provide the cohesive force necessary to bring this cultural reversal to fruition. It has been argued throughout this thesis that the problem of modernity is a problem of belief, and indeed, that could be reducible to the failure of the Counter Culture movement, and its aspirations for social and cultural equality. Certainly for every *Season of the Witch* or *Dark Secret of Harvest Home*, there is a *Valley of the Dolls*[436] and *Stepford Wives*[437] that seeks to not only challenge but in fact call into question the viability and indeed desirability of female agency left unchecked to roam free.

[436] Helen Deutsch, Dorothy Kingsley and Harlan Ellison, *The Valley of the Dolls,* Directed by Mark Robson (United States: Twentieth Century Fox, 1967).
[437] William Goldman, *The Stepford Wives*, Directed by Bryan Forbes (United States: Columbia Pictures, 1975).

CONCLUSION

General Limitations and Resultant Overall Conclusions

Overall, three primary discursive threads were followed within this thesis stemming from an original research question that sought to address how the horror cinema of the 1960s and 1970s discussed and disseminated the intellectual context and the arising contemporaneous cultural debates specifically with regard to religion and spiritual affiliation. Indeed, the project was ignited by an awareness of the profusion of films concerning Satanism, Witchcraft and Paganism that were being produced during this era in American history beginning in the 1960s, and dissipating roughly ten years later at the culmination of the 1970s decade.

In attempting to address queries as to why these films should arise at this historical moment, and what they reveal about the culture of which they are an integral part, a series of limitations necessarily were delineated so as to create a manageable focus of study, these three aforementioned parameters being: first a concern with the horror film specifically, also, as suggested above, a limitation that was established from the outset, second, an emphasis on those films that arose during what has been regarded as the contemporary period of horror filmmaking, works which according to cinema historians such as Andrew Tudor and Stephen Prince presented a greater connectivity with the socio-political milieu, thus potentially directly interrogating concurrent paradigmatic shifts in terms of theosophy, and third, a concentration upon those works produced

within the United States, wherein the majority of these texts issued forth and additionally the locus for many of these aforementioned debates with regard to changing attitudes in terms of traditional religion both in the public and private sphere.

In delineating a specific genre, the horror cinema, it was not the intention of this thesis to reveal the nature of this generic distinction, nor was the goal to make manifest its relationship to spectatorial intellectual or emotional affect, a focus of other film theorists mentioned in this thesis including Carol Clover, Robin Wood and Barbara Creed. Thus, the distinction of what may be regarded as a horror text was made simply through an analysis of the critical reception of and promotion related to these works, and how they were defined at the time of their release. Indeed, if critics and promotional materials referred to these texts as being horror films, then they were regarded for the purposes of this thesis as being thus as well.

Concerning time frame, and periodization, a focus on films dealing with the Satanic, the Pagan and the Wiccan drew an initial starting point for analysis in 1960, a significant year due to it being when, ostensibly, the first contemporary horror film to address these concerns, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho,* was released. With *Psycho* being the first film to thus be considered, a divergence in terms of thematic concern was established: between on the one hand those texts that involved psychological possession by a maleficent outside force, from a religious point of view the taking over of one's soul by the Devil, and on the other those expressing an interest in the practice of Satanism, Paganism and Witchcraft as viable alternative religions existing alongside and in some cases opposing traditional Christian faiths. The first thread of this deviation, the possession text, was eventually relinquished and excised from this discussion

due to concerns with analytical space, and thus the main thematic concern of the thesis became what were defined as being alternative religion texts[438].

With regard to this thematic, initial suggestions appeared to reveal a connection between these alternative religion constellations, and debates surrounding the entrenchment of the Counter Culture movement, and a concomitant socio-political awakening and conventional loosening. However, rather than these articulations of Satanism, Paganism and Witchcraft as being markers for the acceptance of an opening up of overarching religious conservatism, when regarded more closely, these seemingly non-orthodox faiths, were ironically portrayed as being far more than a mere antithesis to traditional faiths such as Catholicism and Protestantism. In fact, further problematizing this dichotomisation, even as conventional religion was at this time undergoing vast reform in order to become more 'culturally relevant,' following the Second Vatican Council, by altering the liturgy to be read in local vernacular, and deemphasising the hierarchical structure of the Church by acknowledging the 'apostolate of the laity'[439], Satanism, Witchcraft and Paganism, while still alternative were rendered so, in certain cases, because of their articulation as being even more orthodox than what was once regarded as orthodoxy. Indeed, as the Church conducted mass in English, relinquished the necessity of priestly vestments, except for the ubiquitous clerical 'dog collar' and allowed for a direct connection to God, these alternative religions were often portrayed in these films as being conducted in Latin, by a preacher garbed in ceremonial

[438] As discussed in the introduction, these works are referred to as texts, or indeed, constellations, because in addition to a consideration of the films or teleplays, is incorporated as analysis of their adaptive literary sources, and any subsequent novelizations.

