LANGUAGE OF THE SACRED: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY GOTHIC NOVEL AND IMAGINATIVE APOLOGETICS.

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Abstract: Language of the Sacred: The Gothic Nineteenth Century Novel and Imaginative Apologetics

This thesis offers imaginative apologetic readings of some of the key Gothic novels from the nineteenth century. It begins with a discussion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) then moves on to Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* (1824) *Jane Eyre,* (1847) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) before concluding with *Dracula,* (1899) *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)*,* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll, and Mr Hyde* (1886). The thesis argues that utilising theological readings of the Gothic is both necessary and productive, bringing to the fore aspects of the Gothic text that have, thus far, been marginalised or neglected by Gothic studies. Furthermore, this combination of the Gothic with imaginative theology establishes new ways in which Gothic literature may influence the wider field of theology, by bringing Gothic literature into the work of Imaginative Apologetics. The thesis argues that the Gothic nineteenth century novel, whilst rooted in particular social and historical circumstances, possesses substantial theological content. Throughout the readings provided, theological revelation is revealed in striking new ways as the Gothic novel shows itself to be not only influenced by theology, but also theologically influential, speaking of God whilst removed from the strictures of orthodoxy and religious institutions. Taking seriously the idea that a generous God is at work in all places, the thesis argues that especially in the midst of Gothic horror, violence and the supernatural, God continues to speak and reveal Himself in strange and unexpected ways.

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Introduction: Gothic ~~and Religion~~, and Theology

The cause and effect of the horror experience in English culture is a form of theological uncertainty, an anxiety which is recognizable at many different levels of consciousness.[1]

This thesis offers a theological reading of some of the key examples of Gothic writing from the nineteenth century, arguing that such an exercise is both overdue and essential for both the fields of Gothic literary studies and theology more broadly. To begin with, before turning to the primary texts, this introduction will provide some wider context of nineteenth century Gothic writing, as well as the ways in which contemporary Gothic criticism has either marginalised or neglected the theological aspect of the texts in question. From there, the introduction moves on to the theological methodology used and the outline of the argument as whole. Throughout the thesis, the Gothic novel is articulated as a form that expresses and challenges theological truths, and, furthermore, it is argued that reading the Gothic in conjunction with imaginative approaches to theology reveals new readings of the texts, contributing to both Gothic studies, and theology more widely.

To pre-empt an immediate objection, it should be stated clearly from the start that the aim here is not to argue that the Gothic novel is some sort of Bible in disguise, neither does this thesis aim to retrospectively baptise the Gothic novels of the nineteenth century. The purpose of the thesis is to avoid the kind of hermeneutic reductionism that would seek to add the Gothic novel to the body of Christian writing or reduce theological complexity down to a set pattern of religious tropes. It is not that the Gothic is "really" or "underneath it all" a religious or even Christian body of work. A more nuanced position requires an awareness that the relationship between Gothic literature and theology has been fraught at

[1] Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. xvii.

best and, at worst, often hostile. Rather than resort to an all-too-common kind of disciplinary one-upmanship, that subsumed Gothic literature into theology without question,[2] what is required is a both a degree of theological humility and a willingness to take the suppositions and commitments of theology seriously. Following Milbank, Imfeld and Hampson, who build on the work of Luke Bretherton in regard to theological hospitality, the aim here will be to attempt to draw both Gothic literature and theology to the same discursive table, to create a space within which both Gothic literary criticism and theological ideas may be placed into productive dialogue.[3]

Such a bringing together as a strategy does not involve a passive toleration of each discipline but must rather involve a concerted attempt to maintain a critical tension in which both Gothic literature and theology may mutually enrich and enliven one another despite the undeniably contentious relationship between the two fields. As Milbank, Hampson and Imfeld write, framing the matter as one of hospitable debate:

> Hospitable debate can and at times must be carried out agonistically, as a lively debate between friends, but never in a dismissive, cynical, or *ad hominem* fashion. Never, that is, if it is to be productive... (Milbank, Hampson, Imfeld, p. 4.)

The theological antagonism, or ambivalent secularism, that runs throughout the Gothic, does not oppose theological ideas to Gothic writing, but rather serves as a spur for theology to re-evaluate and reconsider key doctrinal and theological ideas in creative and imaginative ways. Rather than seek to claim that the texts are some form of Bible in disguise, the readings in the chapters that follow show that the Gothic text, whilst undeniably influenced by theological

[2] This is most striking in the formative work of Montague Summers, in contrast to the more contemporary alternative strategy that seeks to expunge the inconvenient theology from Gothic writing altogether. (This is discussed in detail below).

[3] See Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, Peter Hampson, and Alison Milbank's editor's introduction to *Theology and Literature After Postmodernity* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2015) and Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness amid Moral Diversity* (London: Ashgate, 2009).

language, tropes and themes of Christian theology, has a deeply ambiguous and often hostile relationship with the theological ideas from which it draws. Taken seriously by theologians then, the Gothic text with its consistent renegotiation and reimagining of theological language, trope and theme allows theological doctrines to find fresh expression outside of the confines of orthodox belief and practise. The Gothic novel serves as a site of particular contestation to theological thinking, presenting *theo-logos* or talk of God in provocative, challenging and hostile ways.

With this in mind, this thesis establishes the Gothic novels of the nineteenth century as possessing both theological content and theological significance albeit expressed in heterodox, conflicting and ambivalent terms. As such, the Gothic novel fits as a cultural expression of the model of secularisation offered by Charles Taylor in the landmark study, *A Secular Age*. As Taylor claims, in place of a move from faith and piety to non-belief, the movement of modernity is instead presented as a shift from an age of faith to 'one in which it [faith] is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.'[4] As recent critical work has compellingly proven, the idea of a slow collapse of faith into atheism is one that neither sociological, historical or literary evidence would corroborate.[5] Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, in her study of the Victorian ghost story and theology, argues that the crisis of faith, such as it was, 'was not over the existence, necessarily, of God, but of how to know such a God within the limits of human knowledge.'[6] In other words, the readings offered through this thesis seek to articulate the Gothic as a mediated and contested

[4] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003) p. 3.
[5] For more on this see Taylor, (2003) as well as K.S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2007) and Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2009)
[6] Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: from Le Fanu to James* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) p. 2.

response to the persistence of the supernatural or spiritual aspect of existence, as well as asserting that this aspect of the texts has either been marginalised, missed or ignored by previous criticism.

The Absence of the Theological in Gothic Criticism

The Gothic horror text has, as Victor Sage argued, always appeared as something to be explained, a provocation for which readers must account.[7] This is perhaps true if the role of the literary critic is essentially expository and politically conservative. In that case, the Gothic novel appears as an aesthetic aberration for the critic to explain or excuse – a position that few, if any, of the standard contemporary texts on Gothic criticism would seek to take up in the wake of the huge popularity of the Gothic in terms of both scholarship and students. Whilst an outdated view on the Gothic, it does seem undeniable that the Gothic preoccupation with deviance, transgression, violence and heterodox spirituality has quite reliably seen it placed in opposition to the normative standards of morality generally enforced by the religious figures of the day – alongside cultural figures who decried both its poor taste and seeming political radicalism. As Carol Margaret Davison points out,

> In an era when over seventy per cent of the books borrowed from circulating libraries were novels and less than one per cent were religious in nature…'gothomania' was a guilty pleasure for many and a social concern for some[8]

Many of the early moral concerns often shifted onto aesthetic or technical grounds rather than the explicitly theological or religious. In her discussion of the early Gothic and the history of reading, Katie Halsey notes that the early critical responses to Gothic writing, many of

[7] See Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988) particularly the preface.
[8] Carol Margaret Davison, *Gothic Literature 1764-1824* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009) p. 2.

which focused upon the aesthetic, (often drawing from Burke's ideas of the sublime) had, by the turn of the century, shifted focus in response to new political conditions:

> In the 1790s, such discussions continued, but critics turned their attention to the moral dangers of the Gothic, and particularly to its perceived political dimensions and effects. In the polarized political conditions of the 1790s, Gothic novels were often associated with the ideas and principles of the French Revolution. Conservative journals such as the *Anti-Jacobin Review* characterized these fictions as politically dangerous.[9]

What Halsey notes, but does not develop further, is that even though the critical move from aesthetic debate to political concern is very clear, what remains latent are issues of faith. The early aesthetic debates of the 1700s were, in essence, a discussion around a kind of indirect natural theology, which saw, in the splendour and power of nature, a more sure and rational way of navigating "up" towards the Divine befitting of an age of Reason. Burke, for example, uses the encounter between Job and God from Scripture as an example of something which is 'amazingly sublime, and this sublimity is principally due to the terrible uncertainty of the thing described.'[10] However, in the wake of the French revolution and the emergent anxieties of political and national identity, there arose a deep suspicion that the Gothic novel could exert a dangerous corrupting influence in its ability to stimulate the imagination. As the Reverends F. Prevost and F. Blagdon wrote in their introduction to the 1801-2 *Flowers of Literature* anthology, 'Happy would it be, for the welfare of the present generation, if those ridiculous fabrications, of weak minds and often depraved hearts, which constitute the enchantment of circulating libraries, could be entirely annihilated.'[11] The conservative writer Hannah More in her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) argued that

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[9] Katie Halsey, 'Gothic and the History of Reading, 1764-1830,' in *The Gothic World* ed. Glennis Byron, Dale Townshend, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 172.
[10] Edmund Burke, 'A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful 1757' in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook* ed. E.J Clery and Robert Miles, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 115.
[11] Quoted in Halsey, p. 173.

the Gothic was a threat to the Christian virtue of the female reader, as the novels were the 'modern apostles of infidelity and immorality' that dispersed 'pernicious doctrines.'[12] Other examples of criticism that saw the Gothic as a specifically theological threat include Coleridge in his review of *The Monk,* which attacks the novel as dangerous explicitly on the grounds of how the text uses and interprets Scripture:

> If it be possible that the author of these blasphemies is a Christian, should he not have reflexed that the only passage in the scriptures [Ezekiel XXIII], which could give a shadow of plausibility to the weakest of these expressions, is represented as being spoken by the Almighty himself? But if he be an infidel, he has acted consistently enough with that character, in his endeavours first to influence the fleshly appetites, and then to pour contempt on the only book which would be adequate to the task of becalming them.[13]

What is striking about Coleridge's review is the indeterminate and uncertain nature of his theological criticism. The author of *The Monk may* be either an infidel or a Christian, but it is this uncertainty, this theological liminality, that, for Coleridge at least, makes the work a theological risk. Whilst this ambivalence is what makes the Gothic so dangerous for Coleridge it would be something he would later make use of in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798). Furthermore, it is this ambivalence, which Coleridge saw as so concerning, that this thesis argues makes the Gothic so potentially productive for theology more widely.

However, in terms of the critical response to the Gothic, there has been a notable tendency to focus upon the religious content of the texts removed from the theological issues that surround and underpin them. There are two reasons for such a separation, one of which is key to the development of Gothic criticism, the other to do with the development of criticism more generally. Firstly, twentieth century criticism on the Gothic novel and its

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[12] Halsey, p. 173.

[13] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Review of Matthew G Lewis, *The Monk*,' *The Critical Review* Feb. 1797, PP. 194-200. (Online, first accessed 24/07/2017 http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/coleridge.reviews).

religious elements is greatly indebted to the eccentric bibliophile Montague Summers and, a decade later, Devandra Varma. For Summers, as a somewhat heterodox Catholic, it was essential to downplay the clear Protestantism (and accompanying anti-Catholicism) of the early Gothic novels and insist that 'there is no true Romanticism apart from Catholic influence and feeling.'[14] The insistence upon Catholic feeling as the root of early Gothic writing was joined with an assertion that the early Gothic novel was, in some way, a link back to the great age of faith and the Gothic cathedral of the twelfth century. Therefore, the rather abstract and immaterial notions of faith become linked to the more concrete particulars of religious practice and institution in the guise of the Roman Catholic Church.[15] Varma's *The Gothic Flame* follows this - even in his reading of *Melmoth the Wanderer,* Varma claims that there are no 'direct theological attacks upon' the Roman Catholic church and that it is only 'the vestments, not the doctrines of Catholicism that serve as a source of terror.'[16] As the rather "more-historicist-than-thou" Mighall and Baldick point out, such a failure of theological comprehension 'would have been regarded by Anne Radcliffe and most of her readers as a disqualification from understanding Gothic novels.'[17] From there, Gothic criticism was principally preoccupied with the understanding of the Gothic as concerned with reflecting the cultural anxieties of the day or manifesting political or psychoanalytic depth with little attention being given to the religious signifiers present in the Gothic.[18] Mishra, seeking to

[14] Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest, A History of the Gothic Novel,* (London: Fortune Press, 1938), p. 390.
[15] Graham Ward makes a similar argument in regards to the postmodern Gothic, arguing that it essentially liquidizes religious iconography and symbol, dividing it from specific religious traditions and practises, thus substituting authenticity for a cheap thrill and imitation transcendence. See Graham Ward, *True Religion,* (London: Blackwell, 2003).
[16] Devendra Varma, *The Gothic Flame: being a history of the Gothic novel in England, its origins, efflorescence, disintegration, and residuary influences* (London: Morrison and Gibb, 1957), p. 219.
[17] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism,' in *A Companion to the Gothic,* (London: Blackwell, 2000) p. 217.
[18] A notable exception to this would be Victor Sage's excellent, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition,* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988).

move away from the occasionally vague spiritualisms of Varna, explicitly rejects any theological notion of the Gothic. The 'Gothic sublime is …a version of the Lacanian Real…a non-transcendent aesthetics,'[19] yet this Lacanian retreat into negativity both ignores the theological tradition of writing on negation and, more importantly, transposes religious and theological ideas into a psychoanalytic register without acknowledging the intellectual underpinnings of theology which give these things meaning and ultimate coherence. Rather than engage with theological ideas the critical strategy generally falls into two categories. The Gothic text is either critically praised for its depth and insight into subjectivity and psychology, or, in an alternative strategy is seen as reflecting the cultural fears of a particular historical moment.[20] After the work of Summers and Varma, perhaps the most formative work in the development of Gothic scholarship is David Punter's two volume work, *The Literature of Terror.* Whilst broadly historicist in tone and content, the book once again elides the theological content of the Gothic, in this case through psychoanalysis. This is most glaring in the treatment of Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* which is read as a model of schizophrenia rather than a text deeply invested in a specific religious milieu and within complex theological traditions.[21] However, scholarship more attuned to the religious elements of the Gothic text has become more prominent in recent years, for example with the work of Diane Long Hoeveler, whose book *The Gothic Ideology* focuses rather exhaustively upon the religious and frequently anti-Catholic details in much of the early

[19] Vijay Mishra, *The Gothic Sublime* (New York,: SUNY Press, 1994) p. 17.
[20] For examples of this kind of criticism which makes frequent reference to the supposed "depth" or "subversion" of Gothic literature see Kilgour (1995) Varna (1957) Williams (1995) Summers (1938) and Jackson (1981). For examples of Gothic criticism that that conducts its analysis through emphasising the cultural anxieties of a particular moment, see Arata (1996) as well as Hurley (1996).
[21] See David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction (Two Vols.)* (London: Routledge, 1996.) For a further response to this, see Chapter Two.

Gothic.[22] Yet the focus on religion still comes at the cost of theological ideas, which ties into the broader history of the development of literary criticism. As David Jasper points out, the study of religion and literature has become increasingly popular from the 1950s onwards. He links to the legacy of structuralism, which moved 'the whole enterprise away from theology, towards an essentially 'trivial' notion of religion.[23] Religion, as a concrete system of signs and rituals was more critically palatable than the rather more abstract and less immediately tangible field of theology. As a result, what appears in criticism is the study of literature and religion 'without commitment,'[24] a disappointing 'theological dilettante-ism,'[25] that damages theology through increasingly isolating it from the public realm of literature and culture. As Robert F. Geary argues, in his much neglected and, sadly, little read study, *The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction,* the study of theology is a somewhat old-fashioned pursuit and perhaps even embarrassing for modern rationalist criticism:

> These critical presuppositions, in many cases, turn out to be based on the denial of what the supernatural tale asserts – the persistence of the numinous reality in the modern world. Predictably then, many critics have difficulty taking seriously the essence of much supernatural fiction, for doing so would call into question their assumptions not simply about such writing but the nature of modern people and the status of belief in the modern world.[26]

Geary argues that both the Gothic supernatural tale and theology insist upon the insufficiency of vulgar materialism and thus require a reassessment of the assumptions that underpin both literary criticism and theological expression. Throughout his detailed study, Geary notes the difficulties of 'how to employ the supernatural in a credible manner in narratives laying claim

[22] Diane Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880,* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014).
[23] David Jasper, *The Study of Literature and Religion, An Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 1992) Jasper, p. 5.
[24] Jasper*,* (1992) p. 2
[25] See *Postmodernism, Literature and the future of theology,* ed. David Jaspers, (London: Palgrave, 1993), p. 2.
[26] Robert. F Geary, *The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction Horror, Belief and Literary Change* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992) p. 122.

to a degree of realism,'[27] yet outside of the confines a clear context of belief, this task often leaves formal tensions that novelists struggle to negotiate.[28] The important task from a critical point of view is to negotiate the stubborn persistence of numinous reality whilst at the same time acknowledging the fact that this cannot be easily or conveniently explained through an unambiguously orthodox Christian paradigm (if only for the reasons that to speak of *one* singular orthodox Christian model for reading the Gothic is theologically reductive in the extreme.) It is quite arguable that this persistence of the numinous within the Gothic tale, and the need for some form of explanation is behind the critical proliferation of psychoanalytic studies of the Gothic. Yet, as Eagleton points out, one of the markers of modernity is the 'transition from the soul to the psyche, or if one prefers, from theology to psychoanalysis.'[29] Andrew Smith notes the Gothic fascination with the ineffable, but ties this to a discourse of 'internalisation,' traced from Burke to Freud which is contrasted to the Kantian idea of the sublime whereby the dissolution of the subject is triggered by a transcendent experience in nature. The Gothic challenges to Enlightenment rationality are acknowledged as an 'aesthetic feature…an ontology and, paradoxically, a kind of epistemology,'[30] which is easily read through a psychoanalytic topography.[31] Yet what is missed in this analysis is the fact that Christian theological discourses refuse the notion of a distinction between an interior or exterior sublime. Theology, broadly conceived, depends upon both the internal experience of

[27] Geary, p. 31.
[28] See Geary's discussion of *The Monk* (1798) pp. 60-9.
[29] Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 17.
[30] Andrew Smith, *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Palgrave, 2000) p.1-2.
[31] An exhaustive list is not possible here, but for other key readings of the Gothic through a psychoanalytic model, see Andrew Smith and William Hughes, eds. *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis, and The Gothic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998). See also Michelle A. Masse, 'Psychoanalysis and the Gothic,' *A New Companion to the Gothic* ed. David Punter, (London: Blackwell, 2012), Valdine Clemens, *The Return of the Repressed: Gothic horror from the Castle of Otranto to Alien,* (New York: SUNY, 1999) and Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

the divine as well as the idea that God can (and is) revealed through nature and language – both individual revelation and natural theology are key. Furthermore, rather than seek an explanation for this in psychoanalysis, (for which the nineteenth century Gothic text functions as a kind of forerunner) 'theology contains, at the subjective level, a complete, pre-emptive description of the most obscure processes of the mind.'[32] Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the theological content of the Gothic has been critically repressed – a theo-drama made over into a psychodrama, yet, theological resources and readings can, it will be shown, provide readings and insights that psychoanalysis alone cannot fully articulate. The quotation from Geary highlights the potential reasons for the absence of theological criticism on the Gothic as well as reinforcing the preference for the concrete actualities of religious symbol, practise and trope over the more diffuse ideas of theology. This distinction is important, as religious tropes, symbol and linguistic expression are all too frequently abstracted from a connection to their wider theological ideas and philosophical concepts, which underpin the religious expression within the texts.

What critical moves there have been rest upon either a historicising analysis of anti-Catholicism, particularly in the work of critics such as Diana Long Hoeveler[33] mentioned previously, or a nostalgic return to a kind of medieval Romantic spirituality for which there is little evidence.[34] Without doubt it should be acknowledged that there is great value in these historically orientated studies. However, to theorise the interactions of the Gothic and

[32] Sage, p. xvii.
[33] See Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary 1780-1820* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010) also *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014).
[34] As Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall point out in their essay 'Gothic Criticism' in *A Companion To The Gothic* (2001) this seems to stem largely from Walpole's forward to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and in twentieth century scholarship a too close adherence to the influential work of Montague Summers, see *The Gothic Quest: a History of the Gothic Novel* (1938).

religion as solely a political or social discourse is to ignore the causal role theology holds in the formation of cultural discourses as well as ignoring the body of literature and philosophy that makes up Christian theology over the past two thousand years. Whilst it is undeniable that Christianity is a religion with a certain broad range of symbols, language and ritual, it is also a set of theological ideas and philosophical concepts which serve to give meaning to the religious aspects of the faith. To phrase things more technically, I follow Graham Ward in defining religion (broadly conceived) as 'inseparable from liturgy, community and the practice of faith' whereas theology is a 'speaking about the God who is believed in.'[35] Furthermore, both of these aspects are intimately bound up in other discourses — of political, social and historical contexts and cultural expression. Without examining the theological ideas which inform and define the religious symbolism, an accurate understanding of the relationship between Christian belief and Gothic writing remains, at best, merely half complete – dependent upon a structuralist understanding of religious pattern, but without the necessary commitment (to use Jasper's phrase) that would give those patterns coherence. Critics like Hoeveler have identified the rise of nationalism and anti-Catholicism in contributing to the formation of the early Gothic yet there seems to be all too often a direct correlation equated with causation without examining what is often a more diffuse set of cultural discourses and practises. To examine a theologically formed trope, (such as nationalistic anti-Catholicism) without a degree of theological reflection is to ignore Marilyn Butler's point that that 'the arts do not exist faithfully to reproduce political realities or real-life political arguments.'[36] Whilst Hoeveler's point about the correlation between the rise of Gothic anti-Catholicism and a political discourse is valid, to ascribe causation to correlation is a reductionist understanding

[35] Ward, p. 2-3.
[36] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

of the ways in which culture and politics interact and one that completely neglects the role that theological reasoning and discourse had in shaping the Protestant bourgeoisie and anti-Catholic politics she so laboriously identifies.

What is often denied by critics is the fact that theology serves simultaneously as both cause and effect in social discourse. Whilst Hoeveler's work recognises the anti-Catholicism in the production of the early Gothic (a theological effect), it then fails to grasp the theological justification at work in the root causes of this same anti Catholic sentiment. Perhaps the most famous example would be the reception of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Critics such as Hoeveler rightly connect the almost parodic anti-Catholicism to the political discourses of the time but the relationship is, in reality, much more complex. As Victor Sage points out, Protestant theology, whilst necessarily inclined to a degree of conservativism in order to perform any kind of social cohesion, is also notoriously heterogeneous and hydra-headed.[37] As mentioned above in the critical review, the devoutly Anglican Coleridge took issue with Lewis, accusing him of blasphemy, not for his anti-Catholicism but his use of scripture for seduction. As a consequence, Lewis was forced to censor his own text to avoid the serious charge of violation of the King's peace. Here we see the cause and effect relationship in full – the theology that Lewis depended upon to exploit popular and political prejudice and anti-Catholicism simultaneously underwrote the law that made his text a politically dangerous one.[38] Theological discourse acts as a grid, holding individuals in a social relationship with one another, yet this should not be understood as a static arrangement. Theology possesses a certain degree of conceptual elasticity allowing for the unification of disparate social groups — i.e. those that share certain theological beliefs — whilst at the same time ensuring their

[37] See Sage (1988).
[38] Andre Parreaux, *The Publication of the Monk; A Literary Event 1796-1798* (Paris: Marcel Didier, 1960).

continued isolation from others. The idea of theology having a real, though shifting, cultural influence is visible throughout the whole of the nineteenth century — for example Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions* (1824) draws not just on the homosociality of male desire[39] but on the real theological divisions that existed between the established episcopacy, the Dissenting faiths and the radicalism of the Covenanters. To miss these theological markers is to reduce the scope, accuracy and insight of Gothic criticism. Theological rhetoric, tropes and symbolism at work within the Gothic nineteenth century text allowed for the novels to resonate with various audience members — titillating the sensibilities of anti-Catholic Protestants whilst at the same time providing theological reinforcement for their own sense of cultural identity and spiritual superiority.

In contra-distinction to the work of critics like Hoeveler, Victor Sage's landmark text, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* still represents one of the more promising approaches to examining the intersections of theology, religion and the Gothic. Sage's book proceeds through rigorous analysis of repeated rhetoric, trope, symbol and style finding in these disparate parts an underlying link to the ideological and discursive currents of English Protestant theology. Yet this is never disassociated from the historical conditions to which theology consistently responds and by which it is shaped. However, at the close of the book, Sage argues that the 'horror fiction is, essentially, fantasy about history.'[40] Whilst the point is well taken, a separation between theology and history is not necessarily so easy to construct, given how deeply bound up in one another the two are. If the horror text is invested in using elements of theological discourse, which is both conditioned by historical circumstances and

[39] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
[40] Sage, p. 234.

an ongoing and consistent tradition, then cleanly delineating history and theology is not only difficult, but also impossible. Sage's final point rests upon a binary logic that would seek to place theology outside of, or in some way separate to, history, when in fact the two are deeply enmeshed within one another. Rather than seek to divide theology and history in order to articulate what the Gothic text is "essentially" about, what is necessary is a theological analysis which is robust enough to deal with ambiguity of the Gothic text, as well as aware of the nuances of historical criticism. For this, the thesis depends not upon theological systematics or the critical attempt for certainty, (whether that be doctrinal or historical), but rather an Imaginative Apologetic approach to the texts in question.

Reading the Gothic with Theology – The Importance of Imaginative Apologetics

Understanding these texts in dialogue with theology requires not just an historical understanding of the resonances of particular theological issues, but rather of how these theological issues may prove to be productive for wider contemporary theological discourse. In recognition of the interdisciplinary and hospitable nature of the project, the aim for this thesis is to establish the significance, theologically speaking, of the Gothic text, not only in regard to the historical context and development of the Gothic through the nineteenth century, but also how the Gothic may be productive for the wider work of Imaginative Apologetics. This thesis claims that the nineteenth century Gothic novel fits with the model outlined by Alison Milbank, of an imaginative form that 'provides an epistemology, a way of knowing, that is inherently religious,'[41] albeit in no way orthodox. Milbank argues that imaginative literary forms (mentioning specifically the work of Novalis and Tolkien) can draw

[41] Alison Milbank, 'Apologetics and the Imagination,' in *Imaginative Apologetics, Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition,* ed. Andrew Davison, (London: SCM Press, 2011) p. 32.

the reader into a participatory encounter with the real, to allow a 'stronger role for the 'otherness' of reality.'[42] For Milbank, such an encounter aims at creating a kind of 'homesickness for the truth,'[43] not simply convincing the reader of a *fact* but rather encouraging a new way of perceiving and participating within the wider world. Such a strategy involves seeing Christian theology as more than a set of truth propositions that are logically assented to, but also a set of aesthetic and imaginative qualities that can be expressed through literary form. Crucially then, the bringing together of the Gothic with theology not only enriches the work of Gothic scholarship but also allows the Gothic to be brought into the ongoing work of Imaginative Apologetics, which, despite the growing body of work dedicated to it, makes little to no mention of the Gothic as a site for theological meaning. There has been a far greater focus on poetry, and writers who appear perhaps more immediately theologically valuable such as C.S Lewis, J.R.R Tolkien and the work of the Inklings.[44] This frustrating aporia in the field is shown in Holly Ordway's point that widening the spectrum of engagement can allow for theological language to find new resonance and meaning with people outside of the faith, and even lead to greater sympathy for those suffering.[45] However, Ordway makes no attempt to engage with the Gothic, which in depictions of suffering, horror and fear could prove to be profoundly theologically meaningful. As Milbank claims, Kant's

[42] Ibid. p. 39.
[43] Milbank, p. 33.
[44] An exhaustive list is impossible given the way in which the field has expanded in the course of the past three decades and connected with the wider field of literature and theology but for some key works in Imaginative Apologetics see, Davison (2011), Jaspers (1992, 1993), David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) David Brown, *God in Mystery and Words: Experience Through Metaphor and Drama,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) Malcolm Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination,* (London: Routledge, 2010) Anthony Monti, *A Natural Theology of the Arts* (London: Ashgate, 2003), *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces,* ed. Heather Walton, (London: Ashgate, 2011), Cameron J. Anderson, *The Faithful Artist: A Vision for Evangelicalism and the Arts,* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2011).
[45] See Holly Ordway, *Apologetics and the Imagination: An Integrated Approach to Defending the Faith* (Stubenville, Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017).

critical philosophy argued for a transcendent spiritual reality but with no possibility of perceptual access to it. This, of course, shares much in common with the neo-reformed orthodoxy of theologians such as Karl Barth who argued that humanity could make no movement toward God outside of his own divine revelation, revealed in Jesus Christ.[46] Under this understanding of the world, 'we are cut off…from the noumenal spiritual world, and metaphysics is the science of the limits of our understanding.'[47] In the modern, strictly materialist world, Milbank claims, 'we have lost heaven, but also earth, the real and the ideal together.'[48] We live instead in a world of flat phenomenal objects, and thus, an awakening of the imaginative capacity does not just carry with it a religious dimension, but, as Milbank points out, it 'gives us the world itself.'[49] Literature, specifically non-realist modes of fiction, possesses the ability to create a heightened sense of reality – a new world where 'ordinary sites, are rendered eerie and strange.'[50] This might be termed the 'MOOR EEFFOC' effect – drawn from the moment that Dickens sees the mysterious letters on a plate glass door, whilst walking through a foggy London evening. From the inside of the room, the letters spell out the more prosaic "coffee room," but that moment of mystery is never fully exorcised, to the point that every time Dickens sees the word 'a shock goes through my blood.'[51] Utilising theological understanding of literature does not simply add new facts to our understanding but possesses the potential to transform the way in which analysis and criticism takes place, providing a new way of understanding, outside of Kantian metaphysics. As Milbank argues 'our primary task…is surely to awaken people to their own creative capacity, for in so doing

[46] For a good general overview on Barth, see *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth,* ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[47] Milbank, p. 32.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Milbank, p. 36.
[50] Ibid pg. 38.
[51] Detailed in G.K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens,* (Teddington: Echo Library, 2007 [1906]), p. 21.

we will quite naturally awaken their religious sense.'[52] Here Milbank shares some common ground with the Radical Orthodox theologian John Milbank, who in his theological ontology argues that all 'human making participates in a God who is infinite poetic utterance: the second person of the Trinity.'[53] In her own work Alison Milbank uses the example of Caspar David Freidrich's 1818 painting *Chalk Cliffs at Rugen* as a piece which can be read theologically, as even without crosses or religious iconography, 'it gives us a religious sense of the mystery of the real.'[54] The figures within the painting are, like the viewer of the image, perceiving the view of the infinite sea and taken in by the otherness, the sheer strangeness of the scene and yet, at the same time, they are participating within it. Even without explicit orthodox religious iconography, a painting of a simple natural scene allows for the viewer to be drawn into a familiar scene that is encountered in a strange, new and fundamentally theological way – a point that Ruskin would make back in the nineteenth century in his writing on art, but a truth that has not yet been extended to the Gothic by contemporary critics.