[439] This reform acknowledging and declaring that the Church should not be reducible to a centralised Council of Fathers, but instead may be better defined as the people of God, this decentralisation leading to an acceptance of the unmediated connectivity of the individual to the higher power, wherein intervention on behalf of the parishioner by the Priest was no longer necessary for forgiveness or for salvation but could instead be enacted by faith and prayer.

robes, who primarily enacted rituals designed to align worshippers to the faith. However, at the same time, these films addressed a blossoming of alternative faiths such as those espoused by the Counter Culture in the form of neo-paganism and a popularisation of the occult teachings of Aleister Crowley and Anton LaVey. Indeed, at a time when mainstream film distribution and exhibition was, like the religious climate, and possibly even as a result of this, also experiencing a relaxing of restriction as to what was acceptable to articulate. Formerly, before 1968, the Hayes Code, enforced by the not only the Catholic but equally Protestant factions, restricted what was acceptable in terms of the cinema including what could be regarded as being religiously defamatory. What is interesting for the purposes of this investigation is not only the opening up of allowable material, but the fact that this loosening coincided with the production of what were considered to be 'High Art' and mainstream horror films such as *Rosemary's Baby*, *the Omen* and *the Exorcist*. Such a configuration thus further speaking to the ways in which New Hollywood Horror significantly positions itself with regard to contemporaneous cultural debates.

Thus, a significant intervention inherent to the conclusions presented in this analysis was not only to locate the thematic in works such as *Rosemary's Baby, The Omen, The Wicker Man* and *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*, to name a few, as being primarily concerned with religion, a focus that was dismissed or devalued within current academic discussions, but even more so, rather than being an annunciation of radical alternative spiritual affiliations signalling an opening up of religious discourse, these works were found to be much less unified and far more unsettled. Indeed, God may be dead, or in fact God may now be Jesus, Mother Earth or even Satan. This undecided nature, arguably, directly alludes to a paradigmatic shift, but not only as a transition between the classical and the contemporary horror film, or even a shift between cultural

conservatism and an ethos espoused by the Counter Culture movement, a ‘getting loose’ to coin a phrase used by cultural historian Sam Binkley, but instead to a shifting focus from traditionalism, to modernity and back again as the socio-polity searched for mechanisms whereby the individual and by extension society could be grounded, if such mechanisms were even needed at all. Thus, finally, this era became significant due to the fact that it exists at the crux of the modern and postmodern periods, an interpolated focus that was not part of the initial research question, but upon further investigation, was regarded to have significant overarching ramifications for the understanding not only of the culture, but also its religious connectivity all revealed through a primary artistic output, the contemporary alternative religion horror text.

Chapter Conclusions and Discrete Contemporaneous Cultural Debates

Further, with regard to cultural connectivity, a concern with other contemporaneous socio-political debates was equally located within these works including consumerist, genealogical, ageist, and feminist debates that revealed these texts not to be merely mirrors of their socio-political milieu, but indeed interactively embedded discursive disseminators of culture in and of themselves. This is revealed in the way in which these texts were received and often paned by both the secular popular press and religious media. If indeed it could be argued of these horror texts, as Andrew Tudor suggests, that they reveal a “fear of ourselves and of the ill-understood and dangerous forces that lurk within us”[440], then it could also be argued that their overwhelmingly negative critical reception might further indicate a

[440] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 48.

potential drive to disavow these very concerns that at the time were under such heated debate.