As Imfeld claims, the Gothic supernatural tale 'takes up a specific and privileged space in literature… in which theological truth claims are doubly immanent and other.'[55] Within the space of the Gothic, ordinary objects are made strange and theological truth claims and metanarratives can be explored by what Imfeld terms the 'non-theological reader.'[56] What this entails is an encounter with a particular theological idea by readers who do not have a pre-existing theological framework and is thus not limited to a particular idea of orthodoxy. This thesis seeks to extend Imfeld's argument in another direction, by linking it to the work of

[52] Milbank, 'Apologetics and the Imagination,' p. 35.
[53] John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003) p. ix.
[54] Milbank, 'Apologetics and the Imagination,' p. 36.
[55] Imfeld, p. 6.
[56] Ibid.

the theologian David Brown.[57] Brown's work on the history and development of theology has consistently argued that theological insights can emerge from sources external to church hierarchy and scriptural orthodoxy, which make valuable contributions to the ongoing revelation of God in the world. As Brown writes,

> History invariably throws up new ways of viewing our experience…what has given Christianity its strength over the centuries is not mere repetition of the past but an ability to respond to new circumstances in new ways.[58]

Whilst Imfeld argues that theology may reveal itself to the non-theological reader, my own position is that this non-theological reading can and must be linked back into the ongoing life of the church. The reader may be 'non-theological,' but the insights and challenges brought forth from the text are of vital interest to the ongoing development of Christian theology. The challenge that the Gothic text presents to orthodox Christian belief serves as a spur to make more radical, more open and more generous statements about God, and allow for revelation about the nature of God and his relationship with the world to be manifest in shocking new ways. This strikes me as a vital move for Imaginative Apologetics and theology to undertake, for while Imfeld is correct to argue for the persistence of a kind of metaphysical language throughout the supernatural Gothic that 'haunts the discipline of literature as a secular task,'[59] theology itself is often haunted by its metaphoric, linguistic and imaginative aspects. As David Brown points out, imaginative art is often 'deploying exactly the same tools that

[57] Whilst Brown and others, particularly Milbank, have some differences in terms of theological method, particularly over the issues of natural theology and revelation outside of the Christian faith, their various approaches will be shown through the course of the thesis to be productive rather than contradictory.
[58] David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 175 – As Brown goes on to argue through the whole book, this is not merely an issue with theological doctrine, but something with fundamentally alters the ways in which Christian faith is lived, and members of the community of faith are discipled within faith communities and churches.
[59] Imfeld, p. 6.

make talk of God possible'[60] and therefore it becomes critical to acknowledge the theological potential within the Gothic text, but also the ways in which these texts may feed back into the rearticulating and reimaging of theological ideas carried out by the broader community of faith known as the church.[61] Within the environs of the supernatural Gothic text, talk of God becomes possible – even if that talk is hostile, or even opposed to the long-running traditions and ideas that make up the broad field of "theology" or the wider community of religious believers. Paul Fiddes has sought to show how this creative language allows rather than hinders the articulation of dogmatic statements.[62] However, rather than aim for a kind of Gothic systematics, the aim here is to locate the ways in which gothic texts allow for a more generous and expansive understanding of divine revelation and a wider comprehension about both the nature, and means, of expressing theological truth. David Brown goes some way towards articulating the theological problem with which the Gothic text may productively engage.

> On the one hand, we have God portrayed as marvellously generous in the way he has disclosed himself in biblical revelation and the Church; on the other, he speaks outside that revelation faintly and only then in a manner that acquires proper legitimacy and intelligibility when set in the context of Christian faith. But if God is truly generous, would we not expect to find him at work everywhere and in such a way that all human beings could not only respond to him, however implicitly, but also develop insights from which even Christians could learn?[63]

The argument from Brown highlights the extent to which Gothic texts serve as a challenge to theological approaches to literature. Within the complex and often-ambivalent relationship

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[60] David Brown, "The Arts' Critique of Theology," delivered at the Ian Ramsey Centre - Humane Philosophy Project 2014-2015 Seminar. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgskbXGdHtI (first accessed 26/06/17).

[61] This challenge is taken up in the conclusion to this thesis. Here I differ a little from theologians such as Milbank as for the purposes of this thesis, imaginative apologetics is not used simply as a means of imaginatively engaging and persuading the non-theological reader, but is also a way by which the imaginative capacity can be used to engage those within the Church.

[62] See Fiddes (1991).

[63] David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 8.

to theology that runs throughout the Gothic nineteenth century, the question of the reach of theological revelation becomes more pressing. Brown's question of where God is at work, is one to which the Gothic offers an unorthodox and provocative answer. Even in, and perhaps especially in, the midst of the anti-religious or ambivalently theological Gothic text, there is the very real possibility of finding God at work in unexpected and profound ways. What must be acknowledged is that such a discovery may lead to conclusions that challenge long-standing orthodoxies and belief structures and require a willingness, on the part of theology, to respond hospitably and with humility.

The immediate theological objection to this point is that such an exercise will inevitably lead to the diminuation of Christian theology. Such a view is simultaneously theologically defensive and a-historical. By opening itself to the insights of the Gothic, theology can in turn find new powerful new modes of re-expressing old theological truth. As Brown argues, 'a God active outside the control of the Church needs to be acknowledged, and the implications heeded. That entails a careful listening exercise, the final result of which cannot be predetermined in advance.'[64] Consequently, a study of the Gothic nineteenth century novel and theology is both productive for Gothic scholarship, literary criticism and Imaginative Apologetics, but also serves to invigorate and expand theology into new arenas. Christian thought has long wrestled with issues over theodicy, teleology and the nature of God and religious practise, and the imaginative capacity of Gothic literature offers much by way of potential for contemporary Imaginative Apologetics that has so far, been insufficiently explored. At the same moment, the ambivalent relationship between the Gothic and theology ensures that Gothic literature cannot be easily subsumed into theological orthodoxy. The

[64] Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place*, p. 2.

Gothic text both contributes to, and critiques theological doctrines and ideas, forming a cultural discourse that mediates theological exploration outside of the strictures and limitations of orthodox belief. The insights and reimagining of theology that take place within these textual spaces are both linked to the historical and social contexts in which the novels were written but also serve as a useful spur for the ongoing work of imaginative theology in the contemporary moment.

Outline of the Argument: Chapter by Chapter

Moving through the Gothic nineteenth century the work that follows offers theological examinations of canonical texts from *Frankenstein* (1818) to *Dracula* (1897), exploring both the historical theological issues which the texts draw upon and respond to, as well as the ways in which the theological register of the texts may be productive for contemporary Imaginative Apologetics. Given the overall aim of facilitating the broadest possible disciplinary dialogue between Gothic studies and Imaginative Apologetics, the choice of texts ranges widely across the nineteenth century and across diverse historical, social, cultural and theological contexts.

The nineteenth century as a whole shows, as Max Weber points out, the rise of both capitalism and a wide-spread Protestant work ethic.[65] This is often equated with a rising secularisation, formative upon contemporary society. As the Manifesto of the V21 collective points out, the 'aesthetic forms the … pioneered and perfected [in the nineteenth century] continue to dominate popular and avant-garde cultural production.'[66] Thus, an examination of the interactions of theology and the nineteenth-century Gothic is essential not only for understanding the development of the historical Gothic novel more fully, but also, of

[65] See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, Routledge, 2001).
[66] See http://v21collective.org/manifesto-of-the-v21-collective-ten-theses/ (first accessed 29/01/18)

understanding how theology may still exert an influence on contemporary Gothic forms. All of the texts chosen have been selected for the extent to which they were formative on the development of Gothic writing — both Shelley and Stoker's work were widely adapted and have shaped popular conceptions of the Gothic since their publication.[67]

The purpose of such a range is to pay due attention to the diversity of forms that the Gothic takes throughout the nineteenth century as well as an appreciation for the diversity of theological movements that emerge through the same period. A diversity of texts also allows for a multiplicity of angles of engagement in regards to the use of Imaginative Apologetics within the thesis. Alternative approaches might include a focus only on a particular mode of theological expression – tracing the various engagements with Catholicism throughout the nineteenth century for example, but such a strategy depends upon the idea that a singular theological expression can be easily separated from the influences of the wider discourse. To discuss the role of Catholicism throughout the Gothic in the nineteenth century is inevitably to be brought onto the discussion of Protestant theology, British politics, social factors and the extent to which anti-Catholicism is bound up in other aspects of British culture.[68] Rather than try to limit the argument in this way, the approach taken here seeks to encompass the broadest possible range of theological expressions and ideas from the entire nineteenth century whilst at the same time remaining sensitive to the historical and cultural criticism on the texts in question. With this in mind, the thesis examines a range of theological ideas,

[67] This quite arguably holds true even in to the twentieth century with the success and cultural impact of adaptations and appropriations of these two texts.

[68] John Henry Newman, in his 1851 lectures argues that anti-Catholicism is so rife within Britain that 'we are cried out against by the very stones, and bricks, and tiles, and chimney-pots.' Whilst polemical, his work shows the extent to which cleanly separating anti-Catholicism away from the wider nexus of British society, culture and literature would be impossible. See John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics In England, Addressed to the Brothers of the Oratory in the Summer of 1851.* (http://www.newmanreader.org/works/england/index.html first accessed 30/08/17).

beginning with the theology of Romanticism, moving to Calvinistic reformed theology, the political theology of Evangelical Anglicanism in the late 1840s before concluding with a discussion of sacramental theology at the close of the nineteenth century. Whilst this does not encompass the totality of theological modes and articulations present throughout the nineteenth century, it aims to give a broad overview of some of the dominant theological trends, which have impacted on the varieties of Gothic writing in the period.

The thesis begins with a discussion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* The opening chapter will analyse the discourses of Romanticism that Shelley drew upon, and the ways in which these respond to wider theological issues. The politics that informed the writing of British Romanticism, particularly Shelley's building upon the work of Locke and Rousseau, are tied into the theological influence of Milton, and the chapter argues that the text enacts a deeply challenging theology of personhood. As a text, *Frankenstein* presents a type of fall narrative yet manages to place the theological question of sin and salvation within human material conditions. I argue that Shelley's political liberalism places the theology of the text in concrete terms, rather than the realm of abstract imagination. Furthermore, drawing on the work of theologian David Brown the text will be both placed within the historical and cultural context of the time as well as connected to the ongoing theological tradition within which it participates. In contra distinction to the idea of Romanticism as concerned with a kind of immaterial transcendence, *Frankenstein* can be read, theologically speaking, as deeply concerned with the importance of material existence and deeply bound up in questions of both natural and political theology. The chapter also draws upon the work of Augustine to examine the idea of monstrosity, emphasising the ways in which the category of evil is often a means by which certain Others are systematically excluded from human community. Given the novel's language, which consistently refers to the evil and monstrous nature of the

creature, the concluding section focuses upon the idea of evil, and reads the characters of the novel in Augustinian terms, claiming that, of all the characters within the text it is Victor who most closely fits the model of privative evil. Read theologically then, *Frankenstein* provides both a critique of Romanticism and a practical grounded and material theology that seeks to embrace rather than outcast the Other. This links the chapter to the closing chapter of the thesis, where the materiality of theology is developed further in relation to the appearance of evil in the world.

Chapter Two moves on to consider the influence of Calvin and reformed theology in shaping a specific repeated trend in Gothic literature. Through a close reading of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), as well as some of the shorter work of Nathaniel Hawthorne[69] and Charles Brockden Brown,[70] the ways in which reformed theological ideas inform the techniques used by the texts to create fear are examined. Particularly important is the notion of a fundamentally divided world, split between the physical and immaterial. This inculcates a sense of self-doubt and reveals the subject to be adrift in a material world potentially rife with spiritual danger and damnation. Drawing from the work of Alison Milbank, particularly her essay on Covenanter Gothic,[71] the key Gothic symbol of the double is shown to be an idea undergirded by theological ideas derived from the works of Calvin – particularly the highly influential *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). This kind of systematic theology seeks to ultimately secure theological truth, revealed through scripture, but the textuality of language, riven by metaphor, allusion and

[69] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown and Other Tales* ed. Brian Harding (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008).
[70] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist,* ed. Bryan Waterman (London, Norton Critical Editions, 2011).
[71] Alison Milbank, 'Calvinist and Covenanter Gothic,' in *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion,* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016) ed. Carol Margaret Davison and Monaca Germana.

analogy consistently resists this kind of enclosure. Here the chapter draws this tension out as a source of much of the Gothic preoccupation with doubling and the unknown as the Gothic co-option of Calvinist theological discourse is designed to prey upon this religious anxiety over the status of language and its role in experiencing the theological. Calvinist epistemology, derived from systematic theological ideas is, through these Gothic texts, revealed to be both a source of terror and theologically dangerous – far more unstable than systematic writers such as Calvin would be willing to admit. In opposition to this crude Calvinism, the Gothic articulates an ambiguous natural and imaginative theology through its depictions of supernatural encounters in nature. Drawing on the work of Americanists such as Tony Tanner, the Calvinist Gothic is shown to be often fascinated with the theological potential of natural revelation. Expanding beyond Tanner's conception of scenes of nature, the chapter shows the ways in which the Gothic puts forward an imaginative natural theology. In contrast to the surety and interpretative closure of the systematic, the theological revelation in nature is shown to fit alongside theological doubt, contingency and, crucially, the possibility of destabilising singular meanings. Despite the consistent ambiguity that runs through the supernatural experienced in nature, these texts refuse to foreclose the theological entirely – even if precision in interpretation cannot be easily maintained.

Keeping the focus upon nature and the theological, chapter three returns to British Gothic, with a focus upon the work of the Brontës, specifically *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre,* both from 1847. As unorthodox theologians, the Brontë texts are deeply invested in the theological contexts of the late 1840s and through a careful close reading of the two texts, the theological resonance of the pieces are explored and the ways in which both authors utilise the Gothic for different ends are explained. Like Hogg, and other Gothic Calvinstic writers, the two texts present powerful theological experiences being closely linked to

particular environments. Beginning with Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, the chapter, rather than attempt to place the text within a particular historical or denominational category, approaches *Wuthering Heights* as a Gothic environment within which theological experience is expressed in haunting and heterodox ways. The chapter also draws upon contemporary criticism, particularly responding to the landmark work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar,[72] as well as Simon Marsden's work on the religious imagination of Emily Brontë[73] and Marianne Thormählen's study on the link between the Brontës and Anglicanism. *Wuthering Heights* is linked to the work of Schleiermacher, and the idea of theology as profoundly rooted in personal experience, but at the same time, theology allows for ways out of patterns of abuse and pain inflicted by living in a fallen, material world. In the case of *Jane Eyre,* theology provides a model of liberation that leads toward a more complete and fulfilling model of subjectivity than the strictures and boundaries of a life marked by cultural and class contexts. Rather than see the world as something from which one must withdraw in order to maintain some standard of moral purity, *Jane Eyre* presents theology as a means of entering fully into the world, rather than escaping from the world. Here then, the reading provided expands upon the idea of the novel as a model of feminine subjectivity, arguing for a Gothicisied political theology. Gothic elements are used throughout the text to underscore both the need for liberation into authentic subjectivity, as well as the potential risks of a theological view of existence that can draw the individual away from the full experiences of life. For the Brontës then, theology is both a matter of material existence in all of its fullness, and an awareness that materiality can exist alongside the supernatural.

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[72] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1984).
[73] Simon Marsden, *Emily Brontë and the Religious Imagination* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

The fourth and final chapter of the thesis moves on to the British fin-de-siècle Gothic text, focusing on *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* (1890) *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *Dracula* (1897). Beginning with an exploration of the social and historical contexts, particularly focusing upon materialism and degeneration, the era is articulated as being fraught with the issue of how to maintain a coherent theological understanding of existence in an age of scientific sophistication and increasing secularism. The three texts are read as expressing differing facets of theology and articulating some of the key limitations of scientific materialism. The texts are all placed within the historical and critical contexts, particularly the notion of degeneration as drawn from Max Nordau's highly influential work, *Degeneration,* (1892). However, despite the explosion in criticism around this issue, as well as evolution and material explanations for existence, the Gothic of the period explores not just cultural fears of atavism but also theological anxieties of what may lie beyond the material. Drawing on the work of Rowan Williams,[74] the chapter argues that this discourse of degeneration is unable to articulate its own limitations, and thus the Gothic persists as a means of exploring beyond the solely materialist idea. *Jekyll and Hyde* is shown to be an exploration of Pauline theology in the era of scientific explanations of human subjectivity and behaviour. Expanding on work that treats the novel as an examination of anxieties around atavism, the chapter argues that the text responds on a profound level to a fear of divided subjectivity, not simply the divide between human and beast. This connects Chapter Four to Chapter Two, as the theological aspects of the self divided against itself are directly linked back to Calvinist theologies which inform the construction of subjectivity. From there, Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* is read as an exploration of the danger implicit in decoupling aesthetics from theology, as a solely aesthetic

[74] Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London, Bloomsbury, 2015).

form of ethics leads to a profound deprivation of being, that can be subverted through a sacramental theology that reunites both aesthetics and ethics. Wilde's text is read as providing a case study in the application of a particularly extreme interpretation of the aesthetic theories of Walter Pater,[75] and the dangers this carries. The chapter thus engages with the wider critical and historical context of the time, particularly the debates between John Ruskin and Walter Pater, which were highly influential on Wilde's own thought. The chapter turns to the work of Augustine on privative evil as a means of showing the ways in which Imaginative Apologetics can produce readings that expand the critical debate upon the Gothic whilst remaining sensitive to the pre-existing critical and historical context. Moving from an Augustinian reading of Wilde, to the work of Stoker shows the ways in which theological iconography and sacraments can be used as both a means of combatting evil, but also a tool of justification for colonialist empire building. Stoker, as an Irish Protestant, combines what might be seen as traditionally more Catholic theological practise (the use of icons and sacraments in particular) with a more stereotypical 'protestant' focus on a kind of evangelical missiology – the quest against Dracula functions as both an evangelical mission and a kind of crusade against evil. The text is read alongside the work of Rene Girard on sacrifice as providing a model for both how sacramental and sacrificial theology may be used against evil and the ways in which figures of evil, particularly the vampire, are able to produce their own parodic sacramental theologies. Sacrifice is not simply presented as a safe or easily secured theological rite, but rather an often bloody and materially costly endeavour that carries with it the potential to reorder material relationships between individuals and communities. This focus on the material aspect of theological practise links the chapter back

[75] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, The 1893 Text* ed. Donald L. Hill (London, University of California Press, 1980).

to the opening chapter on *Frankenstein* and further reinforces the ways in which theology is not simply concerned with abstract matters of belief or faith but the ways in which faith is lived. Theology then, in the era of the fin-de-siècle, both proliferates and diversifies, but at the same time becomes more vulnerable and contingent.

The conclusion offers some arguments for the broader implications of the readings explored in the course of the thesis. The challenge of the Gothic to theology is in the emphasis given to the possibility of theological failure. Rather than a system of thought invulnerable to corruption, to historical and social conditions or to mistaken belief, theology throughout the Gothic is presented as deeply fragile, often unable to cope with Divine Revelation or supernatural encounters which manifests in ways outside of the boundaries of orthodoxy. As Davison writes, 'like the sublime cathedrals that first bore its name, the Gothic's supreme levelling effect reminds us of how we are most human.'[76] Yet this should not be seen as a chance to reiterate the old comparison of Summers, who contrasted the Gothic novel to the cathedral. Rather, like the Cathedrals of the past, the Gothic ultimately reflects back upon human subjectivity, in all of its theological and material instability, contingency and fragility – the two are mutually constitutive. To reinstate the idea of the Gothic novel as textual church is an act of theological arrogance that the texts provide no evidence for, and which would forcibly detach the texts from the social and historical contexts in which they were produced. Rather, the supernatural Gothic emerges from a multiplicity of discourses and material influences that have shifted and changed in response to historical changes. In this, it shares something with the nature of theology. Despite the theologian's efforts at a kind of theoretical closure, revelation is never completely certain but rather consistently contested

[76] Davison, p. 225.

and mediated through the supernatural encounters in the texts. The imaginative critique of theology offered by Gothic literature does not invalidate the insights of the theological tradition, but rather offers a profound and serious challenge to orthodox theological approaches to issues like evil, the supernatural and Revelation. Seen as a literary site of theological critique, the Gothic requires a return to theology, to the ongoing work of rethinking theological truth and the constant challenge to take seriously the myriad ways in which Divine Revelation functions. The conclusion then establishes the ways in which the questions and critiques offered through this reading of the nineteenth century Gothic can be brought back into the wider field of theology, and the implications of the Gothic fully acknowledged.

Chapter One: Monstrosity and the Problem of Evil: A Theologico-Literary Understanding of Personhood in *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost*.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) has become deeply embedded in the textual canon of the Gothic,[1] yet for a text that deals so closely with the 'theological consequences of creation'[2] criticism on the theological elements of the text is distinctly lacking. Criticism generally falls into two separate spheres — the assessment of the creature in a social or political context or, alternatively, the creature as an embodiment of concerns around gender or the body.[3] This section will build on the work covered in the introduction and argue for the necessity of a theological understanding of Shelley's text. Through a theologically inflected reading of the novel, the link between ontological status, morality and aesthetics can be decentred and the vital role of community and mutual recognition in the formation of subjectivity re-emphasised. Shelley's representation of Victor Frankenstein and his creature serves to present a supremely practical theology of personhood and Being, and shows that, for all of the Romantic era interest in the transcendent and poetic potential of creativity, that alone will have disastrous consequences. In short, whilst the Romantics may have co-opted Milton, they fatally misunderstood the vision of creativity he espoused.[4] Through Shelley's own imaginative retelling of the Miltonic narrative, the strengths of the theological tradition that Milton is a part of finds re-articulation, whilst at the same time the flaws of the Romantic view of a singular isolated monster (and genius) are trenchantly critiqued. The figure of the

[1] The book has been a recurrent part of Gothic scholarship for at least fifty years. See *Mary Shelley* ed. Harold Bloom (London, Modern Critical Voices, 1985) which collects critical essays and scholarship from 1951 onwards
[2] Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (London: Continuum Books, 2009), p. 9.
[3] Exemplary of the first type would be Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow; Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth Century Writing,* (Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1990) An exemplar of the second would be Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters,* (London: Duke University Press, 1995).
[4] See J.A Wittenreich, *The Romantics on Milton* (Ohio: Case Western University Press, 1970), esp. p. 11.

monster is thus only superficially monstrous, as Shelley presents Frankenstein's creature as, like us all, seeking a connection to that which brought us into being; or, to put this another way, seeking a theology. It is this aspect that must be understood to grasp the significance of the Gothic's theological underpinnings and further the critical understanding of the link between theological belief, tradition and other, more "numinous" Gothic writings.[5]

The opening of *Frankenstein* (1818) quotes from one of the definitive examples of theological literature, *Paradise Lost*, using as the novel's epigraph: 'Did I request thee, Maker, To mold Me man? Did I solicit thee From darkness to promote me?'[6] Quite deliberately, this epigraph and the monster's own speech and thought are linked, as the monster repeatedly echoes Miltonic and biblical language: 'I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel whom thy drivest from joy for no misdeed.'[7] Typically, criticism has given rather less attention to Milton's text as a theological influence, with some critics even going so far as to claim, quite erroneously, that in *Frankenstein* 'the universe is emptied of God and of theistic assumptions of "good" and "evil."'[8] This argument seems, at best, untenable, as the sheer depth of theological language that recurs throughout the novel is impossible to ignore. The theo-linguistic register of the novel culminates with 'the rationalist [Victor] who…ends up execrating his Creature as a fiend and a devil.'[9] When this is coupled with the influence and connection to Milton, such a critical claim for a lack of theology is rendered naïve and untenable, as *Frankenstein* repeatedly shows itself to be a profoundly theologically influenced

[5] I borrow the term numinous Gothic from Devendra Varma's pioneering study, *The Gothic Flame: being a history of the Gothic Novel in England* (1957) as this thesis consistently argues for an understanding of the Gothic nineteenth century novel as texts which possess a theological aspect. See also Milbank's argument mentioned in the introduction in the essay 'Apologetics and the Imagination.'
[6] John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Norton Critical Editions, 2005), ed. Gordon Teskey, p. 250.
[7] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012) p. 98
[8] Joyce Carol Oates, 'Frankenstein's Fallen Angel' *Critical Inquiry,* No. 10 (March 1984) pg. 550.
[9] Nora Crook, 'Mary Shelley, Author of Frankenstein' in *A Companion to the Gothic* ed. David Punter (London: Blackwell, 2000), p. 61.

text. As has been argued in the introduction to this thesis, the theological aspect of the Gothic has been systematically ignored, marginalised and passed over, despite the plethora of evidence present throughout the novels of the Gothic canon.[10] Here, Shelley goes so far as to link Frankenstein's monster to a theological tradition that extends as far back as the book of Job, namely the theodicy question of the purpose and justice of a creator.[11] As philosopher and theologian David Brown points out throughout his work *Tradition and Imagination* (1999), theological orthodoxy has always been creatively re-imagined outside of the confines of doctrine in response to the changes in circumstance brought about through the progress of history.[12] Seen this way, Shelley's work is part of a long established, broadly heterogeneous set of texts that seek to respond to the question of theodicy outside of the strictures of theological dogma. This reimagining takes place in a variety of ways across shifting historical contexts — less a rejection of theological concerns than an ongoing and constant re-telling of these concerns brought about through new stimuli.[13]

Shelley's novel functions as a creative reimagining of a well-established theological position that finds imaginative expression within Gothic writing. Since the equation of the Good with notions of self-identity and sameness in early Western philosophy, 'the experience of evil has often been linked with notions of exteriority.'[14] Frankenstein's response to his creature certainly seems to fit this model. After working himself to nervous and physical

[10] For an overview of the current theological absence in the field of Gothic studies see the Introduction, pp. 1-23.
[11] For a more detailed exploration of the notion of theodicy see *Problems in Theology: Evil – A Reader,* ed. Jeff Astley, David Brown and Ann Loades (London: Continuum, 2003) as well as Joseph F. Kelly, *The Problem of Evil in the Western Tradition: From the Book of Job to Modern Genetics,* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001).
[12] See Paul Fiddes, *Freedom and Limit: A Dialogue Between Literature and Christian Doctrine* (London: Palgrave, 1991) for his discussion of the false binarism between the "open-ness" of imaginative literature and the "closure" of doctrinal statements.
[13] A similar point is raised here by Milton A. Mays who refers to the novel as a 'black theodicy,' – see Milton A. Mays, '*Frankenstein,* Mary Shelley's Black Theodicy,' in *The Southern Humanities Review,* (1964) p. 146-153.
[14] Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters,* (London: Routledge, 2003) p. 65.

exhaustion, Frankenstein succeeds, and yet immediately the 'beauty of the dream vanished' and he himself is unable to 'endure the aspect of the being I had created.'[15] This leads to Frankenstein's indulgence in 'the proclivity to demonise alterity'[16] — a strategy common to much of Gothic literature more generally[17], and one of the two responses to otherness in the field criticized in the opening to this thesis.[18] Rather than attempt to reduce the other to the level of metaphor or elide all difference, theology offers new way of thinking through the ethical implications of the Other in its understanding of personhood. The figure of the radical Other cannot be rendered as solely transcendent or as metaphor. Rather Gothic studies must make the concerted effort to see its literature as an imaginative engagement with theological and philosophical concerns. Furthermore, through an awareness of the historical development of both the Gothic and theological traditions, there must also be an acceptance of the possibility of imaginative revelation as historical contexts shift and theological truths are articulated in fresh ways. This twin movement of both traditional canonicity and imaginative reinterpretation can be understood as expressing the 'capacity of the Christian faith for renewal, reform and even revolution.'[19] The theological truths that can be read through the Gothic are not necessarily positive or redemptive but the traditional orthodoxies of theology around notions of evil and personhood can be renewed and re-examined in the light of the ongoing and essential tradition and revelation of Gothic literature. If, as Kevin J Vanhoozer has argued, 'the Bible is God's instrument for doing revelatory and redemptive

[15] *Frankenstein,* p. 50.
[16] Kearney, p. 65.
[17] The most well documented examples of this demonization can be found in discussion of Gothic Anti-Catholicism, Gothic nationalism, and, of course, masculine suspicions around women within the Gothic.
[18] See the introduction, pp. 4-33.
[19] Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth Century Literature and Religion: An Introduction,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 5.

things with words in the context of the church'[20] then the numinous literature of the Gothic can be seen as doing theologically revelatory things in the context of the wider cultural world.

However, received theological revelation is never static. It is always mediated through various textual forms and thus always subject to a degree of interpretation.[21] One of the issues at stake within *Frankenstein* is the mediation of competing texts and the worrying status that the act of creation, (whether that be literary or otherwise) takes on because of this. The novel is a complex palimpsest of texts exhibiting a multiplicity of characters and distinctive voices. That said, critics such as Newman argue that

> We are more apt to be struck by the similarities in the way the Monster and Frankenstein express themselves, since they both use the same kind of heightened language, and since both speak with an eloquence more expressive of a shared Romantic ethos… The novel fails to provide significant differences in tone, diction and sentence structure that alone can serve, in a written text, to represent individual human voices.[22]

Yet what this misses is the ways in which Shelley uses specifically theological language to clearly delineate the relationship between the creature and Victor, (seen most sharply in their first conversations on the mountainside in chapter two of Volume two and discussed in greater detail below).[23] Even if the question of who may be using that language is complicated by the frame narrative structure, the separation of story from character shapes the combination of different forms, (letters, diaries, journals and even personal testimony) into 'a text, divested of its originating voice.'[24] Here this disparate collection of texts becomes the

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[20] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p xiv.
[21] A recurrent theological issue but one perhaps most famously expressed in the Barth/Brunner debates of the early 20th century, see, Emil Brunner, *Natural Theology, Comprising Nature and Grace by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply No! by Dr Karl Barth,* (London: Wipf & Stock, 2002).
[22] Beth Newman, 'Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of Frankenstein,' *English Literary History [ELH],* 53 (1986), p. 141-61, p. 146.
[23] *Frankenstein,* p. 98.
[24] Newman, p. 147.

means by which the essentially symbolic story can be transmitted. Like Scripture, the text works to destabilise the idea of any kind of singular narrative authority, shifting the reader's conception of authority from a singular source towards a collection of texts that must necessarily be interpreted. Given the emergence of the novel form in the eighteenth century and the accompanying debates about "realism", *Frankenstein* is tied not only to the issue of the epistemology of novel writing[25] but also to a deeply held theological concern, namely the tension between theological certainty, and theological expression, which out of necessity must always be riven by metaphor and analogy. Literature, specifically non-realist forms such as the Gothic, 'reaches out towards mystery, towards a reality that is our final concern but which eludes empirical investigation and bursts rational concepts.'[26] This holds true even if, as with *Frankenstein*, the ostensible format, in this case the epistolary or testimony narrative, is one that lends itself to empirical understanding. Victor's testimony 'reaches out' beyond the verisimilitude of testimony narratives through the novel's content. *Frankenstein*, as a heavily influenced theological text, participates within a tradition of 'searching for something of ultimate concern,' framing this search by 'taking as [its] theme the telling of a story.'[27] The framing device in the form of a series of conversations between Walton and Frankenstein ensures that the character of Frankenstein can only make sense of his life in the act of narration – his existence can only be understood in retrospect. As Walton articulates it, 'strange and harrowing must be his story, frightful the storm which embraced the gallant vessel on its course and wrecked it — thus!'[28] It is through the telling that the events contained within the text may become coherent to Victor and some kind of meaning drawn

[25] Dealt with in great detail by Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987).
[26] Fiddes, p. 11.
[27] Fiddes, p. 8.
[28] *Frankenstein,* p. 22.

from it. Victor himself seems to recognise this as he refers throughout the novel to a sense of predestination at work. Even towards the end of his life, he frames his struggle in retrospect as one that is ordained by spiritual forces; 'you may give up your purpose, but mine is assigned to me by heaven.'[29] Through framing his own narrative through the older, wider narrative of the preordination of the world, it 'gives him a pattern by which he can find *himself* in what would otherwise be a meaningless end to his journey.'[30] Thus, the displacement of the narrative voice of the text is not simply a result of the multiplicity of forms that it covers (such as diary entries, letters and journals) or a problem of hermeneutics, but ties the novel into a tradition of theological quests whereby it is through a larger narrative, through a grander "story" that sense can be made of one's existence.[31] To phrase things more theologically, the textual creation of the novel is one of multiplicity rather than any univocity of being, all of which are incorporated into and pointing towards a larger theological frame. Rather than any kind of singular narrative voice, the novel allows for a plurality of vocal figures within the same text. This too, ties *Frankenstein* to *Paradise Lost*, as Milton's poem makes space for a creation of multiplicity — 'a multivocality at the heart of creation.'[32] However, this embodies a certain tension regarding ideas around creation that *Frankenstein* enables us to grasp more clearly. Human participation in creation can affirm difference, but the line between individual freedom as part of some harmonious vision of creation and free participation that strays into Miltonic Pandemonium seems perilously fine. In both *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*, human

[29] Ibid. p. 223
[30] Fiddes p. 8
[31] Here *Frankenstein* is connected to not only John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) but also *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan (1678). Furthermore, this idea of finding some purpose within a larger narrative idea links *Frankenstein* to the early epistolary novels, wherein the ethical problem of their "fictionality" was solved through the potential virtue of the story in informing a larger ethical narrative. See Samuel Richardson's book, (and it's telling subtitle) *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded* (1740).
[32] Mark Knight, *Introduction to Literature and Religion* (London: Continuum, 2009) p. 13

participation in the act of creation is seen as potentially highly dangerous.[33] As a result, there is a common critical position to see God, in *Paradise* Lost at least, as a tyrant — a creator who maintains his control by allowing there to be only one way or one set of possibilities for the whole of existence to function within. C.S. Lewis decries Milton's presentation of God as 'unsatisfactory… giving us a cold, merciless or tyrannical Deity,'[34] and for William Empson the 'reason that the poem is so good is that it makes God so bad.'[35] The common complaint seems to be that in Milton's poem, all of creation is placed under the tyranny of the divine, and any action is mediated and controlled through God. Frequently it is the speech at the beginning of Book 3 that draws most critical attention[36] as God sets out not only the plan for humankind, but his foreknowledge of their fall and eventual redemption alongside the necessity of Christ's sacrifice on the cross for the satisfaction of divine justice and atonement for sin.[37] Whilst the criticism of God as a rather removed absolute ruler has proven remarkably consistent within a certain school of Miltonic criticism, it ignores a theological issue that states that it is only in Christ that creation can continue to exist in the first place.[38] Despite the issues that the Puritan Milton had with the concept of Trinitarian theology[39] his work is motivated 'less by a rejection

[33] A concern which seems deeply ingrained in the popular cultural legacy of the text, some of which is still felt today. One only need note the fears and concerns around so-called 'Frankenstein foods' for example.
[34] C.S. Lewis, *'A Preface to Paradise Lost'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942) p. 92, reprinted in John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. Gordon Teskey (London: Norton Critical Editions, 2005).
[35] William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) reprinted in Teskey (London, Norton Critical Editions, 2005), p. 439.
[36] See Stanley Fish, 'The Milk of The Pure Word' in *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Also see Northrop Frye, 'The Garden Within,' from *The Return of Eden: Five Essays on Milton's Epics,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).
[37] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed Gordon Teskey (London: Norton Critical Editions, 2005) pp. 59-62.
[38] For the Biblical justification for this belief see Colossian 1 15-19, particular verse 16, 'for in him, all things on heaven and earth were created.'– all subsequent quotations and references are taken from *The Bible, with Apocrypha, NRSV Anglicized Edition,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995). For the theological exegesis on this point of doctrine and its implications, see Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[39] See Milton's descriptions of God in *On Christian Doctrine* wherein Milton struggles to detach himself from the monistic viewpoint as well as his licence for publication in 1650 of a version of a non-Trinitarian creed, the Racovian Catechism.

of the doctrine per se and more by a desire to focus attention on the role of mediation in creation.'[40]

On a textual level, Milton resolves this apparent theological tension between his Puritan leanings and more orthodox Trinitarian doctrine by ensuring the continuation between the new life of Eden and the pre-existence of God, (and thus by implication Christ too). This echoes the opening of the book of Genesis, which 'focuses on how God forms this world out of pre-existing materials, thereby opening up space for human beings to continue to participate in its development.'[41] Shelley herself seems to share a similar creative philosophy, writing in the preface to the 1831 edition of the novel, that 'the materials, must in the first place, be afforded: it [literary invention] can give form to dark shapeless substances but cannot bring into being the substance itself.'[42] The creative act in Milton's work is one that is ongoing and furthermore, one in which all participants are said to be in a 'charming symphony… [m]elodious in their harmony.'[43] In Milton's vision of creation, difference flourishes within the ongoing harmonious work of God's overall creative schema as different instruments involved in the performance of a single symphony. Adam and Eve are participants within this ongoing process — to quote from Book Four: 'God hath set Labour and rest as day and night to man… man hath his daily work of body or mind/Appointed which declares his dignity.'[44] As Regina Schwartz articulates it, far from a totalising homogeneity of vision, *Paradise Lost* does not depict the 'cosmic creation as a privileged beginning, a single event that occurred once-upon-a-time and for all time.'[45] Rather, creation in *Paradise Lost* is, like

[40] Knight, p. 15.
[41] Knight, p. 15.
[42] See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, 1818 text,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) ed. Marilyn Butler, p.195.
[43] *Paradise Lost* IX, 736-7, II. 379-80
[44] *Paradise Lost* IV, 613-618, p. 94
[45] Regina Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation In Paradise Lost,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 1.

textual creation itself, a multi-vocal and ongoing exchange— as Adam discusses later in book four, 'millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth…sole or responsive to each other's notes, Singing their great Creator.'[46] On the other hand, Shelley's novel seems to have a much more pessimistic understanding of the role of the human in creation. Victor Frankenstein, in claiming that 'life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world,'[47] is arguing for his own revelatory act of *creation ex nihilo* with the expressed aim of bringing about a reality over which he has completely unmediated control. Yet, what remains acknowledged by Victor is the truth that *creation ex nihilo* is precisely what he is unable to do – science will only allow him to assemble out of pre-existing material.

Once again, in Shelley's own understanding of the creative process she shares much in common with the theological Milton than Victor: 'invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos…in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it.'[48] Whereas within *Paradise Lost* the mediation of God allows for the flourishing of creation, Frankenstein seeks instead to explain and restrict his own creation. In the character of Victor, we see this combination of exploration of the physical world, representative of the new rise of science and discovery, coupled with a semi-religious and imaginative fervour or 'rapture.' Whereas his cousin Elizabeth continues that Miltonic tradition of the exegesis and description of the world, (in her upbringing she spends her time 'contemplating the magnificent appearance of things'[49]) Victor is established as a character that seeks mastery over it. Victor, rather than merely be a part of the wider creative work of

[46] *Paradise Lost*, 677-683 p. 96.
[47] *Frankenstein,* p. 47.
[48] *Frankenstein,* ed. Butler, p. 195.
[49] Ibid p. 28.

the Divine, seeks to take on the powers of Divine itself. The ability to imbue life is not simple a scientific quest, but a means to bring back and restore those who have been lost (particularly his own mother). Victor seeks the imaginative and 'Christ like capacity of redemption and reconciliation that mimes God's own creative power.'[50] It is no longer in Christ that creation holds together but in the mind of the singular genius who can, like the Christ he has replaced, resurrect the dead and create life. Within the Romantic Imagination, man is the centre of and dominant force within a larger universe. Placing man at the core of the vision of the universe grants not just exploratory or descriptive powers but also, and perhaps most importantly, creative powers. Victor's discovery of metaphysics – the 'secrets of heaven and earth,'[51] as the novel puts it, leads him to the creation of life. The "new man" of Romanticism does not just describe and explore creation, (as Milton's retelling of the creation story did) but actively participates in the process of bringing new elements of creation into being. The theologically gnostic language of 'a torrent of light'[52] adds credence to the notion that the Romantic reorientation of the universe as centred around the subject had dispensed with the traditional theological view of creation as something within which humanity was a participant, (that grand Miltonic harmony), and instead had placed man as the creative force at the centre of it, in place of the divine.[53] Victor Frankenstein has no patience for the necessary participation in the continuing harmonious work of God's creation but seeks a new, and entirely separate, realm of creativity. Coupled with the characteristically gnostic subordination of ethics to cognition, the consequence is that the position of man at

[50] Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God,* (London: Yale University Press, 2014) p. 101.
[51] *Frankenstein,* p. 29.
[52] *Frankenstein,* p. 47.
[53] For further detail on this see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007) For a more detailed focus on the secular age in the context of Western Europe within the 1800s see Owen Chadwick's *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth century,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

the centre of the universe, rather than God, seems assured. Victor figures as a type of the Romantic Ideology more generally as in various ways Romantic poets, writers and philosophers sought to go beyond the material into the realm of imaginative transcendence.[54]

Victor refers to himself as the creator and source of a new species, saying that 'no father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs.'[55] What this neglects is that he himself admits that he is not creating from nothing, but rather visiting the charnel houses to piece together his 'dark materials', disturbing the 'secrets of the human frame' with his own 'profane fingers,' and assembling his monster in a 'workshop of filthy creation.'[56] His own participation in creation is heavily mediated and reflects very poorly on Victor's inability to grasp the social context of revelatory knowledge. His successful acquisition of the ability to create life ignores the reality that life is dependent upon the co-existence of different forms. Scientific revelation within the novel leads only to solitude and undeniable catastrophe. For this, we need only see Victor's inability to concede his responsibilities towards his creation, his constant litany of negative terms and vituperation towards the unfortunate creature throughout the novel and his complete failure to grasp how his invention might bring others killed in the course of the novel back to life. All of these examples reinforce the view that knowledge outside the social milieu is, at best, dangerous. Victor embodies the very essence of imaginative engagement, but without the stabilising influence of tradition his imaginative excesses inflict terrible consequences as his own failure to

[54] This is dealt with in great detail by M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (London: Norton, 1971). For example, see Abrams discussion of Wordsworth's poetic programme pp. 21-32 as well as the theodicy of landscape that Abrams details on pp. 97 -117.
[55] *Frankenstein,* p. 47.
[56] *Frankenstein,* p. 48

acknowledge his involvement and participation in the on-going act of creation leads to his abnegation of responsibility and the eventual death of those close to him.

Victor's unwillingness or inability to acknowledge the mediated nature of his work is reflected in his language too. His initial narrative to Captain Walton is almost shamelessly disingenuous, and in his encounter with his best friend Henry Clerval he refuses to detail or specify just how he attempts to bring new life into the world – only going so far as to say he has been 'deeply engaged'[57] upon an intellectual project. As Ana Acosta states 'there is a reinsertion of opaqueness into enlightenment clarity that constitutes the ideological core of the novel,'[58] as Victor's true actions and abilities are often obscured behind religiously inflected language of revelation and creation. The moment where the creature is brought to life is described in only the vaguest aesthetic terms before Victor flees from the reality of what he has accomplished. However, there is one character, Victor's own creation, who the novel takes pains to show engaging with an intellectual and literary tradition as well as an awareness of the mediated quality of their own existence.

Whereas Victor is the embodiment of the so-called Romantic "great man," who thrives on a kind of solitary revelation, Frankenstein's creature is the direct opposite. Abandoned by his creator the creature is motivated by a desire for not just a sense of community or companionship but also a need to understand himself as a created being-in-the-world. 'The words induced me to turn towards myself.'[59] Later, the monster is led into that most basic of ontological questions: 'I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed

[57] *Frankenstein,* p. 53.
[58] Ana Acosta, *Reading Genesis in the Long Eighteenth Century: From Milton to Mary Shelley* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) p. 1.
[59] *Frankenstein*, p. 119.

intercourse with me. What was I?'[60] It is this desire that leads him to forge his own textual canon — first finding Frankenstein's own journal notes, then moving onto Volney's *Ruins of Empires* (1791), then Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), Plutarch's *Lives* (second century) and most importantly, Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). The choice of texts is striking, as Frankenstein's creature uses these texts to ground his being in the historical, social and cultural contexts of the time. The text's function is extremely formative upon the creature's notion of his own subjectivity. From Volney, his Being is placed within a historical context, as he learns of 'the manners, governments and different religions of the earth...the strange system of human society was explained to me.'[61] Moving on from the historic and the general the creature's engagement with Goethe and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* allows for a more personal articulation of subjectivity:

> The gentle and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded well with my experiences… and the wants alive in my own bosom.[62]

Moving forward from the engagement with the subjective comes the engagement with the theological. Being grounded in a historical tradition with a subjectivity moulded by the literary tradition the creature is guided towards a more explicitly theological tradition. Milton's *Paradise Lost* allows the creature to frame his position in theological terms, as both created and abandoned by his creator. It is from these initial encounters with traditional texts that the creature's recognition of himself and the vital duties that Frankenstein has abandoned emerges. The engagement with tradition gives insight to his own ontological state but little comfort, as he compares his own condition with that of Milton's Adam:

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[60] *Frankenstein,* p. 120.
[61] *Frankenstein,* p. 119-20.
[62] *Frankenstein,* p. 128.

> Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator…but I was wretched, helpless and alone…the bitter gall of envy rose within me.[63]

This sense of exile from God is reinforced when Victor and the creature come face to face for the first time. Resisting his creator's attempts at his destruction the creature puts his case to him, arguing for the vital and central needs of companionship and for community. Drawing from Job 23 the language here reverses the power dynamics established by the more disingenuous Frankenstein. Job, seemingly forsaken by his creator and suffering for reasons that seem not only vague but also deeply unfair, wishes for an audience with God to put forward his case and seek some kind of justice. As Job says:

> I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me. There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.[64]

The language of Job presupposes both the duty of care of the creator toward the created and simultaneously, the possibility of a kind of rational communication between the two. These two elements are interdependent, as without the possibility of rational conversation between the two, (the 'upright reasoning' mentioned by Job) then Job cannot be acquitted in the sight of his judge. Frankenstein's creature shares this desire, asking

> 'let your compassion be moved, Listen to my tale when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me…listen to me, Frankenstein!'[65]

The monster's own subjectivity is revealed to be deeply similar to Job's from Scripture. Here, the creature combines appeals to justice, wisely noting that 'even the guilty are allowed, by

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[63] *Frankenstein,* p. 129.
[64] Job 23: 4-7.
[65] *Frankenstein,* p. 99.

human laws, bloody as they are to speak in their own defence,'[66] with an awareness of the theological nature of the relationship between himself and Victor; 'if you can and if you will, destroy the work of your hands.'[67] Here, the creature takes on the role of the rationalist, becoming the 'supreme rhetorician of his own situation.'[68] He is aware of his own nature and his position in relation to divine power. On the other hand, Victor, ostensibly the novel's hero, becomes an extremist. Victor's language takes on theologically apocalyptic tones as he lambasts his creation as a Devil and a vile insect.[69] Victor goes further still as he seeks to use divine power to undo his own creative act: 'Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you!'[70] Victor, in essence, disavows his own subjectivity as the creature he has brought into the world shows the effort of attaining his own. Unknowingly or not, Victor's outburst articulates a vital theological point — as a fallen individual in creation, the hands that formed the creature are not the perfect hands of the divine presence that Milton details but are cursed by the stain of original sin. As a created being in the world, Victor is literally incapable of creating in any other way, despite his imaginative reach – an imaginative capacity which is, in a sense, an aspect of his fallen nature. As a human subject, Victor is himself bound up within the network of human relationships that always carry with it the potential for failure, hurt and sin. Because of this theologically inflected vitriol, the conversation between Frankenstein's creature and Victor is not a rational exchange between the person and the divine that the creature (and Job) have desired. Rather, the reader sees the rational, created man come into contact with the terrible

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Peter Brooks, '"Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts": Language, Nature, and Monstrosity' in *The Endurance of "Frankenstein": Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1979), p. 205-20.
[69] Frankenstein p. 97.
[70] Frankenstein p. 99.

genius of the Romantic Imagination. The aw(e)ful Other in the novel is not the creature but rather Victor himself. 'You my creator, detest and spurn me…You purpose to kill me! How dare you sport thus with life?'[71] Victor takes on here the role of the divine speaking out of the whirlwind at the end of the book of Job but too committed to his revelatory act of creation, he lacks the grounding in tradition to make sense of what he has done and the duty that creation carries with it.

With this understanding of the relationship between the creature and Victor in place, further attention can be given to the theology of creation that *Frankenstein* puts forward. Once more Milton forms not only the poetic and discursive influence on Shelley but also provides an essential theological stimulus. On his arrival into Paradise in Book Four of *Paradise Lost* Satan espies Adam and Eve for the first time: 'into our room of bliss, thus high advanced creatures of other mold, earth borne … yet to Heav'nly spirits bright.'[72] The God-created Adam and Eve are both earth borne or fully material, and yet theologically aware, bright to the 'Heav'nly Spirits.' Milton's Devil goes on to note how 'lively shines in them divine resemblance, and such grace the hand that formed them on their shape hath poured.'[73] The physical appearance of Adam and Eve is entirely bound up in the grace (a deliberately non-material choice of word) used by the hand which created them — to put this another way, their physical appearance is a reflection of their spiritual condition. In contrast, Frankenstein deliberately problematizes this relationship as the link between physical appearance and spiritual nature is shown in a more complex light:

> It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils…I saw the dull yellow eyes open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs…. Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance … I had gazed

[71] *Frankenstein* p. 97.
[72] *Paradise Lost*¸ Book IV 359-360, p. 88.
[73] Line 364-5.

> upon him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.[74]

The passage repeatedly links aesthetics with the theological. The inability of the mortal to support the horror of the creature's appearance and the reference to the great religious poet Dante manages to construct a theologically inflected aesthetics — the creature transforms from a scientific object of curiosity and becomes a 'demonical corpse.'[75] The hybridized combination of the 'Earth bound' and the transcendent that, in Milton, is used to show the divine influence on Adam and Eve is here transmuted. The combination of the material (the corpse) and the non-material (the demonic) serves to render Frankenstein's creation as not mere metaphor or allegorical fear but as horrific and theologically abject. Whereas the creation of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* forms a smaller part within the melodious harmony of the ongoing act of divine creation and, vitally, allows for the participatory flourishing of the individual within the Edenic setting, Victor's own creative act reveals his lack of awareness about the theological implications and duties that accompany bringing life into being. The quoted passage shows the dangers of his Romantic worldview — the great man of the Romantic ideology is catastrophically prone to dangerous arrogance in terms of ego and is completely unable to translate effort into aesthetic appearance. Here, Victor is linked back to Goethe's *Faust*, for 'it is obvious that Frankenstein is in some sense a Faustian over-reacher.'[76] Victor's creative aspirations are great, but unlike Prometheus, who brought fire from the gods, he creates something he regards as abhorrent. More theologically, unlike the created works of God in *Paradise Lost,* Victor's creature shows none of the 'divine resemblance' or 'grace the hand that formed them on their shape hath poured' as Milton

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[74] *Frankenstein,* p. 50-1.
[75] *Frankenstein,* p. 51.
[76] David Seed, '*Frankenstein:* Parable or Spectacle?' *Criticism,* 24:2 (Fall, 1982) pp. 327-40 p. 330.

writes. Simply put, creation for Victor Frankenstein is a singular event – a great revelatory act of insight — yet as Milton understands, the act of creation depends upon a necessary and deep-seated continued involvement with that which has been brought into being. For as Seed points out, 'creation is articulated partly in terms of birth and consequences in terms of parental responsibility.'[77] Within *Paradise Lost,* God as Divine Father does not simply create Paradise for Adam and Eve and then leave them. Rather, the Garden, their involvement with it and the relationship between the human subject and the divine are assiduously maintained. God goes so far as to send angels to warn his creation that their enemy is at hand in Book Five[78] — the notable reason given for this continued intervention in the created world being, as Milton writes, 'to fulfil all justice.'[79] The creative act without the continued involvement of the creator is, therefore, deeply unjust. The idea of the Romantic man as a lone figure of genius is, via Milton, held up as being guilty of a moral failure to fulfil the role of creator that Victor is so keen to seize. This move from physical involvement within the world to abstracted consideration is not unique but rather inextricably bound up in Romantic era thought around the nature of creation itself which rejected the notions of interdependence and mutuality for the figure of the lone creative genius. As Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) argues; 'An Original may be said to be of a *vegetable* nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it *grows,* it is not *made*.'[80] Rather than emerging from the material conditions of a particular historical moment, art, in the time of Romantic individualism, is seen as a product of the individual imagination that can make it grow — rather than an interaction between the creative individual, their world and the work. As a result, the creator is reduced

[77] Ibid. p. 331.
[78] *Paradise Lost,* p 106.
[79] *Paradise Lost* Book Five, 246-7.
[80] Edward Young, 'Conjectures on Original Composition,' in *Critical Theory since Plato,* ed. Hazard Adams, Leroy Searle, (London: Wadsworth Publishing, 2004) pp. 348-347, p. 348.

down to a singular, decontextualized "genius" figure. This 'new idea of a superior reality, and even of superior power,'[81] finds expression across Romantic era writing that consistently refuses the demand of interpersonal relationship and reaches towards the infinite.

This refusal or failing on Victor's part is well noted by the creature in their first face-to-face encounter; 'do your duty towards me…I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, **if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me**"[82] (emphasis mine.) At a later stage, the creature adds to this, 'but on you only had I any claim for pity and redress.'[83] What is owed to Frankenstein's creature is firstly, the involvement of the creator with creation, and secondly, a degree of ontological recognition from a source external, and prior, to the self. Frankenstein's creature has, by this point in the narrative, begun to engage with the textual tradition of the Enlightenment (as previously discussed) but comes to his creator seeking the recognition of his personhood from an external source.[84] His desire for Victor to create for him a companion is not simply to fulfil a desire for companionship, but a subtle awareness that companionship carries with it the acknowledgement of personhood. Through identification, through sympathy and through the intimacy of relationship that acknowledges a basic familiarity and shared personhood, the Other can be brought from the status of the monstrous to join with human society. As the creature himself articulates it, 'everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably

[81] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, (London, Penguin Books, 1961) p. 55.
[82] *Frankenstein* p. 98.
[83] *Frankenstein* p. 150.
[84] The theological position articulated here shares a relevant theoretical line with the neo-Hegelianism of Judith Butler. See specifically Chapter two of *Precarious Life: The Powers Of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso Books, 2004). Whilst Butler (and, of course, Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit)* share an interest in the vital nature of relationality, both elide the transcendental signifier that is the Divine, which both Milton and *Frankenstein* put forward as essential here.

excluded…am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures who owe me nothing?'[85]

The status of the Other as Other is constructed, and therefore dependent upon firstly, the abandonment of the created by his creator and secondly, a refusal to acknowledge the figure of the Other as possessing a degree of personhood. The comparison once more comes from Milton as Shelley deliberately draws a contrast between the monster's own awakening to self-awareness and the earliest memories and subsequent recognition of Eve in Book Four of *Paradise Lost.* Eve awakens and comes to consciousness 'under a shade of flowers…not distance far from thence a murmuring sound of waters issued from a cave' and like Frankenstein's creature she is 'much wond'ring where/And what I was.'[86] From there she comes to recognise herself and experience the joy of self-recognition; 'A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared…pleased I soon returned.'[87] In contrast, whilst Frankenstein's creature also comes to and gains consciousness by a brook, the creature comes to no such understanding of himself. 'I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.'[88] Frankenstein's creature too has a moment of self-regarding, catching sight of his reflection, but in contrast to Eve who is drawn towards the pleasing shape, 'I was terrified when I viewed myself…when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondency and mortification.'[89] However, to simply describe the creature as monstrous based solely on appearance is far too reductive and fails to appreciate the significance of the contexts that both Eve and the creature are placed

[85] *Frankenstein,* p. 98.
[86] *Paradise Lost,* Book Four, 450-51 p. 90.
[87] Ibid line 463.
[88] *Frankenstein*, p. 102.
[89] *Frankenstein* p. 113.

within. Eve is drawn away from her own reflection and told by the divine voice to 'follow me and I will bring thee where no shadow stays thy coming and thy soft embraces.'[90] By her creator she is placed within relationship with Adam and here Milton makes clear that the relationship they share is not simply a degree of biological necessity or even romance, but something bound up with their theological status:

> Whom fli'st thou? Whom thou fli'st, of him thou art,
> His flesh, his bone. To give thee being I lent
> Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart,
> Substantial life to have thee by my side
> Henceforth an individual solace dear
> Part of my soul I seek thee and thee claim
> My other half.[91]

The relationship between Eve and Adam is presented as a constituent element of not just a material understanding of personhood, but rather, as distinctly non-material. Adam and Eve share a physical connection, a recognition of their sameness but this recognition goes beyond the material into the spiritual. The physical connection and similarity they share is merely the visible sign of the non-material connection. They are brought together through the active involvement of their creator and through relationship, which in itself reflects the ongoing act of divine creation; they find in each other the other part of their souls, and, as a result, an answer to the question that Frankenstein's creature is unable to resolve: 'what was I?' This theological truth goes some way to explaining the desire of Frankenstein creature for a mate of his own. The creature's request for a mate and entreaties towards Victor Frankenstein do not simply show a need for the satisfaction of a human desire. Rather, the creature's request

[90] *Paradise Lost,* Book Four 470-71.
[91] Line 482-87.

is framed as a need to 'become linked to the chain of existence and events from which I am now excluded.'[92] Frankenstein's creature seeks a visible reflection of the link between the God and his creation that is ongoing and participatory, and that allows for the affirmation of the individual's personhood within it. Shelley here draws on the liberal philosophy of Rousseau, particularly *The Social Contract* (1762), wherein Rousseau argues for a social compact as the basis of secure and just societal organisation. In the case of the creature, the relationship he asks Frankenstein to provide is something Frankenstein is incapable of granting as Frankenstein refuses to recognise that his creation requires his ongoing involvement and that the relationship that the creature desires reflects this ongoing process.