With regard more specifically to these discrete cultural conundrums, Chapter One concluded that an essential debate located in the film and literary versions of *Rosemary's Baby* was related to the role and efficacy of traditionalism versus modernity as cultural signifiers, mechanisms for socio-political cohesion, and methodologies for individual grounding. On the one hand, traditionalism provided a curb to the acquisitive impulse, a connectedness to history and religion both of which functioning in tandem to take focus away from a narcissistic self-interest, and provide a connection to that which is larger than the individual, namely generational legacy and a sense of cultural community. However, on the other hand, these orthodox affiliations were also being regarded as being restrictive in terms of self-identification and socio-political cohesion' leaving little room for personal re-invention, re-alignment or growth should the aforementioned ties prove ineffective or unacceptable. It is thus that the modern role of consumerism, at once problematic and gratifying, becomes of specific interest in this struggle for meaning and connectivity. It is also suggested in this chapter that these concerns located at the crux between the culmination of the modern and the advent of the postmodern eras were, in fact not new or novel, but were equally engaged at a time of equally significant paradigmatic shift at the beginning of the modernist period as revealed by the Gothic literary movement. In engaging with an artistic movement whereby similar concerns regarding traditionalism, modernity and consumerism were foregrounded, fostered, and furthered, arguably, such a reading may be seen to be more viable and indeed more plausible.

Chapter Two concludes that *Rosemary's Baby* is not alone in its articulation of the contemporaneous battle between traditionalism and modernity, thus suggesting the possibility that a cycle of works sharing similar thematic concerns indeed exists at this given moment in history. Although similar in overall narrative conflict, the film and subsequent novelisation of the same title, namely *The Omen*, rather than dealing with consumerism as a modern method for identification, re-configures the aforementioned conundrum in terms of the role of predestination versus a culture based on the foregrounding of a freedom of choice. This struggle, within this textual constellation is embedded within a discussion of theology, which links Satanism to Catholicism, both being faiths that rely upon historical imperatives, generational legacies, and the reliance upon supernatural ritual observance, while pitting this spiritual constellation against a modern world of politics, rationality and an essential scepticism. As is the case with *Rosemary's Baby*, the thematic concerns of *The Omen* are tied to similar concerns within an earlier artistic movement, The Gothic, wherein a critique of Catholicism, and a concomitant fear of and longing for the irrational under the guise of a culture championing the concerns of the Enlightenment and Reformation provides an ironic modernist historical legacy.

Chapter Three identifies a group of films within this increasingly emerging cycle of Alternative Religion Texts that equally share a concern with Satanism and 'unconventional' religious affiliation, this time focusing upon the establishment of a thematic surrounding contemporaneous cultural debates about the value efficacy of the modernist cult of youth. This chapter concludes, following the theories of cultural historian Christopher Lasch that the forward-focused ethos of the modernist movement embroiled the culture in a psycho-social condition that he refers to as the 'Culture of Narcissism.' In turn, this chapter identifies a group of works including *The Witches, Race with the Devil*, and *The Brotherhood of Satan* as

articulating similar socio-political debates regarding ageist concerns. As suggested above, however, this chapter reveals that such a discussion, is not as simple as presenting a mere dichotomy between young and old, arguably signifiers for the modern and the traditional respectively. Indeed, like the other works in this section, the conclusions arrived upon when analysing these works are as problematic as the culture out of which they manifest. This is particularly the case for the final film discussed in this chapter, *The Brotherhood of Satan*, wherein it is not the young that adopt a radical alternative faith, but instead the elderly, effectively turning this dichotomy on its head.

Chapter Four draws conclusions regarding configurations of faith between the ostensibly more traditional faith, Christianity, and the more alternative spiritual affiliation, Paganism, within British and Anglo-American films and teleplays. Rather than setting these two theologies in direct conflict , as will be seen with the filmic and textual versions of *The Wicker Man*, however, this chapter suggests that articulations of the Pagan in the film *Eye of the Devil*, its literary antecedent *Day of the Arrow* and the BBC teleplay *Robin Redbreast* regard Paganism as being a fundamental faith that undergirds rather than opposes Christianity, thus providing a continuum of belief that is then pitted against the modern world of disbelief, the former leading to what may be regarded as the formation of a meaningful existence while the latter positioned as being empty and lacking fulfilment,. Ironically, even as the Pagan belief systems, in accepting the concept of propitiation, results in the necessity of sacrifice, to die is to live through the crops, through the villagers who are sustained by the crops and by extension the Gods who are worshipped and kept alive by the rural inhabitants, a circle of life that is contrasted with the self-interested isolation of the modern subject who lives, but whose life is equally regarded as being isolated, isolating and without significance.