Frankenstein's creature is made monstrous, not through his material creation, (a facet of Being shared by all, regardless of our aesthetic qualities) or through being stitched together from the filthy fragments of the earth, but rather through the complete failure of his creator to understand either the significance of what he has made or the act of creation more generally. Materiality is something shared by all, but it is the inclusion of the individual within relationship that seems to be the determining feature in the acknowledgement of personhood and the awareness of the 'various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.'[93] The closest that Frankenstein's creature gets to this state is through the observations of the De Lacy family — the creature even goes so far as to hope that they may 'become acquitted with my admiration of their virtues, they would compassionate me and overlook my personal deformity.'[94] Here then the creature not only

[92] *Frankenstein,* p. 148.
[93] *Frankenstein,* p. 120.
[94] *Frankenstein,* p. 130.

seeks an involvement within an seemingly idyllic community but articulates a desire to be drawn into a social contract, echoing Rousseau in *The Social Contract.*

> Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.[95]

The desire for a relationship and the implied acknowledgement of some shared essence which relationship carries with it is touchingly conveyed: could they 'turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship?'[96] Yet the broader question here is whether to consider this as an entirely secular move – a desire to enter into the *polis* in some form. Rather, this desire to enter into sociality, to form a social contract still rests upon, and requires, a certain degree of theological logic. As Simon Critchley points out, 'if the problem that Rousseau is trying to solve…is the problem of politics, then the solution to that problem requires religion.'[97] As Critchley argues even in Rousseau's model of politics not based on natural law, but free association, equality and popular sovereignty, there still must be an element of *theologia civilis,* or civil theology. Even in the most immanent of communities there must be a kind of belief through which the community can be maintained. In the case of the De Lacy family it seems to be their shared bond, predicated upon their shared familial connection and empathetic recognition of their shared state. As the narrative progresses the link between this understanding of personhood as dependent upon the acknowledgement of another becomes more clear — 'the more I saw of them the greater became my desire to claim their protection and their kindness...my heart yearned to be

[95] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, Or, Principles of Political Right* trans. G.D.H. Cole, (public domain, available here: https://www.ucc.ie/archive/hdsp/Rousseau_contrat-social.pdf first accessed 07/08/2017) p. 11.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Simon Critchley, *Faith of the Faithless, Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso Books, 2014), p. 23.

known and loved by these amiable creatures.'[98] Crucially there is also a sense of this reciprocity being deserved — as a created being the creature seems aware of the intrinsic value he possesses — 'I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself unworthy of it.' [99] On the brink of forming a new association (to use Rousseau's term) the creature makes himself known to the blind old man of the family, who seems to offer a degree of reassurance in fairly Rousseanian terms:

> To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.[100]

However, the moral aesthetics that repulsed the theologically naïve Victor proves to be sadly irresistible to the De Lacy family and the social compact between them is never formed. Simply put, the creature is unrecognizable – when the De Lacy's come back to the cabin, the first question is one from the old man, 'Great God…who are you?'[101] The creature flees this potential reciprocal relationship in a fit of violence, physically driven from the brink of humanity back out towards its limits and the position of the monster. Simply put, it would be a mistake to assume the relationship with the De Lacy family would offer all the creature assumes. Far from being a straightforward Rousseauian idyll, the life of the De Lacy family is built upon the alienated labour of the creature, who clears their paths of snow and fetches their fuel.[102] He remains invisible; a 'good spirit' who delivers the benefits of his labour to his

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[98] *Frankenstein,* p. 131.
[99] *Frankenstein,* p. 132.
[100] *Frankenstein,* p. 133.
[101] *Frankenstein,* p. 135.
[102] I use alienation here in the Marxist sense of the term. In *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Marx writes that the 'object which labour produces – labour's product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer.' In the case of the creature, it is his labour power which provides for the De Lacy family, but at no point does he benefit from the work he has done – he is estranged from it, only gaining the benefit of the fire (fuelled by his own work) before the De Lacy family physically attacks him. See Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm, first accessed 30/08/17).

superiors and as long as he does so, the idea of the social contract that could potentially be formed remains coherent.[103] It is not the creature that causes the violence of the De Lacy family but rather it is his desire to make himself known - to make himself visible for recognition – that brings the virulent response. Strikingly however, the creature never lays blame at the feet of the De Lacys exclusively, only going so far as to admit that he 'could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage.'[104] Notably however he does not do so until the De Lacy family is safely out of harm's way. Immediately following his violent expulsion from their midst, the creature turns his attention to the source of his unrecognised humanity — his creator. 'Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live?'[105] Forcibly expelled from the boundaries of the human world of identification and relationship, the creature's humanity is neglected — 'I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying the objects that obstructed me and ranging through the woods with a stag like swift-ness.'[106] Denied the acknowledgement of his personhood by his fellow men and entirely ignored by the force that brought him into being, Frankenstein's creature truly appears as monstrous for the first time.

From this point, examination can turn to what kind of moral discernment or judgement can be made about the figure of the creature within the text and where the figure of the monstrous may be said to truly reside. The purpose of this section will be to attempt to come to an ethical judgement about the text and explore what the previously discussed theological re-readings of *Frankenstein* may offer by way of recasting the figure of the creature in a more philosophically and theologically nuanced way.

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[103] For more on this, see: Daniel Cottom, '*Frankenstein* and the Monster of Representation,' *SubStance*, 28 (1980), pp. 60-71.
[104] *Frankenstein,* p. 136.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

Frankenstein himself clearly believes his creature to be evil, but as discussed above, the link between aesthetics and morality serves only to indict Victor's failings as a creator and positions the book as highly critically of key tenets of Romantic thinking, particularly ideas on self-hood, creation and the theological. The revulsion and aesthetic disgust that Frankenstein feels towards the creature begins first with his creation, where the aesthetic repulsion ensures that his dreams and pleasant rest have 'become a hell'[107] and where a 'frightful fiend/ Doth close behind him tread.'[108] Even before Frankenstein's creature has committed any act that might reasonably be described as evil, Frankenstein himself attempts to link the creature to the language of hell and damnation. It is not enough to consider evil as a category of behaviour, as Victor positions his creature as such before the creature has any ability to do anything, good or not. Rather, as Eagleton claims, 'evil is a condition of being' as well as 'a category of behaviour.'[109] With the notion of evil as a condition of being (a certain kind of constructed being at that) then evil actions would certainly seem to follow from that — there would be no other kind of action that those who are evil could perform. However, this lends itself to a remarkably circular logic, 'if some people really are born evil… they are no more responsible for this condition that being born with cystic fibrosis. The condition which is supposed to damn them succeeds only in redeeming them.'[110] To hold Frankenstein's creature as morally responsible, and for the moral judgement of evil to hold any weight, it requires evil to be something freely chosen and if Frankenstein has created the monster to be evil then said monster is rendered incapable of being anything else. If we are to label the monster as evil this depends upon an understanding of evil as something that is

[107] *Frankenstein,* p. 52.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 152.
[110] Eagleton, p. 5.

fundamentally willed into action, a series of actions carried out for their own sake, frequently labelled as 'radical evil.'[111] Ewan Fernie calls this understanding of evil 'a form of existence founded upon destruction'[112] where actions are the result of evil beings rather than any kind of external factors. The attraction of such a position is clear but ultimately reductive – too often Radical Evil is used as an ideological means of ensuring that those who have committed acts that are met with disapproval cannot be excused or explained away by appeal to circumstance, mistakenly conflating what is understandable with what is commendable and explanation with absolution.[113] The idea that evil actions are performed by evil persons because they are evil persons is an unsatisfying conclusion and gets no closer to the ontological reality of Frankenstein's creature despite the great effort that Shelley goes to provide the creature with a detailed subjectivity. Without a theological understanding of both creation and personhood, interpretation of the novel and the moral culpability (or otherwise) of the creature is morally reductive, and fails to reflect the true complexity of the issue at stake.

From this, it follows that for Frankenstein's immediate condemnation of the creature as evil to be tenable and taken seriously, a closer examination of the link between evil and subjectivity is necessary. Frankenstein's extreme and theologically inflected language constantly tries to link the creature to not just a moral position but to the ontological state of evil. What renders this untenable is the novel's lengthy subjectivising of the creature, with the middle third of the novel dedicated to prioritising the creature's narrative voice. This voice

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[111] The term is drawn specifically from Kant and his work *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone* (1793). For a more modern summary of the philosophical underpinnings of Radical Evil see *Radical Evil* ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso Books, 1996).

[112] Ewan Fernie, *The Demonic: Literature and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2013) p. 10

[113] See Eagleton's example of the police response to the Bulger murders at the beginning of *On Evil,* 'as soon as I saw them, I knew they were evil.' See Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (London, Yale University Press, 2008), p.1-2.

serves as insight into the nature of the creature's being and shows a rather more complex image than Victor's own rather reductive and totalising theological language. "Evil," as a term, suggests a transcendence, something that goes beyond the solely materialist moral categories of good and bad. To phrase things in more theological language, evil forms the inverse negative of the goodness of the divine. However, Frankenstein's creation shows himself to be far from transcendent or all that interested in negation; rather his aims and actions are often close to prosaic. The creature's concerns are with satiating hunger and thirst, (p. 101, 103-106) with shelter and rest (p. 101, 104 and 106), and ultimately with companionship (p. 119-120.) The concerns of the creature are rather human as opposed to the demonical or truly evil labels that Frankenstein assigns. Even when the creature experiences negative emotions, they are contextualised in such a way as to make the creature more empathetic:

> I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed, and had broken the only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filling my bosom, and I did not strive to control them; but allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death. When I thought of my friends, of the mild voice of De Lacy. The gentle eyes of Agatha…these thoughts vanished …but again when I reflected that they had spurned and deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger[114]

Here, alongside a confessional tone that once again links Frankenstein's creature to the lamentations of Job, we see a broad gamut of human emotion and the perilous emotional trauma tied up in the expulsion of the subject from any kind of community. The anger and thoughts that bend towards injury and death become understandable if not justifiable. To call the creature "evil" seems at best an ethical over-reaction, in fact close to irresponsible, and highlights the fundamental flaw in the radical evil conception of the term. Whilst arson and murder can by no means ever be granted as acceptable actions, it would seem that the

[114] *Frankenstein,* p. 112.

creature's actions and behaviours are too closely inter-related with the behaviours and motives of those around him to be classified as evil. Whilst these actions are wrong, it seems extreme to label them as evil for these actions do not come from the creature themself but from multiple causes, including the great network of relationships and peoples that the creature has been introduced to by the very act of being created. Frankenstein's creature cannot be called radically evil with any sincerity — Shelley's portrayal all too clearly shows the creature as less ontologically monstrous and rather socially constructed as such. Radical Evil's emphasis on the ontological reality of evil is insufficient to comprehending the interconnectedness of Shelley's novel. Frankenstein's creature is *made* to appear monstrous, and the narrative neatly highlights both the inter-related nature of the self with the other and the dangerous trauma and violence that emerges when the personhood of the Other is ignored. Like all of humanity, the actions of the creature within the novel are violent, destructive but cannot be immediately reduced to a singular ultimately destructive and private will. What Shelley documents then, is an example of Original Sin, which 'allows theologians to acknowledge that evil is endemic to human activity and indissolubly associated with the most basic aspects of our experience.'[115] However, to focus on the notion of Original Sin does not require any kind of moral relativism as the doctrine 'links evil to human activity without making the crass and simplistic suggestion that the world's faults are directly attributable to the sins of one particular person.'[116] In other words Frankenstein's creature is evil in as much as we all are morally responsible and morally compromised through the very notion of acting in the world and thus, should not be called evil at all. If this is the case, Victor's appropriation of theological language becomes more significant as it reveals the extent to

[115] Knight, p. 97.
[116] Ibid.

which he is invested within theological logics whilst disavowing his own complicity in the creature's actions. Fundamentally, the creature is not evil in any coherent sense of the term – but rather, capable of wrong-doing and capable of inflicting harm, just as other fallen creatures are. In effect, this is merely a theological extension of the same argument made by Rousseau: if the social contract ensures that humanity 'all bind themselves to observe the same conditions and should therefore all enjoy the same rights,'[117] then all are at risk of inflicting harm upon one another. Shelley takes seriously the idea of a kind of social contract without lapsing into a naïve utopianism, for as the novel shows, to be in the world is to be fundamentally vulnerable to the other, bound up and connected to them in ways which go beyond the political or social. The case of Justine and William seems fitting here, as simply through virtue of being in the world the two are both killed. Their own actions are arguably not the cause of their deaths, but their involvement with others (even if that involvement was involuntary) is far more to blame. Elizabeth's question, of how 'shall I ever again believe in human goodness,'[118] does not simply reflect a moral judgement upon the individual actions of Justine but raises far more complex questions of the fragile nature of the connections between people and how easily the connections that are undeniably good, can also result in great damage.[119] Furthermore, the novel emphasises the vital role of community in the recognition of the ontological status of the individual, and the high costs when aesthetics is equated with morality or ontology. Understood as a theological text then, *Frankenstein* becomes more than simply "part of the Gothic," but presents an Imaginative Theology, declaring the value, worth and personhood of Frankenstein's creature beyond the reductive

[117] Rousseau, p. 23.
[118] *Frankenstein,* p. 80.
[119] It is for similar reasons that philosopher Simon Critchley claim that one of the fundamental ontological states is that of being in debt, due mainly to the fact of our "thrown-ness" into the world. See *Faith of the Faithless: Experiments on Political Theology,* (London, Verso Books, 2014) particularly pp. 155-203.

readings of Gothic Studies that would see this theologically abjected, compelling human figure as nothing more than mere metaphor or political allegory. The Gothic is not simply concerned with expressing the cultural fears of a particular social or historical moment, but is a literary form that participates within the theological narrative between the Divine and humanity — frequently with more nuance and awareness than the Romanticism alongside which it exists.

However, the novel does not merely put forward the figure of a monster as a constructed product of human relationships, but further extends its theology by providing a stern critique of Romanticism more generally. If, despite the theological extremity of Frankenstein's language, his creature resists the label of "evil" the same cannot be said of Victor Frankenstein himself. As previously discussed, "evil" as a term is not simply a moral judgement but must be treated as a metaphysical concept. The turn to theology allows for a move beyond the totalising and reductive moral ontology that has been criticised earlier. As John Milbank notes, 'Traditionally, in Greek, Christian and Jewish thought evil has been denied any positive foothold in being,' being instead 'the privation of being itself.'[120] Evil, in theological terms, is 'violent hostility to being,'[121] and from this point, it becomes easier to see Victor as not merely irresponsible, but as embodying the evil of the Romantic Ideology that Shelley so trenchantly criticises. This privation theory, key to Christian theology since at least the time of St Augustine, argues that evil is not a positive presence but rather an ontological *lack*. As God is creative and always good, it follows that all of God's creation must be good too, in some way. Theologically speaking, this renders evil a problem —if evil is a

[120] For a detailed exposition of the coherence of privation theory see Charles T. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) as well as John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon,* (London: Routledge, 2003).
[121] Fernie, p. 10.

thing in the world then (as all created things are in some way reflective of the goodness of God) evil must in some sense *be* good. The other option is that evil is in some way outside of the control of God. The Augustinian solution of privation theory solves this problem by placing evil outside of the realm of being – something which instead of embodying positive presence, embodies rather negation and often hostility towards that which exists. At stake here is a deep-seated and radical critique to early Romantic Ideology. The emphasis on imagination and the primacy of the individual genius is prone to not just great imaginative creativity but also dangerous annihilationist overreach. Through a privative view on evil, the Romantic ideal of a new metaphysical reality is revealed as not simply dangerous but, more importantly, potentially hostile to the materiality of the world it inhabits. Overly enamoured with its own imaginative capacity, the Romantic Imagination that Victor embodies 'dissolves the everyday world into so much meretricious show….as such it is as much a divisive capacity as a unifying one.'[122] This is rather primly understating the case here, as Shelley's presentation shows Victor's imagination to be not only divisive but also actively hostile to the created world, contributing in the end towards his own bodily dissolution.

With this understanding in place, it becomes more possible to see Victor as the figure within the novel that comes closest to embodying evil. Whereas the creature is presented as a subject concerned with basic, mundane needs, Victor is uninterested in and detached from the physicality and materiality of existence. From the very beginnings of his narrative his interests stretch beyond the limitations of the physical world to the idea of something that can only be conceived of as beyond. Frankenstein speaks of Elizabeth and her interest in the 'magnificent appearance of things,'[123] but the realities of the created world are to

[122] Eagleton, *Culture and The Death of God,* p. 104-5.
[123] *Frankenstein,* p. 28.

Frankenstein a means of concealing a 'secret which I desired to divine.'[124] Beyond the created world, beyond the physical world, Frankenstein seeks another kind of reality and access to a metaphysical realm of power.

> So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein, - more, far more will I achieve…I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.[125]

In theological terms, Frankenstein's failure is not simply in his inability to understand the actuality of creation but in the fatal and hubristic pride, that, like that of Milton's Satan, seeks the knowledge and ability of the divine. Pure autonomy, as Eagleton notes, 'is a dream of evil,'[126] as it removes the human subject from the host of relations and network of interdependence through which humanity is constructed. Whereas his creature is drawn into the mutual co-dependence that constitutes a basis of personhood, Frankenstein, as his own narrative unfolds, becomes increasingly solitary – 'I was now alone. In the university, whither I was going…I must be my own protector.'[127] Cut off from the network of familial relationships and obsessively searching for access to a realm of knowledge beyond the knowledge of man, Frankenstein begins to embody the ideal Romantic Man, 'too voraciously ambitious for his own well-being, perpetually driven beyond his own limits by the lure of the infinite.'[128] Victor's withdrawal from the bonds of the social contract is not only a political issue — a violation of the compact that sustains the Frankenstein family — but is also the physical and social echo of his desperate theological experiments in making himself the Father and creator of a new species. His journey from Switzerland to Ingolstadt marks the beginning of his own *felix culpa* or 'fortunate fall' away from the world of human relations and "up" into the deeply

[124] Ibid.
[125] *Frankenstein,* p. 41.
[126] Eagleton, p. 12.
[127] *Frankenstein* p. 37.
[128] Eagleton, p. 31.

unstable realm of abstract thought and creative powers. The imaginative realm of Romanticism that has attracted such interest from scholars of religion and literature is revealed to be profoundly theologically unstable, more concerned with striving towards abstract metaphysical and poetic re-imaginings than the distasteful physical world that it resoundingly spurns.[129]

This connects the novel to some of the broader theological trends of Romanticism more generally, as theological culture of the time reflected the literary predisposition towards the systematic at the cost of the individual and the particular. The rise of Unitarianism following the founding of the Unitarian Christian Chapel in Essex Street, London in 1774 by Theophilus Lindsay attracted many involved with literary creation — for example, Coleridge, Southey, Wollstonecraft and Godwin were all at one stage or another involved in Unitarian meetings.[130] Lindsay's friend and one of the primary Unitarian theologians, Joseph Priestly, argued that it was in Unitarian thought that 'all persons and things' could be joined in 'an immense glorious and happy system…the whole is but one family.'[131] As Knight and Mason point out, such a vision constituted an essentially 'humanitarian view' on faith, subtracting the divinity from its own Christology.[132] Whilst Romantic writers explored the abstract realm

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[129] To see the resurgent interest in Romanticism in scholarship on religion and literature, see Gavin Hopps and Jane Stabler ed. *Romanticism and Religion from William Cowper to Wallace Stevens* (London: Ashgate, 2006) also Bernard Reardon: *Religion In The Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) plus J. Robert Barth, *Romanticism and Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Religious Imagination* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2003)

[130] Coleridge going so far as to enter Unitarian ministry in 1798 with the support of William Hazlitt; Southey proved to be one of the early influences on Coleridge's interest in Unitarianism to begin with. Wollstonecraft would be initially attracted to Unitarianism, attending a Unitarian chapel in Newington Green led by Dr Richard Price between 1782-85 but would leave as her own theological development placed here in opposition to Unitarian thinking.

[131] J. Priestly, *The Doctrine of Philosophic Necessity illustrated an appendix to the Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit. To which is added an answer to the Letters on materialism and on Hartley's Theory of the Mind,* (London: 1777), p. 123.

[132] Knight & Mason, p. 58.

of imagination in literature, the humanist, anti-Trinitarian beliefs of Unitarianism served as the practical, earthly outworking of this systematic thinking. However, this separated belief in the transcendent possibility of the Divine from the practicalities of living faith. Such theology runs contrary to the commonly accepted orthodoxy of the day in the thirty-nine articles of the Anglican Church.[133] Furthermore, Priestly's thinking also runs contrary to the work of religious theists such as John Locke who argued for not only the moral certainty of Scripture, but the necessity of the divinity of Christ for the outworking of salvation, and thus, for any kind of Christian religious belief to have any efficacy.[134]

The writers who embraced and then subsequently moved away from a broadly systematic, humanistic view on theology best exemplify the flaws in this theological understanding. Coleridge, despite initially being drawn to Unitarian thought, found it emotionally paralysing, ('O for some Sun to unite heat & Light' he wrote) and converted back to a Trinitarian understanding of God.'[135] Unitarians, for Coleridge were 'naked Philosophers — The English Unitarians = the Hermit Crab.'[136] The systematic thinking of the time had so depersonalised the Divine that it was, to Coleridge, inaccessible. It was in encountering the thought of German idealists with its dialectical methodology that allowed Coleridge to bridge the gap between the human and the Divine that the divide between poetry and belief had opened up.

Likewise, Shelley's parents, William Godwin and particularly Mary Wollstonecraft were initially drawn to this kind of theology but found it ultimately unsatisfying. Wollstonecraft had encountered noted Unitarian, Richard Price, after Price's sermon

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[133] See http://www.theologian.org.uk/church/39articles.html (first accessed 17/05/2016)
[134] John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity As Delivered in the Scriptures,* (London, 1824)
[135] Knight & Mason, p. 59
[136] Seamus Perry (ed.) *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p 114

supporting the French revolution.[137] The sermon called for the love of one's country, based not on laws or political affiliation, but on the universal love of all humanity.[138] Initially attracted to the rigour and rationality of the Unitarian church, she spent time defending the rationality of women as God-given and theologically justifiable on a number of occasions.[139] However, she too eventually became dissatisfied with a theology that disconnected faith from its more mystical elements and through her views on nature developed her own natural theology — a move echoed within the novel in the early fondness for the natural world that Victor's adoptive sister demonstrates.[140] Wollstonecraft developed her own theology through a combination of the human as rational, but also able to experience something of the divine in communion with the natural world. Rather than try to persist in a solely rationalist theological mould, it is through writing (albeit in differing forms) that Coleridge and Wollstonecraft attempted to rework the imaginative capacity of faith, with an awareness of the human subject — a project that Shelley's own daughter turns to in her corrective rereading of the Romantic Ideology in *Frankenstein.*

A theology removed from any kind of notion of the Divine becomes emotionally unsatisfying, and as such, there should be little surprise in the prevalence of new, transcendent possibilities being explored in imaginative writing. However, as Wollstonecraft

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[137] Price's sermon was called 'A Discourse On the Love of Our Country.' A number of eighteenth Century journals reviewed this sermon. See ''A Discourse on the Love of Our Country': Delivered on November 4th, 1789, at the Meeting House in the Old Jewry, to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain. Dr Richard Price, D. D. LL. D. F. R. S. and Fellow of the American Philosophical Societies at Philadelphia and Boston. Cadell. 1789', *The Literary Magazine and British Review*, 3, 41 (December 1789), pp. 455-56.

[138] Parenthetically, it is worth pointing out that this projection of Universal Benevolence beyond the limits of those known to the individual is what drew such a stern response from the more conservative and theologically orthodox Edmund Burke and ultimately led to Burke withdrawing his support to Dissenters such as Price.

[139] See her responses to Rousseau in her *Vindications on the Rights of Women* (London, 1792).

[140] Particularly evident throughout her later work, for example, see *Letters written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark,* (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3529/3529-h/3529-h.htm first accessed 19/05/2016)

and Shelley certainly seemed to understand, the transcendent drive must be married to a grounding in the material world of the human subject. Such a thirst for the infinite can, if left isolated and removed from the plane of the human, carry with it a 'puritanical distaste for the fleshly.'[141] Within the novel, this certainly holds true as Victor's own experiments turn from the physical with a striking disengagement from materiality. He himself speaks of being motivated by 'almost supernatural enthusiasm'[142] but once again, his misunderstanding of the nature and importance of the physical is clear. Spending his time in graveyards and churchyards there is no connection to the dead as those who were once people, friends and family members, rather 'a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life.'[143] As before, Frankenstein seeks to look beyond the veil of the physical, ignoring the true metaphysical significance of the human frame. His work examining how the 'fine form of man was degraded and wasted…how the worm inherited the wonders of eye and brain'[144] shows an understanding of creation as singularly and solely physical. There can be no greater significance to the human if, like the secrets of nature, they are concealed behind their physical appearance. Yet Victor, despite his eagerness to seize the restorative and resurrection powers of Christ also reveals himself as a theological sceptic; rejecting the possibility of any kind of physical or bodily resurrection in his treatment of the bodies which he uses to create his creature. Eagleton summarizes the depth of Frankenstein's arrogance in greater detail:

> We think from inside a particular perspective on the world. This is not an obstacle to grasping the truth. On the contrary, it is the only way we can grasp it. The only truths we can attain to are those appropriate to finite beings like ourselves. And these are the truths of neither angels nor anteaters. Overreachers, however, refuse to accept

[141] Eagleton, p. 31.
[142] *Frankenstein,* p. 44.
[143] *Frankenstein,* p. 45.
[144] Ibid.

> these enabling constraints. For them, only truths which are free of all perspective can be authentic. The only valid viewpoint is the God's eye viewpoint. (p. 32)

Yet, as Frankenstein is finite, his actions are catastrophic. His construction of the creature is described as a pursuit of nature, but it is rather a warping of it. Whereas the creative act of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a great ongoing hymn involving the relational participation of all concerned, Frankenstein 'dabbles with the unhallowed damps of the grave' and tortures the 'living animal to animate the lifeless clay,'[145] enacting his own grisly parody of Genesis One. As he comes closer to the act of creation and to attaining the knowledge for which he is disastrously underprepared, the conflict between the appropriate knowledge of the human and the seemingly supernatural encouragement towards hubris is rendered starkly:

> In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from the other apartments by a gallery and staircase I kept my workshop of filthy creation…The dissecting room and slaughter house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near conclusion.[146]

Here we see a dangerous and appealing paradox, Frankenstein reaches beyond the limits of human knowledge yet at the same time this reach into the abstract and transcendent realm of knowledge is hugely creative. It is this ambition that Ewan Fernie observes: 'it involves a potential for creativity, over and against what merely is, which is something other than evil – and indeed, if we are to pay heed to contemporary philosophy and culture, may be a central component of the Good.'[147]

Yet the great tragedy of Frankenstein is his seeming inability to recognise the potential good of his creation – his belief in the secret knowledge *behind* the physical ensures this, and so his response to the physical actuality of creation is violent disgust and a theological

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[145] *Frankenstein,* p. 47.
[146] *Frankenstein,* p. 48.
[147] Fernie, p. 10.

revulsion. That which is actually present in the world is merely an impediment to the working of his abstracted will. In the night of his successful animation of the creature comes Frankenstein's famous dream, wherein the reader sees Frankenstein's aversion to physical contact. 'I thought I saw Elisabeth…delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death...and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of flannel.'[148] This process of revulsion begins with Frankenstein's first view of the creature's completed physical form and accelerates Frankenstein's own isolation. Even his cousin's attempts to draw him back to the world of human relationship, of interdependence and intimacy fail; 'Remember the friends around you…have we lost the power of rendering you happy?'[149] If he could be drawn back into human relationship it is arguable the narrative as it stands would never unfold. Yet Victor is too self-contained, self-reliant and too disengaged from the physical and material to be reached in such a way.

It is this detachment that leads to his solitary hikes and the vicious theologically inflected rage with which he attacks his creature. The linguistic attack being an expression of Victor's own inability to confront and comprehend the physical actuality of his created work whilst at the same time serving as a loaded reminder of Victor's own physical limitations he is so desperate to transcend and go beyond. The creature is labelled as demonic, but is in reality simply too physically human for the transcendentally inclined Victor to accept. Frankenstein's attempt to go beyond himself and create *ex nihilo* has only succeeded in creating a profoundly physical rather than abstract being. Rather than 'pour a torrent of light into the world'[150] Frankenstein instead creates a man — physical and flawed — and

[148] *Frankenstein* p. 51.
[149] *Frankenstein* p. 90.
[150] *Frankenstein* p. 40.

something that the ascetic Victor cannot accept. The ending of the novel also serves to show Victor's essential self-imposed isolation. Pursuing his creation across Europe, he is only kept alive through the work of his creature (p. 210-11) yet he seems incapable of appreciating his own dependence on others — involving as it would an unsustainable commitment to materiality.

Through the course of the novel it is Victor that comes the closest to the negation of being that in the Augustine tradition is known as evil, as he admits he 'trod heaven in my thoughts'[151] and as such he is not without pathos. His inability to stand the physical interconnectedness of all things is what motivates his desires and yet at the end of his life he comes to recognise not only the moral, but also theological error he has made. 'Like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell.'[152] The claim is somewhat histrionic as Victor finds himself not in Hell, but in the unbearable physicality of the material world, and yet with a typical egoistical flourish compares himself to the fallen Lucifer. Dependent upon the generosity of Walton and the sailors and trapped within the impassable physical ice of the Arctic his death is perhaps inevitable. Once again, he manages to slip into the abstraction of non-existence. Once again, Frankenstein's actions are not unique, but serve to function as an example of wider patterns within Romanticism — whether that be the primacy of the imagination in Wordsworth, Coleridge,[153] or Blake,[154] one of the

[151] *Frankenstein* p. 218.
[152] Ibid.
[153] The imagination is a principal concern of Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria, particularly Chapter 13 'On Imagination,' to quote — 'the imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception.' (See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literia*¸(1817) http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6081/6081-h/6081-h.htm#link2HCH0013 first accessed 05/09/17)
[154] See Blake's own thoughts on this in *Jerusalem;* 'I know of no other Christianity than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination.' See William Blake, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake,* ed. David V. Erdman (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 231.

undeniable trends is toward the abstract totality over and against the material and the individual.

To conclude, Shelley's *Frankenstein* articulates that which the Romantic Ideology fails to – that theology is simultaneously a matter of transcendence and immanence, of the sublime and the deeply material. Thus, the novel is a deep seated and much needed corrective to a Romantic Ideology that is morally reductive, removed and aloof from a material world that it finds somewhat distasteful and theologically naïve. Victor Frankenstein's own creature literally embodies this paradox, brought forth from the very basest of all materials, he articulates the all too human and hence familiar desire to connect with the Divine that brought him into the world. Whilst Romanticism seeks the transcendent in the sublimity of the imagination, *Frankenstein* shows that such searching may be both creative but is also deeply dangerous and theologically naïve. Despite the oft-stated Romantic interest in and debt owed to Milton,[155] the Romantic Imagination 'plays a role equivalent to that of the Redeemer in Milton's providential plot,'[156] neatly excluding the need for a genuine theological engagement. On the contrary, it is in *Frankenstein* and the trash of the circulating libraries that is the canonical Gothic that a more sincere theological engagement can be found. However, when this theology itself can be warped to evil ends the theological and the Gothic can only become more deeply intertwined. It is this increasingly close relationship that will be the subject of the next chapter.

[155] One only need see Wordsworth's 1802 poem 'MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour' or Keats's own 'On seeing a lock of Milton's Hair.'

[156] M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution In Romantic Literature* (London: Norton, 1971) p.119

Chapter Two: 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' – Gothic Revelation and Monstrous Theology in the Gothic's Calvinist Legacy

This chapter will consider a certain theological tradition within nineteenth century Gothic writing, namely, the discursive legacy of reformed theology.[1] Shown in the recurrent Gothic fascination with ideas such as election, predestination or fate, this wide-ranging and diverse set of theological ideas will be considered under the broad label of the 'Calvinist Gothic.'[2] This follows the work of Alison Milbank, particularly her essay on Calvinist and Covenanter Gothic, but seeks to widen the scope of analysis beyond the Scottish connection with Calvinistic Presbyterianism.[3] This Calvinist Gothic forms a distinct theme, repeated throughout the different iterations of Gothic writing. Within this subset of the Gothic there is a complex problematizing between what things are and what they appear to be, with a concomitant suspicion of appearances as opposed to essences. Whereas certain critics assert this problematizing as a characteristic of Gothic writing or even of American writing,[4] this tension between appearances and actualities links inextricably to the epistemological frameworks of systematic theology, specifically to Calvinist scepticism over the appearance of things

[1] By reformed theology, this term is used to focus on the theological ideas and discourses produced in the work of European theologians such as John Calvin in their break with the dominant orthodoxies of the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation. For more see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine Volume Four, Reformation and Dogma 1300-1700* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[2] Whilst the theological tropes, ideas and discourses the Gothic concerns itself with are drawn from the reformed theology of John Calvin, Calvinism is a broad and often conflicting set of ideas (particularly since the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism). Despite the conflicts over specific points of dogma, the broader discourse of Calvinistic theology that finds expression in the Gothic canon draws upon the reformed ideas of Calvin (even if only to disagree with those same ideas), particularly in relation to predestination, revelation and soteriology. Therefore, even if on specific points there may be a theological disagreement, these discussions take place within a unified discursive whole that allows the Calvinist legacy to function as a broad, though ultimately coherent term.

[3] See Alison Milbank, 'Calvinist and Covenanter Gothic,' in *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016) ed. Carol Margaret Davison and Monica Germanà, p. 89-101.

[4] See Tony Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), particularly the titular essay. Tanner's close and meticulous attention to text sees this duality as inextricably bound to the idea of American character and writing, and although Tanner acknowledges the theological legacy of Puritan or Calvinistic religion, it receives relatively little attention beyond the influence of testimony narratives in the literature of New England.

(shifting, insubstantial and changing) versus the divinely revealed "true" nature of the world. Through a close analysis of Hawthorne's short stories, specifically 'Young Goodman Brown' (1835), as well as James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) this link between theology, revelation and the Gothic will be positioned as central. Furthermore, this chapter aims to examine the Calvinist legacy in Gothic writings, explore how it articulates the tensions between revelation and knowledge, and argue for the Calvinist Gothic as performing both a valuable critique of, and necessary contribution to, the reformed theological tradition. What is at stake here is a crucial intervention within the debate between systematics and natural theology, as well as essential insight into the importance of Gothic texts as both contributing to, and expressing theological truth. Rather than argue that the Calvinist Gothic is solely condemnatory or even critical of this kind of theology, this chapter will show that while there may be no escape from the narrative pattern of duality, it provides what Milbank refers to as 'a productive episteme through which to think'[5] through the multiplicity of identity in connection to theological belief and expression.

Both theology and the Gothic are discourses of writing and thus, of language. Both discourses attempt to articulate what perhaps cannot be completely expressed through language alone, yet the very mode of their articulation determines much about them. There is, within the Gothic canon, a highly productive set of tensions between the desire to systematically explain and delineate the supernatural and transcendent and at the same time, an unmistakeable ambiguity wherein explanation and rationalist pragmatism can all too often fail or collapse into sheer undecidability.[6] As a result, these Gothic texts, which respond to

[5] Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic' p. 89.

[6] Despite the predilection for the explained supernatural, most evidently in the early Gothic work of Ann Radcliffe, the supernatural and divine is often left open and unresolved in texts that are influenced by the tradition of reformed or Protestant theology. Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions of A Justified Sinner* (1824),

Calvinist theology, pose a substantial challenge to the epistemic and discursive frameworks of systematics as the texts are susceptible to a reading that produces a radical and potentially ambiguous natural theology. Revealed knowledge or revelation of the divine and the supernatural cannot be attained solely through scripture or the word. Rather, in its depictions of revelation — whether that revelation be within nature, or through experience, the Gothic foregrounds and emphasises the very instability of systematic theology and thus of strict or fundamentalist religious faith.[7] Throughout the texts in question, it is not certainty that should be sought. Rather, resolution must come after the process and experience of ambiguity. Therefore, despite the best efforts of systematic theological systems, revelation can never be entirely secured; and the certainty of knowledge, indeed of all absolutes, whether that be identity of the self or other, divinity or the demonic, is brought into question through these narratives. It is in such *questioning*, rather than in systematic certainty, that the theological can be found. Rather than easy didacticism, or moralistic judgement, the Calvinist Gothic text is both closely linked to systematic theology as well as the theological traditions of negative theology or apophatic theology that seeks to speak of the divine, not in terms of concrete or positive statements but through negation and through what is fundamentally unknowable.[8] Thus, even in the experience or encounter with the supernatural, as Brown writes, 'something

Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and the work of Stevenson and the Brontës would all serve as excellent examples of this.

[7] As David Brown points out, the search for definition versus the acceptance of mystery has been a long-standing concern of theology, and the search for definition has been in ascendency from around the Middle Ages. See David Brown *God in Mystery and Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) especially Chapter One.

[8] The tradition of negative theology emerges in the early Church Fathers, such as Tertullian and St Cyril of Alexandria, but some of the most influential early works are from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Other influential writers include Meister Eckhart and Saint John of the Cross. Aquinas drew heavily from the tradition of negative theology in his formulation of the analogical way in the *Summa Theologica.* For more on the development of negative or apophatic theology see, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Mystical Theology,* ed. Julia A. Lamm (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

is revealed or explained, [yet] a continuing element of mystery remains.'[9] Whilst commenting on the strictures and legal epistemic frameworks of systematic theology, Gothic Calvinism advances a more imaginatively engaged theology that in its questioning allows revelation to emerge through experience and through the process of narrative rather than through faith alone. Placing theology as central allows for the theological claims made within the text to be taken seriously as *theology*, rather than as a representation or sublimation of another critical concern.[10]

This chapter consists of three sections. Analysis will initially focus upon the different ways knowledge and revelation are presented in these texts, highlighting how Calvinist revelation is produced, necessitating some close attention to Calvinist theology. Furthermore, consideration will be given to the way in which religious models of revelation come into conflict with rationalist, empirical means of knowledge — usually in the guise of encountering or experiencing supernatural manifestations within the text. From there, analysis will move to consider in-depth and specific examples of this tension in the revelation of the supernatural in nature. It is in the encounter with the supernatural in nature, outside of the systematic and linguistic expressions of faith that the Calvinist Gothic prefers, that reveals the instability inherent in the systematic approach to theology, as language consistently fails to suitably contain or secure the natural world. The final section of the chapter will argue for a Gothic natural theology, drawing on the role of story, narrative and ambiguity in constructing a more expansive, and generous understanding of experiences of the supernatural and the

[9] Brown, *God in Mystery and Words,* p. 5.

[10] Perhaps the most notable example of this is in David Punter's dismissal of Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions* as nothing more than 'detailed and terrifying account of schizophrenia.' Such a short-sighted critical statement shows a startling lack of interest in the impact of theology and a profound a-historicism as to the theologico-cultural realities of the texts production. See David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition* (London: Longman Books, 1996), particularly Chapter Five.

theological more generally. The vital contribution of the Calvinist Gothic is in articulating not simply a systematic theology of revelation, but in seeking to express an imaginative and natural theology of revelation through the mysteries of the supernatural encounter expressed in the text. Crucially, Calvinist Gothic texts should not be considered as antithetical to, or critically dismissive of, religious experience. Through analysis of the texts, what can be revealed is that 'there is not only a parallel, but actually a *union* between [theological] revelation and [literary] imagination.'[11]

Revelation and Knowing

In order to analyse Calvinist conceptions of revelation and knowledge within the texts it is firstly necessary to engage with the modes of knowledge production within Calvinism more generally. Two factors are of particular importance to the issue at hand: firstly, the status of the Word, namely the certainty of scripture; and secondly, the understanding of the world as essentially concealing a spiritual reality behind worldly appearances. Calvin's own work is instructive on both of these points. After establishing the nature of the innate knowledge of God in man, and man's subsequent ultimate depravity through sin, Calvin's work leaves no way for the subject to have any means of access to the divine.[12] It is these 'tenets of the great Reformers'[13] that leads to the next important theological move Calvin makes in the *Institutes,* namely the epistemic security of scripture as the means for revelation or knowledge of God. Calvin claims in Book One of the *Institutes* that 'scripture…deigns not to submit to proofs and

[11] Paul Fiddes, *Freedom and Limit: A Dialogue between Literature and Christian Doctrine,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991) p. 26.
[12] For the knowledge of God, see John Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion* trans. Henry Beveridge (Michigan: WM. B. Eerdman Publishing, 1998) pp. 38-9. For man's ultimate depravity, see Chapters One to Three of Book Two of the *Institutes* (pp. 210-264).
[13] James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2003) p.4.

arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit.'[14] Revelation of the truth of God comes through the unchanging and unchangeable *logos* of Scripture in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit and in no other way.[15] It is for this reason that Calvin goes so far as to claim in Chapter Seven, Book One of the *Institutes* that it is 'impiety' to draw upon the interpretative judgement of the church in matters of hermeneutics.[16] In this formulation of theology, interpretation is secondary to application, and the church, the heterogeneous practicing community of faith, is entirely incidental to theology.[17] Milbank points out that the issue with Calvin's model of redemption is that it is 'wholly extrinsic,'[18] reliant not on works, or even the natural world but on nothing other than the imputed righteousness of an otherwise wholly mysterious God.

As a result, the Calvinist Gothic is often riddled with an interpretative anxiety over the truth status of revealed knowledge, despite the long-standing theological idea that 'reading sacred texts involves a conversation.'[19] The Calvinist Gothic functions as a site of tension, embodying the conflict between the epistemic certainty of systematics and the ambiguities of the metaphoric. Yet as David Brown points out, 'words…are not just a medium for conveying something else but sometimes themselves are an essential constituent in [religious] experience.'[20]

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[14] Calvin, *Institutes,* p. 72.
[15] Calvin, *Institutes,* p. 64-67.
[16] Calvin, *Institutes,* p. 68-74.
[17] For a more in-depth exploration of this issue See Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1993) as well as Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989).
[18] Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic…' p. 94.
[19] Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (London: Continuum Books, 2009) p. 71; also see David Brown's extensive exploration of this, particularly throughout *God in Mystery and Words,* as well as *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[20] Brown, *God in Mystery,* p. 17.

Despite this, the systematic theology of the Calvinist tradition states that the duty of those who receive the Word is not to understand or to interpret, but rather to obey. Scripture is taken as the final revelation of God and is held as ultimately true in all things. As a result, revelation is inherently deterministic, as exhibited in the murderous convictions of Gil-Martin or the theological studies with which Charles Brockden Brown begins the narrative of *Wieland*.[21] Yet it is precisely the deterministic nature of the theology that powers the horror and tragedy of these Gothic narratives. Despite the Calvinist insistence on the inviolate and permanent status of revealed knowledge through Scripture, the potential theological richness of metaphor, ambiguity and textuality is latent within the Gothic despite the influence of Calvinism that seeks to exert a limitation to multiplicity of meaning. However, as post-Saussurian structuralist theory and narrative theology maintain, '[e]xperience occurs within language. All that we have has been given in words.'[22] For the Calvinist, the function of language is to reveal the truth of the divine, yet this revelation is not clearly and finally separable from the ambiguity and multiplicity of language itself. The Gothic co-option of Calvinist theological discourse is designed to prey upon this religious anxiety over the status of language, its role in experiencing the theological and the necessity for interpretation.

With the status of scripture as the final theological and epistemological authority, received by man rather than interpreted, the Calvinist Gothic suspicion of interpretation applies not just to imaginative literature such as the Gothic (which frequently draws upon this very suspicion), but extends toward a suspicion of the world as it is. There is a strong focus throughout the Calvinist tradition of understanding the sensual world as deceptive, whereby

[21] Hogg, *Memoirs,* p. 94-6; Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist,* ed. Bryan Waterman (London: Norton Critical Editions, 2011) p. 10-12.
[22] Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 20.

even apparently benign worldly appearances conceal a spiritual conflict. Such a theological trait is evident in much of the Calvinist Gothic,[23] but is perhaps most glaring in the structural subtlety of Hogg's famous novel. Comprising an editor's introduction, an apparently found manuscript and an editorial after-word, the novel details the life and suicide of a young religious fanatic in Scotland. Set in the aftermath of a particularly violent time in Scottish political and religious history (the "Killing times" of Presbyterian history) the novel is informed by the complex and shifting political, social and religious discourses resonant in Scottish culture. Following the life and religious extremism of Robert Wringhim allows Hogg to examine not just the state of a nation, but its theological sins. In its examination of the minutiae of a single religious fanatic, Hogg shows the broader theological dangers inherent in such beliefs and the very real experiential element of supernatural encounters in forming and refining subjectivity. The Editor's narrative serves to show the material reality of Robert's life — his religious prejudice, his vanity and physical weaknesses are all shown in detail (particularly in the rather embarrassing physical confrontation with George Colwan). However, during the Sinner's part of the narrative, these same events are instead revealed as moments of divine significance. Whereas the Editor's narrative presents George Colwan as a somewhat typical example of aristocratic masculinity in his fondness for sports, games, drinking and 'all that constitutes gentility,'[24] the memoirs section of the narrative sees to the spiritual 'truth' of his character. Wringhim regards his brother with 'utter abhorrence,' and desires him to be 'carried quick to hell.'[25] Thus, not only does Colwan become a legitimate

[23] For more on this, see R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* discussed in Chapter Four.
[24] *Memoirs,* p.15.
[25] Ibid.

target for destruction, but his destruction also serves as a necessary precondition for the salvation and security of the elect.

This attitude, that sees spiritual reality concealed behind material appearances, is applied to events as well as to the representation of subjectivity. The fight at the tennis match is recast from George's 'slight strike' into Robert nobly suffering 'in the name of righteousness.'[26] Whilst such narrative re-interpretation and re-working is key to the novel's narrative ambiguity as well as the development of character, it serves to expose the epistemic and theological discourses which shape the coherence of Calvinist subjectivity. No matter the individual perception and awareness of reality, the real world merely conceals a deeper spiritual truth. Whilst the non-believer may ignore an event or dismiss it as insignificant, for the Calvinist, every moment, no matter how banal, can be deeply loaded with cosmic, albeit non-material, signification, and most crucially, events are interpreted to one's own advantage as long as the subject's certainty of election does not waiver.

Historically these discourses were spread through the extremely effective means of distribution that Calvinistic theology created with its focus on evangelism, preaching and exegesis. One of the most famous examples is Jonathan Edwards' sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of Angry God' (1741), that gives special emphasis to the religious non-material element of existence elided in the material present. Edwards argues in his sermon that, thanks to the ultimate depravity of man, the condemnation of the wicked is assured. Furthermore, Edwards argues that 'it is no Security to wicked Men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at Hand.'[27] Whatever the material circumstances of subjectivity may be, the

[26] *Memoirs*, p.18; p.103.
[27] Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of Angry God: A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741,* (1741). *Electronic Texts in American Studies. Paper 54,* p. 8.

reformed theological position is that it is irrelevant, and the wrath of God as determined through scripture is the reality. This reality is fundamentally non-corporeal and inaccessible. This point crops up repeatedly throughout Hogg, used by Gil-Martin and Wringhim as justification for their various crimes. For example, when discussing the 'worthy, pious divine Mr. Blanchard,'[28] the life of one man is contrasted with the non-material nature of Wringhim's theology, which demands a refusal of the ethics of the world for the theological absolutism of hyper-Calvinism:

> Was it not my duty to cut him off, and save the elect? 'He who would be a champion in the cause of Christ and His Church, my brave young friend,' added he, 'must begin early, and no man can calculate to what an illustrious eminence small beginnings may lead. If the man Blanchard is worthy, he is only changing his situation for a better one; and, if unworthy, it is better that one fall than that a thousand may perish. Let us be up and doing in our vocations.'[29]

The logical extension of the Calvinist refusal of the material world for the realities of the spiritual and immaterial ensures that planning the murder of a man has no ethical ramifications because of the spiritual realities at play.[30] Thus, abnegation of the accepted moral standards of the moment is by no means a failure, but rather an overcoming of a flawed moral idea for the implementation of the perfect system of theological truth. Importantly then, such an action does not call into question the status of the elect but rather reflects the novel's preoccupation with the idea of antinomianism. Freed from the constraints of both the morals of the world and the standards of accepted religious behaviour through the surety of election, subjective behaviour is uncoupled from any moral consequences.

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[28] *Memoirs,* p. 90.

[29] *Memoirs,* p. 92.

[30] The idea of the man compelled by God to commit murder is a common Gothic theme, with some real historical examples discussed further below. This further links Gothic writing with the reformed theological tradition.

The Gothic element of the novel (and of the Calvinist Gothic as a whole) is generated by this very tension and incongruity between the realist and materialist appearances of things, and the fear and anxiety of the spiritual conflict that exists behind or beyond the material. Hawthorne's short story, 'Young Goodman Browne' (1835), discussed in more detail below, places this dichotomy as pivotal to the progression of the narrative, but also makes the point that such a divide between the world and a concealed spiritual conflict is ultimately damaging to subjectivity. After Goodman Browne's experience in the forest, 'a meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man did he become'[31] as an experience of the (normally non-material) spiritual conflict renders him incapable of enjoying his material life. Hawthorne's novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) also draws much of the energy of the plot from a similar divide between the material circumstances of the novel's events contrasted with their spiritual reality. The worldly success of constructing the family home is immediately undercut when the familial patriarch Colonel Pynchon dies. His death is not necessarily argued as tragic, 'his duties all performed, —the highest prosperity attained, — his race and future generations fixed on a stable basis, what other upward step remained for this good man to take.'[32] Yet despite the material prosperity Pynchon's family inherits, the effects of Maule's curse dictate these material conditions and significantly diminish the family fortune.[33] As a result, the generational impact of the curse leads to the eventual fall of the family into the poverty which Hephzibah experiences at the novel's opening. The immaterial world is shown to be able not only to influence material circumstances across generations, but to fundamentally shape

[31] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown and Other Tales* ed. Brian Harding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 124.
[32] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2009), p.17.
[33] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* p.8.

individual subjectivity. Hogg's titular Calvinist exhibits his own signs of subjective dissonance throughout the novel, exemplified in the following famous passage:

> I generally conceived myself to be two people. When I lay in bed, I deemed there were two of us in it, when I sat up I always beheld another person and always in the same position from where I sat or stood, which was about three paces off towards my left side…over the singular delusion that I was two persons my reasoning faculties had no power.[34]

Whilst the modern-minded critical response to this may turn to a psychoanalytic reading, (some key texts on psychoanalysis and the Gothic are footnoted below),[35] this fractured subjectivity is a direct consequence of the theological discourses that shape the novel as a whole. Milbank draws this theology out, as follows:

> If in Calvin's system salvation is purely by the imputed righteousness of Christ and not by the individual's good actions or by his faith, how can someone know he is of the Elect? Such dubiety opens a space of self-conscious inner examination whereby the subject potentially splits, divides and doubles itself.[36]

Thus, to focus on psychoanalysis to the detriment of theology is simultaneously to ignore the historical and cultural conditions of the texts production as well as the role theology plays in structuring the Gothic conception of the subject.[37] It is a theme often repeated throughout Hogg's novel as the titular sinner increasingly becomes unable to function or maintain a coherent grasp upon his own subjectivity. The split between the real world and the spiritually violent and conflicted realm that is normally immaterial becomes increasingly hard to maintain. This suspicion is one that Hogg's novel expertly captures, as many of the characters

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[34] *Memoirs,* p. 106.

[35] For example, see Andrew Smith, *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), also Joel Faflak, *Romantic Psychoanalysis: The Burden of the Mystery* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009) as well as Michelle A. Massé, 'Psychoanalysis and the Gothic' in *A Companion to the Gothic,* ed. David Punter, (London: Blackwell, 2001).

[36] Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic' p. 93.

[37] For the historical context of Calvinist controversy in the Church of Scotland and the ways in which Hogg was almost certainly aware of them, see Louis Simpson, *James Hogg, A Critical Study* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), p. 170-199.

exhibit the belief that material identity is something ultimately deceptive. Gil-Martin is frequently referred to as being able to change his appearance, and even Robert, after spending only the briefest time within his company, is thoroughly 'transformed.'[38] As Bessy Gillies so accurately notes at the courthouse, when she is questioned on the nature of the stolen goods, the items presented may be very *like* the ones taken, but '*like* is an ill mark.'[39] The Calvinist theological discourses, which in many ways shape the novel, seek to neutralise the fundamental instability of material identity through the imposition of the immaterial, unchanging and revealed Word. However, this absolutism is further complicated by the various textual and structural strategies the work employs in order to dramatize the quest for the truth. The editor's narrative reveals the editor to be extremely hostile to Calvinism in favour of 'nature, utility and common sense,' as opposed to seventeen-hour discussions on points of doctrine.[40] Yet despite this, the search for any kind of narrative certainty reveals the editor of the manuscript, and by extension Enlightenment values more generally, to be utterly powerless to inform the reader of the ultimate truth of things: 'With regard to the work itself, I dare not venture a judgement for I do not understand it.'[41] In addition, the fight that breaks out after the altercation at the Black Bull is investigated to the fullest extent of the law, and yet, once more, true knowledge cannot be revealed: 'Finally it turned out that a few gentlemen, two-thirds of whom were strenuous Whigs themselves, had joined in mauling the whole Whig population of Edinburgh.'[42] The strategies of asserting and securing "truth" – whether this be the truth of identity, the legal truth or even narrative truth – are consistently

[38] *Memoirs,* p. 83.
[39] *Memoirs,* p. 49.
[40] *Memoirs,* p. 10.
[41] *Memoirs*, p. 176.
[42] *Memoirs,* p. 23.

undermined throughout the course of the novel.[43] Just as Calvinist discourse seeks to ascertain who belongs to 'the society of the just made perfect'[44] and by the end of the narrative fails to secure an answer, so too does the novel fail to resolve the ambiguities of the supernatural into solely material causes. As Milbank puts it, 'the reader is thus left in a position of hesitation, unable to discount or to believe…parodying Calvinist doubt.'[45] This doubt is only exacerbated through the course of the novel for, as the text progresses, the demarcation between the material and the spiritual becomes more porous, and both the systematic revelation of Calvinism and the rationalist theories of the Editor begin to break down. Accused of horrendous crimes and increasingly unable to maintain a coherent grip upon the actualities of his own life, Robert becomes a fugitive, moved from place to place and increasingly beset by the strange and supernatural. The supernatural manifestations reach a head upon his reaching the village of Ancrum, where he is

> momentarily surrounded by a number of hideous fiends, who gnashed on me with their teeth, and clenched their crimson paws in my face… my dreaded and devoted friend, who pushed me on and, with his gilded rapier waving and brandishing around me, defended me against all their united attack.[46]

Such an episode is easily enough read as a hallucination, or a psychosomatic manifestation of guilt for his various hideous crimes, but this misses the situation's theological language and semiotics. The language describing 'hideous fiends with crimson paws' echoes the apocalyptic and annihilationist language of Edwards' sermon:

> The Wrath of God burns against them, their Damnation don't slumber, the Pit is prepared, the Fire is made ready, the Furnace is now hot, ready to receive them, the Flames do now rage and glow. The glittering Sword is whet, and held over them, and the Pit hath opened her Mouth under them. The Devil stands ready to fall upon them

[43] As Jan-Melissa Schraam explores in *Testimony and Advocacy in Victorian Law, Literature and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), the undermining of the truth of testimony and narrative was a long-standing preoccupation and anxiety throughout nineteenth-century literature.
[44] *Memoirs,* p. 79.
[45] Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic…' p. 94.
[46] *Memoirs,* p. 161.

> and seize them as his own, at what Moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their Souls in his Possession, and under his Dominion.[47]

As argued in the opening section, the Calvinist predisposition towards the perception of the world as concealing a conflict-riven spiritual reality is one that has a profoundly damaging impact upon subjectivity. Guilt often emerges in strange and unaccountable ways as a direct result of the theological positions that Calvinistic religion espouses. Neither is the effect upon subjectivity limited to the subjectivity contained within narrative. The story of Major Thomas Weir serves as an instructive example. After a life 'characterised externally by all the graces of devotion,' the Major confesses to crimes and sins so removed from the material realities of his life that 'the provost, Sir Andrew Ramsay refused for some time to take him into custody.'[48] Weir's response to the possibility of repentance was to cry 'Torment me no more — I am tormented enough already.'[49] Weir was eventually sentenced to death by strangulation and burning, April 9th, 1670. His final words, instead of the to-be-expected call for divine mercy, were, 'Let me alone — I will not, I have lived as a beast and must die as a beast.'[50]

In a similar real-world example, Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* draws influence from another religiously inspired criminal case. In late July 1796, James Yates, 'bidden by a "spirit" to destroy all his idols,' murdered his two sons, baby daughter and beat his wife to death with a stake from the garden fence.[51] When caught by the authorities, as with Weir, he refused any opportunity to repent instead exclaiming that 'my father, thou knowest that it

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[47] Edwards, p. 7.
[48] Robert Chambers, *Traditions of Edinburgh: A New Edition* (Edinburgh: W&R Chambers, 1847), p. 33.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid p. 34
[51] Peter Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution and the Birth of American Gothic* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 113.

was in obedience to thy commands and for thy glory, that I have done this deed.'[52] As with Weir, the religiously inspired belief in an immaterial spiritual reality manifests itself in the justification of horrific crime. As with Weir, Yates too refuses the possibility of repentance and forgiveness as both his belief in the necessity of obedience to the spiritual world, and the ability to ignore the ethics and moral standards of the present and material world manifestly prove. Importantly, these Calvinist subjects believe that they are more pious in accepting their damnation rather than seeking any kind of repentance. By accepting the deterministic nature of Calvinist faith, obedience to the glory of God and his will is framed as an ultimate virtue, and, in keeping with typically Gothic concerns, predestination proves to be inescapable even to the point of death. What this suggests is that the Gothic double is a profoundly Calvinist concern – or, in other words, it is through the figure of the double that the Gothic gives form to the Calvinist notion of the divided self. As Chapter Four outlines, the Calvinist idea of the divided self is hugely influential on Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde,* which, as Milbank points out, is 'rarely connected to its Calvinist origins.'[53] Milbank correctly identifies the interest in duality as a 'protest against a murderous dualism,'[54] – a dualism, that as the stories of Weir and Yates proves, is able to exert genuinely dangerous consequences.

Again, whilst it is perhaps enough to approach this narrative as an apocryphal story or simply the testimony of a disturbed mind, the parallels between the story of Weir, the story of Yates and the subjectivity of Hogg's sinner, all of which were formed and shaped by the systematic theologies of the day drawn from the *Institutes* of Calvin, cannot be easily ignored. Like Weir, Robert cannot endure the material realities of the world, too burdened by the

[52] Ibid.
[53] Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic...' p. 98.
[54] Ibid p. 101.

spiritual conflict and sins that exist beyond the material realm. Like Weir, Robert ends 'dying like a beast.' Hogg's sinner believes that the 'hour of repentance is past and now my fate is inevitable,'[55] and, 'ordered to the byre, or cowhouse'[56] he dies in a manner far removed from his class status and far away from the ideal of a sinner made righteous before God. The Calvinist discourse that shapes his subjectivity, that in many ways, constitutes his identity as *human,* reduces him to the level of a beast. Despite the best efforts of Calvinist discourses to elevate humanity, the instability of Calvinist systematic revelation achieves exactly the opposite. In other words, revelation can never be entirely secured, and the forced division that Calvinist theological discourse enacts between the word and the world provides much of the narrative power of the Calvinist Gothic. At the same time, subjectivity is placed under an enormous tension, as the material world is presented as essentially false and concealing a deeper, non-material spiritual reality. Thus, despite the disavowal of interpretation, the world must constantly *be interpreted* in order to reveal the spiritual that it conceals. What is important to note is that it is not the issue of interpretation per se that causes the issue – rather, tension emerges from the idea that interpretation must in some way be concealed in order for the systemic totality of Calvinist discourse to be maintained. Such tensions reveal themselves to be profoundly stressful, as the individual subject begins to fracture under the pressures of a world and self that is deeply unstable, with a revealed Word or *logos* that is believed to be unchangeable. Confronted by the supernatural that runs counter to the fixed idea of what it *should be*, Calvinist subjectivity struggles to maintain any coherence. In the case of Hawthorne's Goodman Brown, Hogg's Robert or even the real-life example of Major

[55] *Memoirs,* p. 165.
[56] Ibid p. 164.

Thomas Weir, the attempt to fully, finally and unimpeachably secure the meaning of the revealed word of scripture can often lead to violent disaster.

Revelation and Nature

In order to grasp the theological dynamics of the conflict between the systematic and imaginative revelations of the divine, it is necessary to examine in detail moments of supernatural encounter within the Calvinist Gothic legacy that occur within nature. Tellingly, for a theological system so concerned with the status of the Word or *logos* much of the Calvinist Gothic texts deal with supernatural or divine encounters not in urban centres of learning, teaching or literary culture, but in specifically rural or natural settings. The following section will focus on these moments of natural revelation and explore how they continue to problematize the systematic theology of Calvinist discourse. Through nature and natural theology, the Calvinist preoccupation with language can be destabilised as the Gothic serves to demonstrate the insufficiency and limitations of systematic theologies for capturing revelation of the supernatural.[57] Through engaging with the idea of natural theology, or rather, the potential of the natural world to be theologically revealing, the Gothic performs an important and vital critique of Calvinist theology. By deprioritising the notion of a theological system of signs, and offering an imaginative and theologically illuminating encounter within nature, the Gothic text stages the tensions and theological anxieties between the systems of orthodox systematics and the possibility of natural theology. What is at stake in this staging is not a simple binary of sign versus scene (to use Tanner's useful

[57] As Milbank points out, under Calvinism 'not even God's creation can bring us to love and know him, for we have lost the vision by which to read it.' (Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic' p. 94). The divide between systematics and natural theology is solidified by the time of the Barth/Brunner debates; it is clear from Calvin's own work (see particularly Chapter five of Book One of the Institutes) that whilst 'none who have the use of their eyes can be ignorant of the divine skill' manifest in nature there is no guarantee that this will lead man into the path of righteousness. See Calvin, *Institutes,* pp. 50-63.

phrase,)[58] but rather the expression of the theological and the means by which such theological experience is interpreted and codified.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Calvinist legacy in the American Gothic offers the most opportunity for close analysis here, particularly the extremely formative work of Nathaniel Hawthorne. With the history of the nation as settled by (often violent and imperialist) religious communities, the conflict between systems of belief and experiences of nature can be starkly drawn.[59] The Puritan system of belief, influenced as it is by Calvinist discourse, maintains the unchangeable, immutable revelation of God in the scripture.[60] As Ruland and Bradbury point out, the writing that developed in the early days of American colonialism, (particularly in New England) was driven by an understanding of events as fitting in with the pre-existing narrative of scripture.[61] The recorded story of the Calvinist settlements 'is the stuff of millenarian epic, but it is epic without known outcome. Sign and meaning are always uncertain, and satanic deception is always a possibility.'[62] The primary concern that drives this 'sadistic semiology'[63] is once more the anxieties between the systematic belief and the material world. As such, material reality has to be reshaped to match the strict understanding of what it should be. Naturally, America presents something of an opportunity for the

[58] Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men,* pp. 1-24.