Chapter Five discusses the British-American co-produced film and literary versions of *The Wicker Man* in light of the aforementioned debates regarding the role and efficacy of traditionalism. Indeed, as is suggested above, this chapter concludes that the central conflict of this narrative rests in a battle of traditional faiths, both imbued with historical imperatives, and a belief in the power of sacrifice. Indeed, at the conclusion of the film, these two faiths merge into one, under the shared voices of their respective believers who speak to their Gods, seeking favour and salvation. As with the other films in this text, this world of belief is contrasted with a modern condition of scepticism, although alluded to throughout, is not personified by any character within the narrative, the only indicator of this spiritual other being the necessity of separation from a world that would not understand the tenets of a religion based upon propitiation, and thus would suffer its followers to be as reviled as was the reception of this work overall at the time of its release.

Finally, Chapter Six draws conclusions between the ways in which American Pagan films and teleplays differ from their British and British-American counterparts, specifically in terms of gender positioning. Indeed, while all the films in this section of the thesis debate the efficacy of traditional faiths within a modern context by offering up paganism as an antecedent of the later traditional religious belief system, Christianity, the aforementioned works discussed in Chapters Four and Five offer up faiths that are as equally male dominated as their Christian counterparts. What makes the American productions including *Season of the Witch* and *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home* unique is how they position female agency as the active construct in terms of those that follow faith, those who are the spiritual leaders and the object of reverence, Mother Earth. In dealing with these essentially feminist concerns,

these films also beg the question as to the outcome of this gendered discourse. As authors such as Barbara Creed and Julia Kristeva suggest, is it the fact of these women being in positions of power that renders these texts horrific? Regardless of the answer to this question, these contemporaneous cultural debates nonetheless provide a pointed view into the culture at the end of the modernist and advent of the postmodern periods.

Further Study

As is suggested in the overall conclusions as well as those drawn from these discrete chapters, in being a discursive analysis of American, and in certain significant cases British-American literature, films and teleplays, this thesis is first necessarily limited by a concern with national identity and cultural specificity, for indeed, to explore international instances of so-called alternative religion texts would prove impossible given the scope and allotted space constraints of this research project. In thus focusing upon American and Anglo-American contexts, traditionalism in terms of spiritual affiliation naturally rests with Christian belief, while alternative is its religious other, in this case, because of another limitation with regard to a focus upon one specific genre that of horror, may be located as being Satanism, Witchcraft and Paganism. With these parameters in mind, a study of another national context would prove interesting and would indeed potentially issue dramatically different results. For example, to focus on the horror texts of nations such as Indonesia, and the Middle East would change the parameters whereby traditionalism would be defined both overall, and more specifically in terms of Muslim faith. Additionally, to consider Japanese or Indian horror would yield similarly divergent conclusions.

Also, to move beyond the scope of one specific genre would open up discussion with regard to what might be deemed alternative. Indeed, even within American horror, films like *Audrey Rose*[441] and *Carrie* introduce religious 'others' such as Buddhism and Evangelical Christianity, respectively, not to mention those films from different countries with different generic distinctions. Additionally, as discussed in the introduction and the beginning of this conclusion, the decision to focus upon American horror lead to other decisions with regard to time period, as these alternative religion American horror texts manifested primarily beginning in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. This is not to suggest that other alternative religion horror texts are not still being produced, for indeed they are, or that these works discussed herein were the first of their kind, for indeed they were not. With this in mind, to focus on the origination of Alternative Religion Horror texts by analysing films beginning with the silent era, works such as *Haxan*[442], or to go into a more in-depth study of the Gothic would be a fruitful theoretical prospect. Likewise, to deal with the legacy of these works for films such as *The Witch*[443] would also yield interesting results.

Finally, as was suggested at the outset of this chapter, one half of the initial project that was proposed at the inception of this study was excised due to analytical constraints, namely a consideration of Possession texts. These works, in fact, can be considered to be closely tied to any project that deals with Satanism, Paganism and Witchcraft. Films such as *Psycho* and *The Exorcist*, just to name a few, were equally vital articulations at the time not only because they, like those texts discussed throughout this thesis, reveal debates

441 Frank De Felita, *Audrey Rose*, DVD. Directed by Robert Wise (United States: United Artists, 1977).
442 Benjamin Christensen, *Haxan,* DVD. Directed by Benjamin Christensen (Sweden: Svensk Filmindustri, 1922).

443 Robert Eggers, *The Witch*, DVD. Directed by Robert Eggers (United States: Parts and Labor, 2015).

about the efficacy of traditional religion, but also as these works arguably also further legitimated horror as a generic discourse. Indeed, all films and teleplays included in the attached filmography, even those that are not directly referenced, are worthy of conisation, admiration, and indeed possibly even love, even if, as the saying goes, love hurts….

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