[59] For the history of the early American settlers, see Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settlement of North America to 1800* (London: Penguin, 2003).

[60] Theologically speaking, whilst fine grained distinctions may be drawn between Calvinist and Puritan belief and practises, such a distinction is a matter of theological complexity too great to be explicated here. Given the large amount of influence exerted by reformed theology on Puritan religion and practice, (for example the Millenary Petition of 1603 which pushed for the Calvinist reformation of the Anglican church). I will refer throughout to American Calvinists or American Calvinism for the sake of argumentative clarity.

[61] Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 4-32.

[62] Ruland & Bradbury, *From Puritanism,* p.11

[63] Tony Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Man* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 11. Tanner's point is perfectly encapsulated in Cotton Mather's 'The Wonders of the Invisible World. Observations as Well Historical as Theological, upon the Nature, the Number, and the Operations of the Devils' (1693), *Electronic Texts in American Studies*. Paper 19. (http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/19. First accessed 22/08/16).

discourse of Calvinist religion, as a blank space on which can be written a new orthodoxy. This blank space is a constructed fiction – one which either erases indigenous peoples and traditions or instead condemns them as demonic. Such a desire to remake material reality in the image of the revelation of God lends itself quite easily to strict enforcement – theological, socially and even physically. As Tanner rather understatedly notes in an insightful commentary on a scene within a Hawthorne short story, 'bodies are variously deformed to register their inner faults or contraventions of Puritan law.'[64] The reason for such deforming and torturing of bodies is once more an attempt to match the material, all too unreliable and changeable world with the revelation of the divine — a desire which fundamentally links both American Puritan beliefs and the Calvinist legacy of Hogg.

This combination of understanding the new world of America within the terms of the millenarian Christianity and a belief in the fixed nature of the theological sign renders the natural world as 'hopelessly over-interpretable.'[65] Fortunately, for those who are saved, the elect, 'the scene of the world was composed entirely of signs and the signs were fixed and interpretable — stabilized, as it were, by God.'[66] However, the Gothic text seizes upon this semiotic anxiety and presents the natural as theologically revealing, but not necessarily pointing to the divine. The opening of *Wieland* explores this tension; the family patriarch, a devoutly religious figure, constructs a temple in the forests, far away from his home to allow for a more secluded and authentic religious experience. Crucially, the temple is 'without seat, table or ornament of any kind,'[67] – a blank space, wherein man can directly and intimately experience the revelation of God. However, anticipating some great disaster, the elder

[64]Ibid.
[65] Tanner, *Scenes of Nature,* p. 19.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland,* p.13.

Wieland retreats to his temple and there, spontaneously combusts.[68] Removed from an organized religious community, the episode reveals both the power and randomness of nature and the insufficiency of a monolithic and systematic belief structure when confronted with the instability and ambiguity of nature.[69] Put simply, the much-needed semiotic stability requires a community which not only allows for potential punishment, but crucially also shares in a collective, stabilising interpretative discourse in contrast to the isolationist religious experiences within Nature, where such instability comes to the fore. Such a point seems extremely pressing for Brockden Brown. As a Quaker, he is part of a religious group that eschews ecclesial hierarchy (ostensibly at the very least), coupled with the belief in the Inner Light inside the individual believer. This is shown in the introduction to *Weiland* to produce a religious experience which is extremely powerful and (in this case) literally all consuming.

One of the clearest examples of the dangerous potential of the theological encounter within nature is depicted in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, 'Young Goodman Brown'. Brown leaves his home and his wife, Faith, and, taking a 'dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest,' walks into nature.[70] Away from the civility of home and hearth, nature is presented as both potentially violent and theologically risky: 'There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree…what if the Devil himself should be at my very elbow.'[71] There Goodman Brown indeed meets a mysterious figure — the Devil himself, in a textual allusion

[68] *Wieland,* pp. 16-18.
[69] This is explored in more detail in Marshall N. Surratt, "The Awe-Creating Presence of The Deity": some religious sources for Charles Brockden Brown's 'Wieland.' *Papers on Language & Literature*. 33.3 (Summer 1997), p. 310.
[70] Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown,* p.112.
[71] Ibid.

to Christ's own temptation in the wilderness.[72] Brown becomes reluctant to continue the journey, protesting that 'I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of.'[73] Yet, in the middle of nature, isolated from the signs, practises and structures of systematic belief, the issue is immediately complicated by the Devil's response:

> I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker women so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war…[74]

Despite his protestations, Goodman Brown is not able to secure familial immunity from the complexity and ambiguity of theological practise. Despite the Puritanical obsession with the fixed and immutable truth, the material realities of the world have provoked great violence from those in his own family who have sought to enforce a singular vision of the theological upon the material world. Brown's protestation that 'we are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness' is a response of Puritan orthodoxy, yet as his interlocutor retorts, this systematic theological orthodoxy offers little by way of security. 'Wickedness or not…I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me.'[75] The consistent impression offered through Hawthorne's short tale is the deep and troubling interconnectedness of the theologically beneficent with the theologically feared — a connection that can only be truly acknowledged in the natural world. One of the common readings of the story is that of a retelling of the Faust narrative, and whilst there are certainly thematic and linguistic

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[72] See Matthew 4: 1-11.

[73] Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown,* p. 113.

[74] Hawthorne, p. 113.

[75] Ibid p.113-4. This serves as a direct allusion to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 'I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' 1 Cor 10: 20-23, p.169.

similarities, the ambiguity of revelation is never consistently resolved, and thus the deal with the devil lacks the same sense of theological fall as in *Faust*.[76] Ruland and Bradbury are quite correct to note that whilst 'Hawthorne was seen by most of his contemporaries as a moral allegorist…his world only seems to offer readable meanings…Hawthorne has a moral theme, but it is in tension with itself, disputes with itself.'[77] Or, as Lawrence wrote in his classic study of American literature, in the case of Hawthorne, 'we are divided in ourselves, against ourselves.'[78] Such a dispute is eminently clear in "Young Goodman Brown" — determined to 'stand firm against the Devil,' Goodman Brown hears the sounds of Faith, 'uttering lamentations…and entreating for some favour.'[79] In response, Goodman Brown utters a deeply theologically-laden cry — 'My Faith is gone! There is no good on Earth and sin is but a name. Come, Devil; for to thee this world is given.'[80] This cry is a startling abnegation of the Calvinist idea of the New World functioning as a New Eden, wherein the natural world signals upward and beyond itself towards God. Eventually Brown finds his way into the Satanic coven, and there experiences a revelation of a new kind of theological community that the systematic understanding of belief cannot account for. He sees the great and the good, 'all whom ye have reverenced from youth,'[81] formed into a new kind of religious community. 'The Good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed from the saints.'[82] This Satanic coven functions as an ambiguous reflection of a theological point of Scripture – 'there

[76] For the similarities and links between Hawthorne's short story and the Faust narrative see, Hubert Zapf, 'The rewriting of the Faust myth in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"' *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*. 38.1 (Spring 2012): p.19.

[77]Ruland and Bradbury, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism,* p. 151. For Hawthorne as a writer of allegories, see T.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 242-315.

[78] D.H Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London: Penguin Classics, 1971), p. 70.

[79] Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown,* p. 118.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown,* p. 121-2.

[82] Ibid p.120.

is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'[83] In a sense, the coven meeting in the woods accelerates the Puritan systematic theology to its breaking point. As previously mentioned, the Puritan obsession with the justice of the elect led to a morbid fascination with rooting out sins; it is this power to do so that is offered to Goodman Brown and Faith.[84]

> This night it shall be granted to you to know their secret deeds; how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows weeds have given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers wealth; and how fair damsels — blush not sweet ones — have dug little graves in the garden and bidden me, the sole guest to the infant's funeral…It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin.[85]

What is offered here, with its accompanying sacramental baptism of liquid flame or possibly blood, is the Calvinist preoccupation with sin and the righteousness of the elect taken to its theological extreme. In the new world of America, the absolute revelation of the divine in nature becomes terrifying. For Goodman Brown, what is revealed is a theological reality that is profoundly unstable, able to co-opt the very source of systematic theological certainty: Scripture itself. In addition, the theological encounter that occurs in nature is one that not only draws into question the surety of the revelation of Scripture, but also forms an echo of the practises enacted in Calvinist religion that are designed to secure that revelation. The Puritan practises of close communal living, preaching and rigid application of Scripture to questions of morality are shown to be prone to corruption, instability and uncertainty — accelerated to the point of fracture by the theological power experienced in nature. It is this

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[83] See Galatian 3:28.

[84] This obsession appears at multiple points throughout Hawthorne's work; see also his short story 'The Minister's Black Veil' in *Young Goodman Brown*, p.144.

[85] Hawthorne, p. 122.

that Goodman Brown is unable to reconcile and so, perhaps unsurprisingly, he becomes a 'distrustful, if not a desperate, man from the night of that fearful dream'.[86]

However, despite the theological tensions and often challenging ambiguity found in nature, the Gothic Calvinist text is not entirely antithetical to the religious possibilities of natural theology – wherein characters experience a revelation of the divine through a natural setting. Here's Hogg's novel proves useful in illustrating the point — despite the Calvinist extremism of its protagonist, the text offers the potential for a Gothic natural theology. By "natural theology," what is referred to is not the systematic revelation of the divine through Scripture that Calvin espoused, but rather the argument that theological revelation can be derived from sources other than Scripture (e.g. nature). Alison Milbank points out that this kind of theological idea is common to the more Radcliffean tradition of Gothic writing, 'drawn to scenes of Romantic beauty experienced properly by characters of moral worth.'[87] As Emil Brunner argues, in what is widely regarded as the classic text on the issue, 'the creation of the world is at the same time a revelation, a self-communication of God.'[88] Brunner's rather narrow natural theology drew a furious polemical response from his long-time friend Karl Barth who argued passionately against natural theology in all of its forms. Tellingly, Barth was long seen as winning the debate, determining the direction of much twentieth century

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[86] Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown,* p.124.

[87] Alison Milbank, 'Gothic Theology' in *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion,* ed. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 372. The connection, theologically speaking, is to the theistic thought of writers such as Shaftsbury who was hugely critical of religion derived from Scriptural revelation alone, as Calvin had argued for:

> Tis indeed no small Absurdity, to assert a Work or Treatise, written in human Language, to be above human Criticism, or Censure. For if the Art of Writing be from the grammatical Rules of human Invention and Determination; if even these Rules are form'd on casual Practice and various Use: there can be no Scripture but what must of necessity be subject to the Reader's narrow Scrutiny and strict Judgment.

See Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, Volume 3*, (Indiana: Liberty Fund Press, 2001) p. 140.

[88] Emil Brunner, *Natural Theology: Comprising Nature and Grace by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply No! by Dr. Karl Barth*, (London: Wipf & Stock, 2003.) p.25.

theology towards systematic theology at the expense of natural theology and imaginative apologetics.[89] The Gothic presents moments wherein characters experience a revelation of the divine in nature, and from these presentations it is possible to move towards a broader understanding of the model of revelation that the Gothic Calvinist text advances. Certain passages from the texts in question bear closer examination – in pursuit of his brother and 'desperate for an opportunity of executing divine justice on a guilty sinner,'[90] Robert pauses, experiencing a rare moment of doubt. 'I tried to ascertain, to my own satisfaction, whether or not I really had been commissioned of God to perpetrate these crimes in his behalf.'[91] Following this moment of doubt is a clear moment of theological revelation as,

> Involved in a veil of white misty vapour, and, looking up to heaven, I [Robert] was just about to ask direction, when I heard as it were a still small voice close by me which uttered some words of derision and chiding.[92]

The still small voice is a direct reference to a moment of revelation within Scripture. The prophet Elijah is told to stand upon the mountain and is assailed by wind, earthquake and fire, but 'the Lord is not in the wind' or any of these physical manifestations. Finally, there is sound like 'sheer silence' and 'then came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"'[93] Crucially, Wringhim's theological revelation comes from a moment not of dogmatic certainty, but rather of doubt, directly echoing a Scriptural story of a devout prophetic figure beset by spiritual insecurities.

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[89] For a good overview on the debate and the ways in which the thought of Brunner has undergone re-evaluation in recent years, see Alister McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).
[90] Hogg, *Memoirs,* p.108.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] See I Kings 19: 11-13

This 'still small voice' is followed by another theological revelation as Robert meets a figure 'robed in white' who possesses supernatural insight into his spiritual condition:[94] 'Preposterous wretch! How dare you lift your eyes to Heaven with such purposes in your heart? Escape homewards, and save your soul, or farewell forever!'[95] Unlike the theological revelation of his sure election to salvation, however, these undeniably supernatural experiences are not forcibly imposed upon him, but are rather mediated through (in this case) what appears to be a human figure. He goes on to justify his behaviour with a theologically loaded rhetorical question; 'How is this interested and mysterious foreigner a proper judge of the actions of a free Christian?'[96] Carrying on with his journey, he encounters Gil-Martin who, upon hearing what the mysterious woman has said, interprets the words in such a way as to allow the attempted murder to continue. From this episode, a few formative points on the nature of natural theology as a source of revelation of the divine begin to emerge. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, Hogg's natural revelation is necessarily *interpretable*. As opposed to the view on revelation drawn from the Calvinist discourse, here the experience can, and indeed *must* be interpreted — even if the ultimate interpretation is a disingenuous attempt to justify murder. Secondarily, and crucially, natural revelation comes at the moment of subjective spiritual doubt. Whereas 'Young Goodman Brown' explores the extension of the Calvinist Gothic to its ultimately horrifying conclusion, this moment from Hogg suggests that in the still small voice and the revelation within nature, there is space (however quickly extinguished) for the notion of predestination to be questioned.

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[94] Hogg, *Memoirs,* p. 109.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

This moment of indecision, ('I be thought the rashness of my undertaking'[97]) proposes a theological revelation of the divine which is, at core, non-deterministic and allows for the possibility of different action. This can be profitably contrasted with an earlier episode in the novel, wherein Robert confesses that 'my faith began to give way a little and I doubted most presumptuously of the least tangible of all Christian tenets, namely *the infallibility of the elect.'*[98] The infallible knowledge of election is a doctrine that is placed beyond the possibility of questioning, and to even be concerned about one's own theological status is a 'disingenuous sin.' Yet, in contrast, the emergence of doubt, the possibility of failure and, most strikingly, the fear of an absent salvation mark the moments of theological revelation within nature. The close of the sinner's narrative is rich with language which echoes the prophetic laments of the Old Testament — 'Lord thou knowest all that I have done for Thy cause on earth! Why then art Thou laying Thy hand so sore upon me? Why has thou set me as a butt of Thy malice?'[99] Once again, the rigidity of systematic Calvinist belief is unable to allow for ambiguity, doubt and the possibility of failure. In epistemological terms, where the systematic revelation imposes a theology of certainty, the destabilising of the Calvinist legacy within the Gothic text opens the possibility for a theology of doubt. The theological experience of the divine in nature resists the systematic imposition of unchanging and unchangeable words imputed by an external hierarchical figure. Natural revelation is incommensurable and the experience within nature continually eludes the semiotic certainties that dominate Calvinist theological thought.[100] It seems then that Gothic

[97] Hogg, *Memoirs*, p. 108.
[98] Hogg, *Memoirs,* p.101.
[99] Hogg, *Memoirs,* p. 164-5. For the Scriptural correlates, see Habakkuk 1, and the entire book of Job.
[100]The awareness of this is behind much of the American transcendentalists and their move away from this kind of theological Calvinism towards new models of community and politics. For more on this, see Lawrence Buell, ed. *The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writings,* (New York: Modern Library, 2006).

depictions of theological revelation in nature draw out the tension between explanation and mystery, 'between the conviction that something has been communicated by the divine (revelation) and the feeling that none the less, God is infinitely beyond all our imaginings.'[101]

Towards A Gothic Imaginative Theology

This tension between the systematic and natural theologies present within the Gothic Calvinist legacy are not necessarily anti-theological. Notably, the tradition of doubt, of questioning and ambiguity that eventually defeats Young Goodman Brown and drives the justified sinner to the grave is drawn from the same *sola scriptura* that Calvinist revelation is built upon. Rather than seeing the moments of revelation in nature as a direct challenge to the Calvinist tradition, the Gothic draws from the same sources and traditions that the Calvinist discourse uses, and at the same time, both subverts and opens this tradition to new readings. This final section will thus seek to draw together the shortfalls of theological revelation that the Gothic exposes whilst at the same time offering a revised model of revelation that significantly contributes to this ongoing theological tradition. The Calvinist understanding of revelation as coming solely through the Word, a-historical and final in its meaning, 'revealed a strategy all too concerned with human control of the divine.'[102]

Revelation for the Calvinist legacy is one dominated by the desire to control, and such control is exerted through a vision of language that is entirely fixed on a definitional level. Calvin's comment on the opening of John's gospel serves as an excellent case in point here.

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[101] Brown, *God in Mystery and Words,* p. 22.

[102] David Brown, *God in Mystery and Words,* p.33. In reference to this point it is important to note that it is his father that welcomes Robert into 'the society of the just made perfect.' (Hogg, p. 79) rather than anything else which assures Robert of his own election.

> Just as men's speech is called the expression of their thoughts, so it is not inappropriate to say that God expresses himself to us by his speech or Word…the other meanings of the word are not so appropriate. The Greek certainly means ''definition'' or ''reason'' or ''calculation''; but I do not wish to enter into philosophical discussion beyond the limits of my faith.[103]

Calvin's fundamentally a-historical and rather literalist view on language prevents the full metaphoric richness of the work from emerging, and thus leaves his commentary lacking theological depth.[104] However, the alternative, namely to see divine revelation only in nature also comes with significant issues, which have been well explored in the intellectual history of the Christian faith, having formed perhaps the most notable theological debate of the twentieth century in the reformed tradition.[105] What the Gothic text allows for is not simply a continuation of the divide between systematic or natural revelation and theology, but rather the creation of an imaginative revelation which opens space for the reconsideration of theology as not monstrous system, but rather as something experiential. Thus, the Gothic novel is intimately bound up in the process of belief. To quote Graham Ward,

> Novelists do not create ex nihilo. These worlds are exercises of imaginative transformation. That is, taking what is perceived and configuring a new presentation of what is meaningful. And, if they are to be successful exercises of imaginative transformation, they have to be believable – they have to persuade, even seduce, the receptive reader. The art of good novel writing is to arouse belief by awakening the imagination of whoever reads it.[106]

Rather than perceive imagination as antithetical to systematic statements and practises about theology, the Calvinist Gothic tradition positions them as complementary. Both Hogg and

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[103] John Calvin, *Commentary on John,* ed. A. McGrath and J. I. Packer (Illinois: Crossway, 1994), p. 13.

[104] For a brief, but extremely illuminating, exposition of Calvin's literalism and a small taste of the vitality and metaphoric depth of John 1, see Brown, *God in Mystery and Words,* particularly pp. 22-43.

[105] See Emil Brunner, *Natural Theology: Comprising Nature and Grace by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply No! by Dr. Karl Barth* (London: Wipf & Stock, 2003). For background and context to this debate, see Trevor Hart, 'A Capacity for Ambiguity? The Barth/Brunner debate revisited' in *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993) p. 289-305. Also see Stephen Andrews, 'The Ambiguity of Capacity, A Rejoinder To Trevor Hart,' *Tyndale Bulletin* 45.1 (1994) p. 169-179.

[106] Graham Ward 'Belief and Imagination' in *Theology and Literature After Postmodernism,* ed. Zoe Lehman, Alison Milbank and Peter J. Imfeld, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), pp. 74-95, p. 82.

Hawthorne argue for a literary experience that can 'open onto the theological.'[107] The proliferation of theological language, concerns and allusions throughout the texts under consideration leaves these writers in the service of 'expressing a reality, which in some way transcends what can be empirically verified, by sense and rationality.'[108] Both the Gothic text and the theological tradition from which it draws are attempts to use language in the reaching out towards mystery. However, where the theological discourses of Calvin seek epistemic certainty, the medium of this reaching, language itself, betrays the theological endeavour. Systematic theology seeks to use language to provide a secure foundation of theological knowledge and directly map the eternal Word of the revealed God onto the lives of the faithful. However, as David Brown notes, 'no detailed precision in such mapping is anymore possible.'[109] Thus the Gothic exploits the textuality of the language of systematic theology, which despite the systematic attempt at foreclosure, consistently points outward toward multiplicity of meaning. It is this desire for epistemic and religious certainty and the frustration of this desire that allows the texts discussed to generate much of their narrative power. Imaginative revelation of the divine presented in these texts destabilizes the systematic through the use of ambiguity, but at the same time affirms the actuality of theological experience —

> Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch meeting? Be it so if you will; but alas! It was a dream of evil omen for Young Goodman Brown.[110]

The epistemic reality of what Goodman Brown experiences is rendered finally as ambiguous, yet at the same time, the real impact that such a revelation can exert is affirmed, with the

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Paul Fiddes, *Freedom and Limit,* p. 35-6.
[109] Brown, *God in Mystery and Words,* p.44.
[110] Hawthorne, p.123.

final detail that, true or not, what Brown experiences is an 'evil omen.' To express it another way, the event can be 'true' in the sense of conveying a significant meaning even if it is not something which actually took place. The idea of the vision in the forest can never be entirely dismissed as "just a dream," as its effects are well noted. The Editor in Hogg's manuscript might open the final section of the text asking, 'what can this work be…I cannot tell,'[111] yet even in this final section the theological and supernatural cannot entirely be explained away. Hogg once again expertly destabilizes any kind of epistemic certainty, firstly through the letter to *Blackwood's* and finally the discovery of the body. In short, the imaginative revelation proposed by the Gothic Calvinist legacy is one that exists on 'the edge of the incredulous, seeking out new terrain where what is visible and reasonable and familiar meets what is invisible, miraculous and *Unheimlich.*[112] Thus, the Gothic text functions as a powerful and necessary corrective to the oversimplification of Calvinist theological discourse while at the same time refusing to foreclose the theological entirely. An exceedingly strict Calvinist theology is shown to be potentially dangerous, prone to either ignore the material realities of the world or violently force the world to conform to an immaterial spiritual reality. At the same moment, the Gothic text resists the closure of systematics for the ambiguities of theological revelation in nature. Theological faith is depicted as strange, unstable and potentially far from benign but nevertheless one that is experientially and imaginatively real. The Gothic Calvinist legacy proposes a model of revelation that is inescapably bound up within 'the tense possibility of welcoming what is strange and highly dangerous: an act of faith.'[113] However, the theological discourses which manifest themselves throughout the Gothic

[111] Hogg, *Memoirs and Confessions,* p.167.
[112] Graham Ward, *Belief and Imagination*, p. 90.
[113] Ibid.

nineteenth century novel are not necessarily solely concerned with the abstractions of theological discourse and dogma. Theological belief and practice are concerned with the immaterial as has been discussed, but theology is also a powerful and effective tool for social regulation. Theology, as well as being a discourse of political emancipation can also be used as a means of enforcing expected social norms and hegemonies. It is this social aspect of theology which the next chapter will consider.

Chapter Three: Gothic Writing and Political Theology — *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* as Theological Texts

The connection between the Brontës' writing and religion is well established – hardly surprising given the Brontë siblings' familial biography and the close involvement and awareness of the theological issues of the day that their work reflects.[1] For the Brontës, Influenced by theologians and writers such as Coleridge and his *Aids to Reflection* (1825), as well as the Evangelical focus on personal piety and practical discipleship, Christian belief was understood as not simply a set of creeds, but a mode of life, influencing all aspects of living.[2] However, as with all of the fictions under consideration throughout this thesis, the relationship to theology is not simply didactic, moralistic or evangelistic, but far more ambivalent and frequently antagonistic towards certain forms of Christian orthodoxy and various manifestations of institutional forms of religion.[3] As Miriam Elizabeth Burstein notes, 'contemporaries found the religious tendencies of their works ranging from glum to heterodox.'[4] One of the early reviews of *Jane Eyre,* for example, condemned it as 'pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition.'[5] Yet such lack of orthodoxy should by no means exclude these novels from being considered as theologically motivated works for '"religion" is a capacious category that includes more than expressions of doctrinal orthodoxy.'[6] Furthermore, as Gilbert and Gubar point out, what attracted the charge of anti-Christian

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[1] For an in-depth exploration of this see Marianne Thormählen, *The Brontës And Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[2] Thormählen, p. 144.
[3] Not for nothing does Tom Winnifrith categorise the influence of religion on the Brontës as 'both obvious and obscure.' See Tom Winnifrith, *The Brontës and their Background: Romance and Reality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), p. 28.
[4] Miriam Elizabeth Burstein, "The Religion(s) of the Brontës" in *A Companion to the Brontës* ed. Diane Long Hoeveler, Deborah Denenholz Morse, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016) p. 433.
[5] Elizabeth Rigby, 'Vanity Fair – and Jane Eyre' *Quarterly Review. 84* (December 1848) p. 153-185. (http://www.quarterly-review.org/classic-qr-the-original-1848-review-of-jane-eyre/ first accessed 24/04/2017)
[6] Burstein, p. 434.

writing was not the apparent coarseness and sexuality of the texts but rather the 'refusal to accept the forms, customs and standards of society.'[7] What emerges from this conflation of social norms with Christianity is not a conflict between Christian belief or anti-Christian sentiment, but rather religious expression that is far enough outside of the orthodox standards of the day to be considered oppositional to a certain conception of the theological status quo. Too frequently, as Simon Marsden argues, the 'complexities and ambiguities of religious discourse have not always been acknowledged,' [8] with criticism frequently depending upon a fixed notion of Christian belief that the Brontës either resist and oppose or move beyond entirely. Therefore, rather than reproduce the simplistic binary of sceptical vs. faithful, this chapter seeks to follow the work of Micael M. Clarke — that of seeking 'a hermeneutics that considers religion in relationship to secular epistemologies.'[9] This is in line with the overall aim of the thesis, which seeks to consider the ambivalently secular Gothic in hospitable dialogue with the hermenutics of imaginative apologetics.

Therefore, this chapter will not seek to place the Brontës within a particular theological or dogmatic position (as Thormahalen explains, such an exercise, whilst perhaps valuable, would be deeply contested for a variety of reasons)[10], but rather will examine how, through the use of Gothic technique, language, and theme, theological ideas may be examined and critiqued. Particularly pertinent to this chapter will be the two Gothic novels, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) in which Emily and Charlotte present two differing comments on theology. Thus, rather than attempt to label the Brontës as Christian or not, this

[7] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination,* 2nd edition, (London: Yale University Press, 2000) p. 338.
[8] Simon Marsden*, Emily Brontë and the Religious Imagination*, (London, Bloomsbury, 2014) p. 19-22.
[9] Micael M. Clarke, "Emily Brontë's "No Coward Soul" and the Need for a Religious Literary Criticism," *Victorians' Institute Journal* 37, 2009, p. 195-224.
[10] Thormählen, p. 13-24.

chapter will seek to examine the ways in which the Gothic novel functions as both a type of theological criticism and theological model, allowing for both Emily and Charlotte to explore, however ambivalently, a variety of theological concerns. *Jane Eyre* will be read as providing a kind of social theology concerned with a personal theological response to a specific social and political configuration of society. In *Wuthering Heights,* Emily Brontë offers a radical vision of openness and hospitality towards the Other at the very limits of language as well as an ambiguous theological vision that embraces both religious and imaginative experience. *Wuthering Heights,* within the generic setting of the Gothic country house, outlines a highly original and compelling imaginative theology that emphasises the contingency and fragility of the separation between the spiritual and material, as well as the ways in which religion and theology not only reinforce one another, but can often emerge as in tension with one another. In the case of *Jane Eyre,* which uses the same kind of generic setting, theology is anchored in the material relationships between people, articulating, in a sense, a type of political theology that encompasses both social and theological ideas on the nature of relationships between individuals.

Wuthering Heights, **Religious Tensions, Theology and Grace**

Wuthering Heights as a novel has often attracted attention from critics, who saw in it a complex work of art beset by various structural and thematic inconsistencies and problems. Q.D. Leavis, in her influential 'A Fresh Approach to Wuthering Heights'[11], divides the text in two, between a sociological narrative, on the one hand, broadly realist in tone and, on the other, a far more violent section revolving around the relationships of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar. This section argues that, theologically speaking, the divide that Leavis notes is

[11] See F.R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis, *Lectures in America, (*London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), pp. 85-138.

instructive, highlighting as it does not only a divide within the text's structure, but rather more significantly a fundamental divide within theological belief and religious practise. In her piece, Leavis notes that,

> If we were to take the sociological novel as the real novel and relegate the Heathcliff-Cathy-Edgar relationship, and the corresponding Cathy-Linton-Hareton, as exciting but ex-centric dramatic episodes, we should be misconceiving the novel and slighting it, for it is surely these relationships, and their working out that give meaning to the rest.[12]

Leavis's point is well taken, but the argument is not extended far enough in the direction of theology. Rather than see it as simply a reflection of structural issues within the text, the divides within the narrative serve to illustrate the ways in which religious tradition, expectation and culturally ingrained norms can conflict with theology and doxology.[13] Throughout the novel, there is a clear tension explored between the accepted practises of culturally normalised "religiosity" and theological experience and encounters with the numinous which exist outside of what is accepted and normalised. Whilst in orthodox religious and theological practise these two ideas would be ideally held as mutually reinforcing, *Wuthering Heights* explores the tensions that arise when the two constituent parts of faith – religion and theology – begin to come into conflict with one another, rather than mutually reinforce one another. However, despite this tension between religious practise and theological experience, there is not necessarily a contradiction, or an opposition to Christian belief and practise *per se* through the novel.

The critical opinion of Emily Brontë as being either opposed to institutional religious expression, or, at best, a heterodox believer, is well established. For example, Stevie Davis's

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[12] Leavis, p. 101.

[13] Here I follow Graham Wards argument about the distinction between theology and religion outlined in *True Religion.* See particularly pp.2-4.

reading of Brontë's poem "No Coward's Soul is Mine" argues that the poem has 'a quality of out of doors: no church could hold it. The roof would blow off.'[14] As Marsden points out, Brontë's most famous fictional church, Gimmerton Kirk, 'seems less likely to be blown off than to fall down.'[15] Yet, as J Hillis Miller points out, in a widely influential but much misunderstood reading, Brontë may have moved away from a specific understanding of Christianity, wrestling with the absence of a divine presence, but she also sought to try to find some way of rebuilding the connection between humanity and God – 'for only a recovery of God will make possible a renewal of society.'[16] As Clarke expresses it, the religious spirit that 'overflows doctrinal boundaries' should not be conflated with 'hostility to religion itself.'[17] Therefore, the question of what type of religious and theological critique the text articulates becomes clearer. Firstly, the text functions as a theological critique of certain organised religious institutions and the behaviours and cultural expectations within which these institutions are bound up. Undeniably, the text is deeply antagonistic towards some notions of organised religion — the character of Joseph being a particularly vicious satire of Calvinist Christian religion, prone to mangling Scripture for his own particular ends. He is, as Nelly eloquently explains, 'the wearisomest, self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself, and fling the curses on his neighbours.'[18] Importantly, however, what seemingly attracts most criticism is not Joseph's devoutness but rather his use and interpretation of Scripture and the ways in which his particular literalist hermeneutics informs

[14] Steve Davis, *Emily Brontë: Heretic* (London: The Women's Press, 1994), p.144.
[15] Marsden, p. 57.
[16] J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth Century Writers,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) p. 209. This is a fight that later natural theologians would take up, as the nineteenth century popular discourse increasingly turned to issues of materialism. For more on this, see chapter four.
[17] Clarke, p. 212.
[18] Emily Brontës, *Wuthering Heights* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012) p. 44.

his behaviour. On the same night that Heathcliff leaves the Heights, after overhearing Catherine's rejection of him as a potential future spouse, Joseph comes to berate Catherine:

> This visitation worn't for nowt, und Aw wod hev ye tuh look aht, Miss, - yah muh be t'next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks together for gooid tuh them as is chozzen, and piked aht froo' th' rubbidge! Yah knaw whet t'Scripture ses – [19]

Here, like the Calvinists discussed in Chapter Two, Joseph uses Scripture to assure himself of his own salvation whilst condemning those who are outside of, or behave in a way that is resistant to, his own religious tradition. Throughout the novel he proves to be 'actively and aggressively malignant,'[20] a religious hypocrite who delights in assuring himself of his own righteousness.[21] An extreme version of this kind of hermeneutic manipulation and the violence which emerges from it is in the famous dream of Lockwood and the sermon of Jabes Branderham. After listening to Branderham's interminable sermon, Lockwood rises to his feet and tries to depart before being stopped by a response from the preacher:

> *Thou art the man!* Cried Jabes, after a solemn pause, leaning over his cushion. 'Seventy times seven didst thou gapingly contort thy visage – seventy times seven did I take counsel with my soul – Lo, this is human weakness; this also may be absolved! The First of the Seventy First is come. Brethren, execute upon him the judgement written![22]

From this distorted reading of Matthew 18: 22 erupts violence – again, institutional religious practise is seen as both prone to perverting the sacred texts they adhere to, and, more fundamentally, inspiring dangerous levels of physical violence. Not only does this echo the critique of Calvinism offered by writers like Hogg, but also shows the extent to which Gothic writing serves as a site that destabilises normative theological practise. With tongue-in-cheek

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[19] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 92.
[20] Thormählen, p. 82.
[21] The links and similarities between Joseph and the justified sinner of Hogg's earlier novel suggests a degree of cultural awareness of Calvinist thought and practise that was continuous and widespread throughout the period.
[22] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 25.

subversion, the message of the sermon and its example of the unforgiveable sin is to refuse to listen to a seemingly never-ending sermon – neatly highlighting the careful hermeneutic literalism of the preacher. Branderham's sermon is an exercise in biblical legalism, taken to a grossly exaggerated degree. His sermon exposes the extent to which this type of religious hermeneutics seeks outward conformity of behaviour and social propriety, enforced through strict disciplinary mechanisms. At the same time, the text highlights the level to which these controls and limitations of behaviour, which are constantly presented throughout the text, are ultimately intolerable. The suggestion is clear, that 'legalistic and literalist readings of the Bible have reverted to a distorting insistence upon vengeance under the guise of forgiveness,'[23] — a point highlighted in the previous thesis chapter on Calvinism. Even Lockwood, at best a rather lukewarm orthodox believer, is not immune to practising such violence when confronted with that that exists outside of his experiences. After reading Catherine's diary he dozes off. Awakened from his dream, he encounters the spirit of Catherine for the first time; his response is brutal:

> Terror made me cruel; and finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed clothes: still it wailed, 'Let me in'![24]

The scene neatly juxtaposes the Gothic with the theological — it is a classic example of the Gothic idea of the past forcibly reappearing into the present. As Sedgwick writes, 'Catherine's ghost represents the unquiet past that has not found continuity with the present.'[25] Yet this same moment of the violent re-emergence of the past comes alongside a record of the ways in which Catherine engaged with religious texts. The journal that Lockwood reads is written by Catherine in the margins of various sacred texts – her thoughts and narrative positions her

[23] Marsden, p. 81
[24] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 27.
[25] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Convention,* (London: Methuen Press, 1986) p. 99

as a kind of textual ghost – haunting the orthodox theological writing. As Marsden notes, 'her diary literally plays with the borders of authoritative texts, enacting the convergence of sacred and secular discourses.'[26] Not only is this an important theological point, but further links the text to the Gothic, with its own long record on blurring and falsifying textual boundaries.[27] After reading it, Lockwood experiences this blurring of secular and sacred discourses as Catherine makes her "Gothic return" from the past. Understood theologically, the moment is extremely significant in exploring the tension between religious tradition and theological experience. Religious tradition, focused on binding together a community of believers in faith, emphasises a historical continuity and consistency of belief and behaviour. This is often practised and maintained through various strategies such as the supposedly educational texts and pamphlets that Catherine uses as the basis of her diary as well as the interminable sermons and proselytizing of figures like Joseph. However, theology, specifically doxology and eschatology, acknowledges the distinct possibility that God can, and indeed does, disrupt the historical continuities of faith communities. Revelation can manifest itself unexpectedly and radically affect the idea of a seamless continuation and progression between past, present and future. The Gothic, then, not only allows for the return of the past into the contemporary present, but also allows for a dangerous destabilising of the boundaries between the religious and secular. Such a destabilizing frequently provokes a violent reaction from religious institutions and more fundamentalist believers who seek to preserve the clear boundaries of the spiritual. The violence of religious institutions is not necessarily triggered through their religious nature, or through faith *per se*, but through their religiosity — a culturally

[26] Marsden, p. 79.

[27] Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions* discussed in the previous chapter is an excellent example of this, with the Editors Introduction and the letters in Blackwood's Magazine but perhaps the most famous example is in one of the most successful early Gothic novels, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) with its 'found narrative' conceit.

appropriate set of behaviours that either has little to do with Scripture and more to do with the various culturally sanctioned expressions of religious faith.[28] A literalist, vengeful hermeneutics inevitably results in a limitation of behaviour and sets in place often violent disciplinary mechanisms by which conformity is policed. Sedgwick picks up on this in relation to Catherine, writing that 'her ambition is always to break through, and if that involves pushing aside a wall of books, she would no doubt find the symbol a satisfying one.'[29] The best example of the ways in which this kind of religion seeks to limit behaviour comes immediately after Heathcliff's return — Catherine, now married to Edgar, welcomes home Heathcliff and brings him into the parlour. Edgar's response highlights the ways in which this kind of religion is more a question of acceptable behaviour than actual Christian living, as Nelly details the incident:

> 'You bid him step up' he said, addressing me, 'and, Catherine, try to be glad without being absurd! The whole household need not witness the sight of your welcoming a runaway servant as a brother'.[30]

Of course, once again, the Biblical text is misinterpreted. The reference to a runaway servant being welcomed as a brother is the Prodigal Son, from Luke 15: 11-32 (as well as discussed in Paul's letter Philemon). The irony of the situation is that if truly committed to following Biblical models of behaviour as literally as possible, Catherine would do exactly what Edgar disallows – propriety would be cast aside and she would welcome him *as a brother,* which is, in a certain sense, precisely what Heathcliff is to her. Here then, spiritual impulse collides with religiosity in order to limit and restrict the range of behaviours that are deemed acceptable, subsuming and reducing faith to a set range of class appropriate behaviour. The

[28] It's quite arguable that this idea is something easily observed in the discourses of Calvinism that were discussed in Chapter Two – as there is a clear divide between the work of Calvin and the expression these writings found in the religious communities that that fit the label of 'Calvinist.'
[29] Sedgwick, p. 100.
[30] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 102.

novel presents these restrictions as both physically and emotionally coercive and constraining, illustrated in a brief exchange between Catherine and her father. Exasperated by his daughter he asks, 'Why cant thou not always be a good lass Cathy?' to which she responds, 'why cannot you always be a good man, Father?'[31] In this short exchange, the complexities and ambiguities of the divide between religious acceptability and theological experience come into sharp relief. Catherine's father judges the issue of goodness as a matter of propriety, respectability and the performance of certain social functions and behaviours. In contrast, Catherine refuses this value judgement, asking the far more theologically interesting question of her father of why, despite his apparent performances of goodness, he is incapable of being a truly good man. Quite arguably, she has a far more thorough grasp of issues such as Original Sin – men cannot always be good, simply because 'good' does not depend upon issues such as the public performance of proper behaviours but rather, reflects a more fundamental truth about human ontology. Religiosity is a limit – a barrier that prevents the individual from being truly good no matter how devotedly religious behaviour is maintained and demonstrated as it fails to deal with the fundamentally fallen nature of humanity.

This idea of praising the performance of particular religious practise over a more substantive engagement with the realities of human life is something that occurs throughout the text. The grouchy old Calvinist Joseph goes so far as to insist upon the futility of the family's grief when their father dies, asking 'what we could be thinking of to roar in that way over a Saint in Heaven.'[32] Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss the novel as simply an anti-Christian or heretical piece of work — a mistake predicated upon a narrow understanding of

[31] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 46
[32] ibid.

Christian tradition and theology that reduces theology down to a specific and rather narrow binary of either orthodox or heretical. Whilst the text excoriates the religiosity of a specific set of Christian beliefs, belief structures that exists outside the contemporary understanding of orthodoxy have generally been dismissed as heretical by theological or ecclesial authority at some point in history. However, as has been consistently demonstrated throughout this thesis, the Christian tradition has, throughout its history, been able to express a capacity for imaginative renewal, brought about by changes in historical circumstance and, hence, to bring forth new forms for expressing theological concerns. Whilst critiquing the religious civilities and practises that limit individual freedoms and disguise violent behaviour behind the veneer of piety, the novel also extends its own theological ideas. Such a theological vision is constructed through the use of specifically Gothic techniques and strategies wherein theological language and Gothic ideas coexist and inform one another. The Gothic haunts the theology within the text, as shown in the scene with Catherine's ghost, and this is directly connected to the ways in which the sacred is presented and understood.

The novel's own positive contribution of/to a theological tradition (however ambivalent or antagonistic that tradition may be) has been noted among some of the key readings of the novel, although often not fully developed. Gilbert and Gubar link Emily Brontë, along with Mary Shelley, to various restaging's of the work of Milton.[33] As discussed in Chapter One, Milton's influence on the Gothic novel is not simply poetic or aesthetic, but also theological, connecting the Gothic tradition to theology in under-acknowledged ways. From

[33] See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination,* 2nd edition (London: Yale University Press, 1984) particularly Chapters six, seven and eight.

the outset, *Wuthering Heights* is replete with references to both Heaven and Hell, perhaps most famously in the much-quoted speech from young Catherine:

> If I were in heaven, Nelly, I would be extremely miserable…I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they fling me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke, sobbing for joy.[34]

What is striking about the passage is the extent to which the novel disavows normative theological standards. Heaven, rather than being a place where every tear is wiped away is, instead, a place of misery, for it would involve union with God, rather than her desired union with Heathcliff. There is an element of sacrilege here, picked up by contemporary reviewers, as it seems Brontë moves away from a traditional or more orthodox conception of heaven. One anxious contemporary reviewer found the work threatening to the morality of the readership:

> If we did not know that this book has been read by thousands of young ladies in the country, we should esteem it our first duty to caution them against it the book is original; it is powerful. But still, it is coarse…Setting aside the profanity, which if a writer introduces into a book, he offends against both politeness and good morals, there is such a general roughness and savageness in the soliloquies and dialogue…[35]

Yet, rather than see this as a violation of orthodoxy, or a threat to the general morals of readers,[36] it is possible to read this section of the novel in another light. Read imaginatively, the speech from Catherine can be seen as proposing a critique of theological understandings of heaven that challenges its spatial and hierarchical aspects,[37] through a shocking, and fundamentally relational, understanding of heavenly paradise. Rather than see heaven as a spatial configuration, wherein the soul is reunited with God in a place that is both

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[34] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 86.
[35] G.W Peck, from an unsigned review of *Wuthering Heights, America Review,* June 1848, vii, 572-85 in *The Brontë's: The Critical Heritage,* ed. Miriam Allot (London, Routledge, 1974) 235-248, p. 236.
[36] The concern here being somewhat similar to anxieties expressed by Coleridge in his review of *The Monk.*
[37] For more on the ways in which Victorian theology saw heaven in spatial terms see Albert Myburgh, 'Spaces of death in Emily Brontës *Wuthering Heights, Journal of Literary Studies* 30.1 (Mar. 2014): pp 20-33.

geographically distinct and removed, paradise for Catherine is found in her union with another.

For Catherine, the traditional idea of a paradise after death is anathema, and like Milton's Devil and, indeed, Frankenstein's creature, the fall from the heights of Paradise is a *fortunate* fall, back to the environment of Wuthering Heights. She literally sees herself as a cast-out from Paradise, a fallen angel, exorcised from heaven and forced back into the material world. Yet, at the same time, the world that Catherine "falls" into (or rather, is thrown back into) is one irreducibly fallen itself – as Hillis Miller puts it, the characters of the novel 'are, for the most part, without pity or forgiveness for one another, and their conscious defiance of the law by which God reserves vengeance to himself echoes throughout the novel.'[38] Forgiveness, redemption and, most importantly, grace, are seen throughout the text as both desperately needed but also, 'conspicuously absent.'[39] Here, Brontë expresses a long-held theological idea – that the obsessions of Branderham and Joseph with individual transgressions of morality are reductive and caricature the Christian understanding of sin. Theologically speaking, Brontë acknowledges that, as Ricoeur argues, '[sin] is not the transgression of an abstract rule — of a value — but the violation of a personal bond.'[40] Sin is, to use a much-repeated theological analogy, a kind of stain – a distortion of the *imago Dei* and a corruption of the world from how it should be. Like the Gothic past that constantly seeks to reassert itself in the present, so too does sin constantly emerge into the world of the novel. Just as the religious seeks consistently to secure itself from the intrusion of the heterodox, unorthodox and secular so too does society seek to disguise the essentially

[38] J. Hillis Miller, p. 188.
[39] Marsden, p. 87.
[40] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston, Beacon Press, 1969) p. 2.

universal nature of sin. From the outset of the novel, the world of *Wuthering Heights* is presented as already fallen, tainted by a kind of inexpungable blot – rather than a state 'caused by a loss of an earlier state of civilised restraint.'[41] 'Why is *Wuthering Heights* so Miltonically hellish'[42] ask Gilbert and Gubar — the answer to this is because it could be no other way. There is no singular villain of the text, but, within the Gothic environs of the novel, all are implicated and all are culpable in various degrees for the bitterness and destructiveness that runs through the text. There is no singular monster but rather a collection of people who are placed within a specific Gothic environment that brings forth the very worst within human nature by refusing the societal niceties of respectable religious behaviour. Violence and Sin, then, are not shielded by the pious orthodoxies of religiosity but brought to the fore, and all are shown to be, in some way, bound up within the behaviours. Heathcliff at the beginning of the novel is not introduced into a kind of metaphoric Eden that he fatally destabilises – rather, he merely conforms to the already existing structures of relationship and sin that are in place throughout the text. Thormählen describes the text as a 'nineteenth-century Revengers Tragedy,'[43] but, that said, there is no identifiable cause – the novel 'refuses to trace its cycles of vengeance and violence to a secure point of origin.'[44] Heathcliff, for example, enters the narrative at the beginning but on his arrival, he comes loaded with the mystery of what has happened to him already and his origins. Mr Earnshaw simply announces that he has been found on the street, but provides no details as to what may have brought this about. There is a pre-story, a point further back from where the narrative begins that determines much about him, but to which we, as readers, have no access. Heathcliff, then, is not simply the model of

[41] Hillis Miller, p. 168.
[42] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 263.
[43] Thormählen, p. 119.
[44] Marsden, p. 102.

a Byronic hero that critics have pointed to,[45] or some sort of supernatural force of evil, but is rather the product of some tragedy in his past, which is further exacerbated with his introduction into the hostile environment of the Earnshaw family. Rather than consider the text as a kind of Revenger's Tragedy then, it is far more precise to consider the text as a Gothic castle. Within its limits all of the characters prove themselves to be imbricated in the idea of sin as an indelible stain upon their nature. Nelly admits as much, that 'we plagued and went on with him shamefully, for I wasn't reasonable enough to feel my injustice,'[46] and the injustices of the past become motivation for further injustices as the novel progresses. Heathcliff, of course, inherits some of the tragedies of the Earnshaws, as he is given the name of a child who died in childbirth, a Gothic bequest, that ensures from the very beginning Heathcliff functions as a presence that haunts the Earnshaw family. Hindley, in response, 'comes to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections…he grew bitter brooding over these injuries.'[47] The novel dramatizes the prophetic warning of Numbers 14:18 as the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, yet at the same time there is a sense in which the "sins of the fathers" are diffuse and have no clear point of origin. There is a distinctly Gothic sense of inescapable predestination at work here, as the familial dynamics between the Earnshaw's become increasingly unstable. Trying to locate a single or discreet cause would be futile as 'each generation is marked by the failures of its predecessors; their individual stories are conditioned by their inheritance.'[48] Whilst Marsden's point here is instructive, inheritance is

[45] This is a common critical argument and key examples can be found in Gilbert and Gubar (2000) as well as Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalisation of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp.185-241.
[46] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 40.
[47] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 40-1.
[48] Marsden, p. 103.

a somewhat unhelpful term, as with its implications of economics and familial relationships, it essentially reduces the scale of the problem to one that is socially mediated and passed down, rather than a reflection of the fundamentally fallen character of the human subject more widely. Thus, one of the central conflicts throughout the novel, exemplified by the speech from Catherine quoted above, can be seen more clearly — namely, the struggle between the religious, Calvinistic view of human behaviour and history and the exercise of individual agency founded on love that forms the basis of an apparently more authentic religious expression. Marsden argues that Brontë criticizes the extreme and stifling Calvinistic moralism not merely through caricature, but through 'depicting a social environment shaped by its paradigms.'[49] This environment is one that refuses the possibility of disguising violence behind the veneer of civility, instead bringing it front and centre to the entire world of the novel. As Eagleton expresses it, *Wuthering Heights* trades in 'spite and stiff-neckedness, but always "objectively'' as the power of its tenaciously detailed realism to survive unruffled even the gustiest of emotional crises would suggest.'[50] Interpersonal relations are then inevitably shaped and dictated by the "objective" nature of the fallen world of the novel. It is a deeply Gothic environment – a point Lockwood brings up in his first visit to the Heights, describing its great fire and cavernous interior, alongside swarms of 'squealing puppies, and other dogs,'[51] which haunt the recesses of the building. He details the environment, realising that it is a reflection, or double, of the spiritual nature of its inhabitants.

Another example of this is the moment where the two children are spotted by Joseph in the act of destroying the various religious tracts they are forced to study. Joseph warns

[49] Marsden, p. 108.
[50] Terry Eagleton, *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 99.
[51] Brontë, p. 5.

them that, '"owd Nick" would fetch us as sure as we were living; and so comforted we each sought a separate nook to await his advent.'[52] Catherine and Heathcliff thus invert the threat of damnation issued by Joseph, awaiting the Devil not out of fear of damnation but an expectation of spiritual liberation. The two are, in many ways, 'of the Devil's party' and seem to acknowledge a distinctly Miltonic Satan, seeing the possibility of being carried off to a hell as a kind of Gothic soteriology — far better than the performance of piety within which neither of them seem to find much truth. Yet this possible redemption is deferred – the two may find solace and a spiritual kinship in the company of one another, and in the wild splendour of the moors, yet this does not serve as a solution to their problem. Leaving the Heights to 'have a ramble at liberty,'[53] the two find their way to the Grange, contrasting the life of the Lintons with their own condition. Unlike Heathcliff and Catherine, the Linton children do not spend their time 'reading sermons, and being catechised by their manservant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names.'[54] Rather, the Lintons exist in a pleasant world of frivolous enjoyment, with the children fighting over who gets to hold a puppy. This combination of class position, material comforts and rather childish indulgence receives nothing but disdain from the two observing the scene. As Heathcliff puts it, functioning as a type of ghostly observer, haunting the family at the window, 'we laughed outright at the petted things…we did despise them.'[55] Whilst Heathcliff offers Catherine a friendship that 'opens fresh possibilities of freedom within the internal system of the Heights,'[56] the encounter at the Linton house offers her a secure class position, a more "appropriate" spouse and an apparent liberation from the catechizing, spiritually restrictive world of Joseph and

[52] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 23.
[53] *Wuthering Heights* p. 51.
[54] Ibid.
[55] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 52.
[56] Eagleton, p. 103.

Hindley Earnshaw. The true struggle of Catherine then, throughout the novel, is the struggle against the realisation that the world she inhabits is structured in the same way as the Heights — marked by an absence of grace, requiring the same performative religious and social appropriateness. If anything, the discursive codes and disciplinary procedures that the Lintons embody are less explicit than the disciplinary mechanisms enacted at the Heights, but just as restrictive. Unlike Catherine, Heathcliff seems to recognise that the life at the Grange is no different from that in the Heights. He furiously tells Nelly that he would not exchange his life for that of the Lintons, for that life of comfort would deny him the possibility of revenge.[57] In the choice between being 'good' (in the sense of social approval) or not, Heathcliff refuses it, preferring instead to exist outside of those structures which make such a choice necessary. Whilst Heathcliff is a social inferior but a spiritual equal, and so, for him, Catherine's decision to marry Edgar is a sign of a kind of spiritual betrayal — a colossal act of 'theological *mauvaise foi*'[58] based on the mistaken belief that a move upward in class position is preferable to the authenticity of her relationship with Heathcliff.

> *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort – you deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears. They'll blight you – they'll damn you. You loved me – that what *right* had you to leave me? What right – answer me – for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, you, of your own free will, did it.[59]

Heathcliff's speech is undeniably vicious, but, as Arnold Kettle points out, the 'brutality is not neurotic, nor sadistic, nor romantic,'[60] but rather a moral and theological criticism of Catherine's actions. The contradiction that Catherine attempts to square is that between

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[57] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 52.
[58] Eagleton, p. 101.
[59] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 175.
[60] Arnold Kettle, 'Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights* (1847)' in *The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism,* ed. Ian Watt, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 209.

authenticity and acceptability but not simply in a material or social sense. Heathcliff excoriates her with language that echoes Scripture — here drawing on the rhythms and intonations of Pauline theology (specifically Romans 8:38-9).[61] Catherine, in her marriage to Edgar, has chosen the values of class respectability and outward acceptable piety in contrast to the connection she shares with Heathcliff (as she forcefully tells Nelly earlier in the novel, 'he's more myself than I).'[62] In effect, to return to the question posed by her father, she has decided to be 'good' in terms of respectability, rather than continue to refuse the value judgements in the way she did as a young child. Heathcliff's point is rather prophetic as her marriage to Linton does damn her – it casts her out again from the Heights and the moors where she is freest. The strictures of her Calvinistic upbringing have been exchanged for a gilded cage, and in a much-noted speech to Nelly, Catherine articulates this spiritual yearning for an existence marked by freedom.

> The thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearing to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart but really with it, and in in it.[63]

The two speeches, quoted at length, are illustrative of the heterodox theological vision that Brontë puts forward, underpinned by an intimate and profound connection between Catherine with Heathcliff that is fulfilled in nature. Her yearning to 'escape' back into the natural realm highlights an important tension – that between Nature and society, or, as it is otherwise framed, between an experience of freedom against the limitations of institutional religiosity. Catherine's desire to be 'half-savage, and hardy and free,' is a reflection of her

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[61] 'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

[62] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 87.

[63] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 174.

desire to exist outside of the confines of a society structured by restrictive religious practises, away from the civility and restrictive performative piety that marks her daily existence. To be away from that savage state is, for Catherine, to be trapped. Existing in the world she is, as the traditional Gothic heroine, imprisoned. Whereas the early Gothic heroines would be trapped in a deserted castle, Catherine is trapped (admittedly by her own choice) within the world of the text that deprives her of authentic existence. Her connection with Heathcliff is, supposedly, a more liberated mode of being, contrasted with the arid "heaven" of marriage to Linton – an apparent paradise, but one from which Catherine yearns to be thrown. As Tom Winnifrith suggests, Linton may have a vision of heaven and future salvation but for his new partner it is just as stifling as that that she wishes to escape.[64] For as heaven divides her from the moors, her marriage divides her from the one with whom she feels the most profound connection. In the speech above, Catherine appropriates the language of Christian eschatology,[65] desiring a kind of Edenic return to the state of nature, but also to an authentic kind of personhood. She wishes to be a 'girl again, half-savage and hardy and free…I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills.'[66] Eagleton claims that Catherine's and Heathcliff's relationship is 'projected into myth,'[67] yet its more accurate to say that it is projected into a kind of paradisiacal soteriology – a vision of a heaven to come, where the idea of religious performance is replaced by a kind of radical freedom, where there is no need to spend time in chapels listening to overly long sermons, or limiting one's behaviour in the name of being 'good.'

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[64] Tom Winnifrith, *The Brontë's and their Background: Romance and Reality,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988) p. 68.
[65] See 1 Corinthians 13:12: 'For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.'
[66] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 134.
[67] Eagleton, p. 109.

If this idea of freedom is absent within the religious institutions and codes of belief depicted within the novel, it is in nature, specifically the open spaces of the moors, that an experience of this kind can be found. Catherine seeks to escape into the material world, away from the realm of religious knowledge, back to a 'communion with the universal other, the re-integration of the self into what has ceased to be "my world."'[68] Interpersonal connection with Heathcliff is inextricably bound up in connection with the natural world, which is a more authentic and spiritually compelling mode of existence than the haunted and limited life at the Grange. Theologically speaking, this places Brontë within the more heterodox theological tradition of writers such as Schleiermacher, whereby religious experience is not found in 'previous knowledge'[69] of the divine but here in the uniting of the individual self with the universal splendour of Nature. True religion, then, is not the pieties of Joseph or the acting out of a certain set of culturally approved behaviours but rather is 'a phase of consciousness in which differentiation of subject and object has not yet occurred.'[70] Brontë complicates this with the relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff within the wider scheme of Nature. Catherine specifically describes her relationship with him through the language of eternity and images of nature: 'my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks…a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff.' [71] The infinite, which in Schleiermacher's terms may or may not have the name God attached to it, is, for Catherine, found in her relationship with Heathcliff. However, such a phase of consciousness, such a unity of self with the infinite is presented as impossible as Catherine dies shortly after giving birth, shattering the potential for any kind of reunion with Heathcliff and thus, any possibility of connection

[68] Marsden, p. 137.
[69] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (London: T & T Clark, 2016), p. 17.
[70] Bernard Reardon*, Religion in the Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 35.
[71] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 88.

with that infinite other which may be termed God. Rather than embracing the divine presence the novel consistently problematises the idea of reaching it — Lockwood even goes so far as to ignore Nelly's question on the happiness of the dead in heaven, finding it 'somewhat heterodox,'[72] here echoing the sacrilegious theology of heaven expressed by Catherine. Even death then, is not a means of accessing heaven, but rather a kind of exile – another casting out. If, in the relationship with Heathcliff there is something of the infinite, then after her death Heathcliff is trapped in his own hell — namely, separation from Catherine. 'Where is she?' he asks Nelly: 'not *there* — not in heaven — not perished…Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living…do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!'[73] Catherine 'can be located only by reference to where she is not,'[74] becoming a spectral presence, a paradoxical ghost who violates the realist framework of the novel, suggesting a 'lifting of the veil between worlds.'[75] Catherine becomes another ghost through the text – a spectral force that fractures the easy separations between presence and absence and, more importantly between life and death. By her death she has, in effect, rendered Heathcliff as unable to fully live. Yet, this spectral presence becomes reported at second or third hand – usually through dreams or visionary experiences that allows them to sit, albeit uneasily, within the realist framework of the novel that these moments of spectral haunting threaten to disrupt.[76] This absent presence ensures that Heathcliff and Catherine can never be conclusively separated, but also never finally reunited. Even at Catherine's grave when

[72] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 179.
[73] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 181.
[74] Marsden, p. 138.
[75] Marsden, p. 139.
[76] Ibid. As Andrew Smith points out, this tension highlights the ways in which the Gothic has become part of the ostensibly non-Gothic forms of writing (in this case, the realist novel) once again closely tying together theology and the Gothic. See Andrew Smith, *Gothic Literature,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) p. 75.

Heathcliff wishes to embrace her one final time, her spectral haunting ensures that this cannot take place:

> I was on the point of attainting my object, when it seemed I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave, and bending down…There was another sigh, close at my ear…I knew no living thing in flesh and blood was by — but as certainly as you perceive the approach to some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth.[77]

It seems then, that at the moment of reuniting with Catherine's physical form, the spectre of Catherine's paradoxical presence and absence maintains an infinite deferral between the two. In the 'shadow' of Catherine's ghost, Heathcliff's own involvement in the physical world begins to dwindle, leaving him barely able to remember to eat or drink.[78] The world is both made into a Gothic abyss emptied of her presence and, at the same moment, 'a dreadful collection of memoranda' that consistently suggest the lost Catherine.[79] In a sense, the two consistently struggle to escape the world of restrictions that is marked by a religiosity and a distinct lack of grace, for a more authentic mode of Being that reconnects both human subject with one another and the absent Divine. However, ultimately the two fail to do so, yet the novel constantly holds open the possibility that such a relationship, a restoration between individuals and God is possible. Yet, despite what critics such as Eagleton argue, this possibility is not found in the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff.

> The loving equality between Catherine and Heathcliff stands, then, as a paradigm of human possibilities which reach beyond, and might ideally unlock, the tightly dominative system of the Heights.[80]

The optimism here feels misplaced, as the reading, so grounded as it is in strictly materialist terms, has no space for the idea of something as non-materialistic as theological inflected

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[77] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 309.
[78] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 344.
[79] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 345.
[80] Eagleton, p. 103.

Calvinism or the possibility of grace, which can disrupt the world entirely ordered by those precepts. For, despite what Eagleton might claim, it is not the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine that unlocks the dominative system of the novel, but rather between Hareton and young Cathy. At the close of the novel, the two reach a 'tentative convergence'[81] – which Eagleton frames in terms of a synthesis between 'labour and culture, sinew and gentility.'[82] What allows such a synthesis to occur is not simply a co-mingling of Nature with society, but rather by some attempts at grace and forgiveness. Gilbert and Gubar describe her as the ideal Victorian woman, who has so well absorbed the 'lessons of patriarchal Christianity'[83] that she is able piously to forgive Heathcliff and Linton for their various sins. At the same time however, she is also haughty and dismissive, seemingly deeply aware of her class position, which emerges in her early treatment of Zillah. Not for nothing does Nelly describes her as possessing a 'propensity to be saucy, and a perverse will.'[84]

Yet, even so, Cathy's behaviour should not be dismissed as solely the product of a kind of bourgeois conditioning — a range of acceptable behaviours that she is too dutiful to challenge, as Heathcliff recognises her as a threat – not just economically, but spiritually too. He recoils from her, asserting that 'I'd rather hug a snake'[85] abusing her as a witch and a slut. This is, as Gilbert and Gubar point out, behaviour that makes sense, from a certain point of view, as 'besides threatening his present position, Catherine II's union with Hareton reminds Heathcliff specifically of the heaven he has lost.'[86] The physical resemblance to the dead Catherine 'tells Heathcliff not so much that Catherine endures as that she is both dead and

[81] Eagleton, p. 118.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 299.
[84] *Wuthering Heights,* p. 203.
[85] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 294
[86] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 300.

fragmented.'[87] Once again, ghosts proliferate even in the world of the living and Heathcliff becomes doubly haunted – haunted by Catherine's absence which traps him in hell and haunted by her presence in the form of Cathy. Yet, Cathy does not just serve as another spectral presence of the absent Catherine, but also a sign of a potential future world not structured by the paradigms of violence, vengeance and retribution. Yet, at the same moment, without this world-structure and without the tempestuous Heathcliff/Catherine pairing, the possibility of redemption that Hareton and Cathy embody would be impossible. As Hillis Miller asserts:

> What has intervened by the end of the novel to make possible the milder love of Hareton and the second Cathy? What has intervened is the love affair of Heathcliff and the first Cathy. The love of Hareton and the second Cathy appears to be possible only because Heathcliff and the first Cathy have broken through life into death.[88]

Whilst without the relationship between Catherine-Heathcliff plot, Hareton would not need to be made into a gentleman in the first place, what this misses is Ingrid Geerken's point that regret is essentially generative of narrative.'[89] Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is marked by regret – a failure to connect with one another and to reunite religious belief with theological experience. Only when the second Catherine has, like the Psalmist, walked, 'through the shadow of death'[90] (in the case the death of Linton) can she begin to educate Hareton, teaching him to read and take possession of the Heights. As Gilbert and Gubar similarly note, it is only after the confrontation with the Miltonic Devil figure of Heathcliff that the two can build their new world, marrying on New Year's Day.[91] However, to extend the argument somewhat further, the relationship is not simply a marriage that carries with it an

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Hillis Miller, p. 209.
[89] Ingrid Geerken, "The Dead Are Not Annihilated": Mortal Regret in Wuthering Heights,' *Journal of Narrative Theory* 34.3 (2004) pp. 373-406.
[90] See Psalm 23, particularly verse 4.
[91] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 359.

echo of social betterment. Cathy does not simply educate Hareton, but she rather draws him into a kind of existence that is not structured by religiosity and violence in the first place. If Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship is fundamentally marked by the tensions between religion and theology, Cathy and Hareton represent a possible future whereby religion and theology may be brought back into a kind of harmony, though tellingly that harmony does not involve a church or any other form of institutional religion. The book though resists any kind of closure, riven by a series of contradictions between the other and the subject, between Nature and Society and ultimately between divine absence and presence. 'Every critic must leave the book in the awareness of not having reached a conclusion, and it will keep attracting new ones who find that the same applies to them.'[92] Thormählen's point is not merely a source of critical frustration but a product of the resistance to theological closure that run throughout the novel as a whole. Heathcliff, like Catherine, may die — fading into nature, where Catherine "persists in every cloud, in every tree"[93] He is found in his room, with open windows, and whilst the grumpy old hypocrite Joseph might claim that the 'th' divil's harried off his soul,' his dissolution into the paradise of Nature, back to the spectral Catherine is assured. As Heathcliff expresses it, 'my soul's bliss kills my body' – for in the possibility of reuniting with Catherine, the body itself becomes merely something to be escaped. There are echoes here with the theological power of nature that so preoccupied and concerned Charles Brockden Brown and James Hogg in Chapter Two as, once again, it is in nature that the theological finds powerful, albeit unorthodox, expression. At the close of the novel, the Heights is left and Hareton and Cathy return to the Grange - a more suitable home for the young couple — leaving the rather tiresome Joseph and servants to ensure that the Heights

[92] Thormählen, p. 142.
[93] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 301.

remains standing. Yet this too is presented as an ambiguous kind of closure. The house will be left shut up, as Lockwood asks, 'For the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it?'[94] Yet, as Nelly asserts she may, 'believe the dead are at peace: but it is not right to speak of them with levity.'[95] Despite the apparent success of Hareton and Cathy in establishing a new kind of relationship, the dead, it seems, are still a powerful presence within the novel. The little boy who spots Heathcliff and a woman wandering the moors 'hints at the powerful disruptive possibilities they represent.'[96] The final scene, where Lockwood walks past Gimmerton Kirk adds to the ambiguity. Whilst Catherine and Heathcliff have been reunited in death and a new Adam and Eve have taken over the Grange, restoring it for the future, the church is still empty and now physically decaying.

For Hillis Miller, 'the church is still deserted because it is unnecessary,'[97] rendered irrelevant by the peaceful love of Cathy and Hareton. Yet, though the church itself is fractured and decaying, it still stands — suggesting that whilst a certain kind of institutional religion may have become neglected, it too is not beyond the bounds of renewal and resurrection. Whilst John Maynard makes the point that it 'is inner experience replacing institution, ritual, and myth as the location of the sacred'[98] this misses that it is the very concrete relationship of Hareton and Cathy that has made the Kirk increasingly irrelevant.[99] Whilst the church lies decaying and empty, the living are still at Wuthering Heights, not the local chapel. At the same

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[94] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 359.
[95] *Wuthering Heights*, p. 360.
[96] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 305.
[97] Hillis Miller, p. 211.
[98] John Maynard, "The Brontës and Religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontë's* ed. Heather Glen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 193.
[99] It's striking that Nelly admits towards the end of the novel that whilst the Kirk has no minister, Joseph now attends the 'Methodists' or Baptists' place,' (p. 315) suggesting that whilst the Kirk has fallen into disrepair, the local population has moved to a new kind of religious practise, marked (in the case of Methodism) by a deliberate attention to both study of Scripture and fellowship with others.

time, there is a clear sense that the new world the two symbolize is deeply contingent, bound up as it is in the 'the three head-stones on the slope next the moor.'[100] Whilst Lockwood 'wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth,' this carries a deep sense of irony, for Lockwood knows all too well just how unquiet those buried in the earth may be. The Gothic text consistently asserts that the dead may rise once again and disturb the living. Those who have been reunited with the infinite cannot be assumed to be safely isolated or externalised away from the living, for as Lynne Pearce points out, the novel speaks of a deeply held 'resistance to the finality of death.'[101] The romantic sublimity of the ending, redolent with a grace that sublimates what is past and 'cancels out history,'[102] is, at the same, riven with a sense of fragility – the ending of the novel is not a triumphant eschaton, but one reached in the deeply Gothic awareness that the past can emerge unexpectedly into the present – often violently — and the ghosts of the dead cannot be distinguished easily from the ones who are still living. Existence is lived in awareness of its contingent nature – Hareton and Cathy at the end of the novel must 'brave Satan and all his legions'[103] but must do so through continuation, through life together, not through the strictures of institutional religion and public performances of acceptable religious behaviour. Rather than a simply religious allegory then, the text functions as a site for the Gothic elements within it to destabilise the boundaries between the religious and the secular, between the sacred and the profane and most crucially between the ghosts of the past and the life of the present. It is this question, of how one must live, that forms the crux of the theological concerns of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre.*

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[100] Brontë, p. 360.
[101] Lynne Pearce, *Romance Writing,* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007), p.108.
[102] Milbank, p. 146.
[103] Brontë, p. 360.

Jane Eyre **as Social Theology**

With the claim in the title to biography and a strong concern with the place of the individual within society, *Jane Eyre* is explicitly concerned with the ways in which society is, and should be arranged. The ways in which society is constituted and the means for individual expression are decidedly moral and theological concerns (or, at the least, have certainly been questions with which religious institutions have been explicitly concerned) but also, the inherently political nature of these questions links the text to the wider history of Gothic writing, which has a long critical investment in articulating political fears and anxieties.[104] Here, the question of theological criticism of *Jane Eyre* is more precisely understood as a question of political theology – the interaction between theology and the wider society within which believers exist. This, of course, is not simply a question of belief, or of institutionalised practise, (attending church services for example) but, as with the criticism of institutional religion laid out in *Wuthering Heights,* entails a wider set of discourses and behaviours linked to the question of social and subjective behaviour removed from the institutions of religious adherence. Thus, this section will examine the ways in which Jane's experiences of navigating the various moments of enclosure and escape form part of an explicitly theological struggle toward a kind of subjective liberation and an expression of authentic Christian life. This process occurs within the generic convention of the women in the gothic house or castle, and so, like *Wuthering Heights,* its religious and theological points cannot be disentangled from the Gothic means by which they are communicated. The novel profoundly critiques the culture of accepted, conventional religiosity, (particularly in the character of the Rev.

[104] For a discussion of this, especially in regard to the early Gothic novel, see Robert Miles, 'Political Gothic Fiction,' in *Romantic Gothic, An Edinburgh Companion,* ed. Angela Wright and Dale Townshend (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 129-146.

Brocklehurst, discussed in more detail below), and as such the early critical reviews attacked *Jane Eyre* for its supposed anti-Christian nature. Brontë herself clarifies her own position in the preface to the second edition from December 1847:

> Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the latter. To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns…men too often confound them: they should not be confounded.[105]

Yet, as with *Wuthering Heights,* the text puts forward a scathing critique of both institutionalised religion and the authoritarianism to which religious leaders within those traditions are prone – particularly in the figure of the Reverend Brocklehurst. That erect 'black pillar'[106] of a man with his fairy-tale appearance of a great nose and large prominent teeth is a ghoulish monster figure that questions Jane on the nature of hell and how to avoid it. Brocklehurst serves as a figure of the kind of Gothic theology that divides the world into a deceptive material reality and a danger-filled potentially damnatory spiritual realm – which possesses greater truth status than the world the individual inhabits.[107] This scene, and Jane's assertion, that to avoid the pit of fire all she must do is not die,[108]can easily be read as a combination of childish naivety coupled with Brontë's own satire of the Calvinistic and annihilationist theology espoused by evangelicals such as Brocklehurst (similar to the kind of discourses analysed extensively in Chapter Two).[109] However, whilst a compelling though simplistic reading, it ignores much of the rest of the scene and indeed the ways in which Jane's own theology changes and develops throughout the novel.

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[105] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* (London, Penguin Deluxe Editions, 2009) p. 3-4.
[106] *Jane Eyre*, p. 33.
[107] Once again, see Chapter Two for a more in-depth discussion of this kind of Calvinistic thought.
[108] *Jane Eyre*, p. 34.
[109] The similarities between the Calvinism of Robert and Brocklehurst reinforce the idea of the Gothic interest in Calvinistic theological ideas.

What is striking about this confrontation between childish subjectivity and Gothicised hyper-Calvinist threat is the way in which Jane manages to articulate a theological response to Brocklehurst's intimidating rhetoric. Questioned on Scripture, Jane tells the reverend that her favourite parts of Scripture detail both liberation and eschatology. She picks the prophetic books of the Old Testament, the theodicy of Job, 'a little bit of Exodus' and the histories of Israel detailed in Samuel, Chronicles and Kings as well as the eschatological Revelation. The choice of books here is deeply striking, as Eyre (a dispossessed, orphan unwelcome in the Reed family) is drawn to Scripture that reflects her own feelings of injustice, and crucially offers up hope for a radical transformation of the world. This canon within the bible tends towards prophetic and liberatory expressions of faith as opposed to the books Jane is expected to voice approval of by Brocklehurst. For Jane, the Psalms, so beloved by Brocklehurst, are 'not interesting,'[110] used as they are to inculcate an acceptable evangelical 'infant piety'[111] in children who claim that they would rather have verses to learn than gingerbread. In response, Jane is told she has a wicked heart, a propensity for deceit and that she is a liar, destined to have her 'portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone.'[112] "Elected" to Lowood School, Jane is left a book containing 'an account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G—, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit.'[113] What is at stake in the conversation between Brocklehurst and Jane is not simply a satire of a singular religious vision – no matter how cutting that satire may be. Rather, what is presented are two distinct although ambiguously defined theological traditions – on the one hand is the evangelical Calvinist tradition that Brocklehurst exemplifies, this being well established, and socially

[110] *Jane Eyre*, p. 35.
[111] *Jane Eyre*, p. 35
[112] *Jane Eyre,* p. 36.
[113] Ibid, p. 37.

powerful, aimed at teaching outward displays piety over sincere religious expression, conditioning a certain kind of class hierarchy and enforcing a strict category of acceptable behaviour.[114] Jane, on the other hand, seems drawn to a less dominant, "minor" theological tradition – one that emphasizes overcoming injustice and the restoration of correct relationships between individuals and between societies and God. The reference to Genesis and Exodus, detailing creation, the first covenant between God and his people, their enslavement and, crucially, their liberation, is a Scriptural referent for the concerns of the text as a whole. Gilbert and Gubar note that *Jane Eyre* is a work permeated by angry, *Angrian* fantasies of escape-into-wholeness'[115] consistently drawn to themes of imprisonment and escape, and finding in its ending a muted, though hopeful response to the enclosing force of Victorian patriarchy. To reformulate the argument in a familiar piece of Gothic rhetoric, the castle from which the Gothic heroine must escape is nothing less than the systemic, hegemonic theo-political structure that underpins the world of the novel as a whole. It is this 'model of liberation rather than of defiance and revenge'[116] that Milbank draws attention to, whilst exploring the ways in which Brontë uses the theme of liberation as a 'plot of erotic provocation.'[117] This acknowledgement of the themes of escape and liberation and Brontë's more general awareness of a 'sexual and often supernatural world',[118] make clear that the theology of the novel is concerned both with the eschatology of the on-coming Kingdom of

[114] Jane's aunt tells Mr. Brocklehurst that she wishes Jane to be 'brought up in a manner suiting her prospects…to be made useful, to be kept humble.' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 36.). For a discussion of the ways in which this conflicts with theological understandings of God, see the discussion of *Wuthering Heights,* above.
[115] Gilbert and Gubar, p.336.
[116] Alison Milbank, "Doubting Castle: The Gothic Mode of Questioning," in *The Critical Spirit and the Will To Believe: Essays in Nineteenth Century Literature and Religion,* ed. David Jaspers and T.R Wright, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989) pp. 104-120, p. 105.
[117] Alison Milbank, *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992) p. 11.
[118] Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) p. 104.

Heaven, as well as the immediate practices of 'how to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.'[119] In other words, the text establishes an opposition between Jane's socio-political theology and the theological institutions that, whilst ostensibly non-political, seek to control her and reinforce strict social hierarchies and class privileges.[120] However, to complicate things further, both of these issues are bound up in one another — the expectation of the coming Kingdom and its imminent *parousia* is directed towards not just the long expected and long hoped for New Heaven, but importantly a New Earth as well. As the novel's final line of, 'Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus,'[121] implies, such a project is both still ongoing at the novels close, and still to come.[122] In this sense then, Jane's response to Brocklehurst, that she 'must keep in good health and not die,'[123] articulates a vital theological point — it is simply not enough to avoid hell through displays of piety, but authentic Christian faith must consistently work and live towards liberation rather than submission. Such a struggle toward liberation is juxtaposed throughout the novel with various theological and political systems of belief that seek to constrain and restrict behaviour in the name of piety and respectability. These systems operate upon the basis of an eschatological expectation of

[119] See Micah 6 particularly verse 8.
[120] For all their personal failures and their hypocrisies, the Reed family are seen as the very model of propriety and respectability by figures such as Rev Brocklehurst.
[121] *Jane Eyre*, p. 453.
[122] There is some critical debate around this last line – critics such as Kevin Mills see it as giving a rather spiritual conclusion to what is a very earthly book. In contrast Marsden argues there is a tension between Jane's description of her marriage with language drawn from Genesis and this quote from Revelation. Frankly, I find Marsden's Hegelian argument unconvincing as it seems to establish an uneasy divide between Heaven and Earth, or rather between creation and paradise, that neither Genesis or Revelation would support – after all, it is in Genesis where God walks in the garden with Adam and Eve, and in Revelation God once again dwells with his people in the new Earth. See Kevin Mills, *Approaching Apocalypse: Unveiling Revelation in Victorian Writing* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007) and Simon Marsden, 'The Earth No Longer A Void: Creation Theology in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë',' *Literature and Theology,* Vol 25 Issue 3, (2011) pp. 237-251.
[123] *Jane Eyre*, p. 34.

Heaven at the expense of the life here on earth, or a lifetime of service that demonstrates an acceptable kind of religious behaviour.

In her move to Lowood, Jane encounters the 'physically maladroit but theologically adept Helen Burns,'[124] who sees the relationship between life and death as simply a matter of 'organic development'[125] that must be passed through to reach the sublimity of Paradise. Passive in life, Helen simply accepts what seem to Jane to be intolerable injustices. As Helen argues,

> We shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbrous frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain…perhaps again to be communicated to some higher being than man – perhaps to pass through gradations of glory, from the pale human soul to brighten to the seraph![126]

Whilst there is much here that Jane silently accepts, there is a denial of the flesh – of the body specifically, that is simply unacceptable to such a materialist individual such as Jane, who cannot abandon her concerns with justice and the ways in which she is treated. Faith, or rather more specifically, salvation, is not simply the mechanistic process by which the soul leaves behind the body to attain paradise, but rather must be *worked* through as Paul outlines in Philippians 2. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.'[127] Later on Helen goes further still in creating a false separation between spirit and flesh (echoing the rhetoric of Brocklehurst) as a means of ensuring she accepts her present material condition. Jane, Helen argues, thinks 'too much of the love of human beings; you are too impulsive, too vehement,' in the light of the injustices of the world. Such an attitude is a mistake 'when life

[124] Milbank, p. 147.
[125] Ibid.
[126] *Jane Eyre*, p. 60.
[127] Phillipians 2 v 12-13.

is so soon over and death is so certain an entrance to happiness.'[128] Helen's argument, which 'calmed' Jane, is mixed with 'an alloy of inexpressible sadness,'[129] which seems to have no identifiable source but stems from a recognition of the insufficiency of Helen's argument, that privileges the potential future reward of Paradise at the cost of material injustices in the immediate present. The idea of a paradise beyond death functioning as a kind of spiritual freedom for the oppressed seems one that Jane is ill at ease with – too practically minded to find "justice to come" as a satisfactory idea. Even at the point of death Helen craves the company of another person – begging Jane to stay with her, suggesting that even Helen herself does not entirely ascribe to this idea of abandoning the physical world for the world beyond.

Also, whilst at Lowood, Jane encounters the other systemic theological belief that aims at restricting and limiting her behaviour and self in the form of Brocklehurst's sanctimonious disavowal of the body (in contrast to Helen's disavowal of the material conditions of wider society). Commenting on the food at Lowood, Brocklehurst tells the teachers that

> Should any little disappointment of the appetite occur, such as the spoiling of a meal…the incident ought not be neutralised…a judicious instructor would take the opportunity of referring to the sufferings of the primitive Christians; to the torments of martyrs; to the exhortations of our blessed Lord himself, calling upon his disciples to take up their cross and follow him….Oh madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their **vile bodies**, [my emphasis] but you little think how you starve their immortal souls.[130]

Where the spiritual Helen Burns argues that the material conditions of existence are a mere distraction to an oncoming theological paradise, Brocklehurst sees the material conditions

[128] *Jane Eyre*, p. 71.
[129] Ibid.
[130] *Jane Eyre*, p. 64-5.

and specifically the body as inherently sinful and a site for the performance of piety.[131] Both of these arguments are designed to enforce individual passivity and acceptance of the wider state of affairs. They are, in a sense, both Gothic discourses, one which focuses upon the mortification of the body as a site of corruption, in the case of Brocklehurst's theology (if not his practise as his own family remains well-fed and well taken care of), whereas Helen Burns sees the world as irredeemably corrupted and something from which one must escape. Furthermore, both of these perspectives demand an adherence to a particular conception of truth. Non-conformance to a particular set of acceptable behaviours is met with extreme disciplinary procedures. In the case of Jane, who refuses to accept the notion of her aunt as virtuous, this leads to her being branded, publicly, a liar. Such a label seems, for Brocklehurst at the least, to be a major issue – he labels Jane 'worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma,' placing her below the colonial other that missionaries sought to bring into the Christian empire. He calls upon her teachers to 'punish her body to save her soul – if, indeed, such salvation be possible.'[132] Jane's sin, as it were, is not simply that she has apparently lied, but that her insistence upon the truth of what she believes is a violation of the ideas that undergird Brocklehurst's wider theological beliefs. After the intervention of the beneficent and appropriately named Miss Temple, Jane settles into the routines and structures of Lowood, but Helen – her theological double of a sort —passes away. She tells Jane that, 'when you hear that I am dead, you must be sure and not grieve,' for 'by dying young, I shall escape great sufferings.'[133] Yet, for Jane, this death is not an escape, but a waste of potential and an affront to her rather more materialist understanding of faith. Years after

[131] As Brocklehurst himself puts it at one point, 'my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh' (*Jane Eyre*, p. 66).
[132] *Jane Eyre*, p. 68.
[133] *Jane Eyre*, p. 83.

Helen's death she rewrites her friend's memorial, adding the inscription to her grave of *Resurgam* - I shall rise, affirming both Helen's entry to Paradise, but also the resurrection of the dead that the flesh-denying Helen Burns refuses to accept. Just as with *Wuthering Heights,* the distinction between the Gothic and the theological is not easily maintained, as Jane predicts a gothic return from the grave for Helen Burns.[134]

In these encounters with both Helen and Brocklehurst Lowood School ultimately proves to be another source of constraint and enclosure, as gazing out onto the natural world, Eyre chafes against the restrictions that has been imposed upon her once more. 'I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer…for change, for stimulus… "Then I," I cried, half desperate, "grant me at least a new servitude!'"[135] Once again, the theological emphasis is geared towards the work of Christian living (notably not the work to attain salvation but rather the dutiful work that emerges because of salvation rather than for it) – the Scriptural referent is to Matthew 25. Searching for new work, Jane seeks the answer given in Scripture: 'well done, good and trustworthy servant, you have been faithful with a little, I will put you in charge of many things – enter into the joy of your master.'[136] Like the Gothic heroine trapped in the castle, Jane seeks to assert her own subjectivity, but the escape for which she wishes is, at this point in the narrative, simply an exchange of one kind of imprisonment for another rather than any kind of authentic assertion of selfhood.

Jane's move to Thornfield and subsequent courtship with Rochester seem to offer the possibility of both a radical liberation from her past and a vital equality with her newfound

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[134] In a sense then she becomes a kind of theological vampire, a figure resting uneasily in the grave until called forth again to a new kind of life. For more on the connections between the vampire and theology, see chapter four.
[135] *Jane Eyre*, p. 87.
[136] See Matthew 25 v.23.

partner. Here, the theological influence of Helen Burns comes to the fore, but articulated in the setting of a material condition – namely marriage to Rochester, as in the proposal scene in the orchard:

> I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; — it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal as we are.[137]

Here as Milbank claims, - 'the sublime is no longer enough to effect equality in a novel in which the landscape is always owned by someone. The apocalyptic provision of the world beyond is all that can make possible communication as equals.'[138] Though Milbank's point here is well taken, the language of an eschatological apocalypse should not elide material conditions. The language is apocalyptic but at the same moment is grounded in a marriage proposal. Only through the medium of marriage *as sacrament* can there be a true equality between the two — as Jane seems to recognise with her honesty and call for Rochester to see her as she truly is. Yet, of course, the true impediment to their union is revealed in the figure of Bertha and Jane is forced to leave, repeating the motif of enclosure and escape. There can be no kind of sacramental marriage whilst Bertha is still living – in the aftermath of Bertha's discovery, once again Eyre turns to the language of theology, reinforcing the idea that the novel presents marriage not simply as an economic arrangement, but as a sacramental idea. As Jane tells Rochester, 'Do as I do; trust in God… believe in heaven… I advise you to live sinless, and I wish you to die tranquil.'[139]Rochester offers her a marriage but one that is not theologically valid – she insists upon keeping 'the law given by God,'[140] refusing a marriage

[137] *Jane Eyre*, p. 253.
[138] Milbank, p. 147.
[139] *Jane Eyre*, p. 317.
[140] Ibid

that would not only be a sham, but would be sinful. Rochester, despite being able to 'bend her with my finger and thumb'[141] is unable to prevent her leaving.

This ongoing conflict between faith and freedom reaches its height in the interactions between Jane and St John. Somewhat surprisingly, many of the critical works on the novel focus on the relation between Bertha and Jane,[142] when in fact; the 'mad-woman in the attic' is a fairly minor character in the book, in contrast to St. John, who occupies a substantial section of the novel.[143] After leaving Thornfield, with little clue of where to go, the journey that Jane undertakes is framed as something akin to a pilgrimage – 'God must have led me on,' as Jane expresses it.[144] St. John, with his name referencing both St. John the Evangelist and the St John of Revelation, functions as both a theological and emotional counter-point to both Brocklehurst and Rochester but as Thormählen points out his name highlights his own theological flaws. 'Neither John Reed nor St John Rivers is ever capable of genuine love for a fellow human being. The former indirectly kills his mother, and not even the latter shines as a son.'[145] Despite this, he is the one who takes in Jane, provides her with the companionship she desires and the useful employment that, for her, is so desperately necessary. He promises what Rochester cannot – namely a marriage grounded in devotion to God, and good Christian duty with the promise of missionary work in the Empire. Jane faces another type of imprisonment in the Gothic castle, but unlike the lascivious or suspect villains of the earlier

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[141] *Jane Eyre*, p. 318.
[142] This is somewhat unsurprising given the impact of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* - A definitive list is impossible, but some examples include, Alexandra Nygren, 'Disabled and Colonized: Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre,' *Explicator*, 74.2 (2016) pp. 117-119, Paul J. C. M. Franssen, 'Another possible source for Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre,' *Notes and Queries,* 58.1 (2011) pp. 88-89, Julia Sun-Joo Lee, 'The (Slave) Narrative of "Jane Eyre," *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2008), pp. 317-329 as well as Valerie Beattie, 'The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness in Jane Eyre,' *Studies in the Novel*, 28.4 (Winter 1996): pp. 493-503.
[143] For a somewhat polemical take on this issue see Laurence Lerner, 'Bertha and the Critics,' in *Nineteenth Century Literature,* Vol 44, No. 3*,* (Dec 1989), pp. 273-300.
[144] *Jane Eyre*, p. 322.
[145] Thormählen, p. 207.

Gothic, the imprisonment here is grounded upon the highest possible justification. St John's theology functions as both the means for justifying Jane's submission at the cost of her agency, and justifying involvement in the colonial exercise of empire building. It is a theological request that seeks both the violent domination of the individual and to participate in the violence of dominating far off nations.[146] Strikingly however, Jane does not deny St. John's request on the grounds of its imperialistic and colonial nature, but simply because it would not be right for her to do so – suggesting that even the practical Jane Eyre's theological sympathies do not extend beyond a certain sphere. Her theology then, whilst rather more astute than St Johns, still suffers from a number of limits and lacunae.

However, it is through the figure of St. John that Brontë works her most subtle theological critique. Whilst more conventionally attractive than Rochester (Jane specifically notes his 'Athenian mouth and chin,')[147] he is crucially lacking in the most important theological value — namely, love. Jane herself notes this, observing that whilst he is a great orator, capable of thrilling the heart and astonishing the mind, 'neither were softened.'[148] There is a sense of theological tragedy for St. John, for whilst he may be conscientious and zealous, he has not found 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding.' As his own sister puts it, 'it is right, noble, Christian; yet it breaks my heart.'[149] As a result, listening to St. John, as with listening to the young Helen Burns produces 'an inexpressible sadness.'[150] However, unlike Helen, who denies the world in order to achieve the goal of heaven, St. John denies himself, in order to work for the glory of God in the world. Yet, for all of his dedication, there

[146] The link between theology and colonialism comes into great importance in Chapter Four of the thesis in connection to horror in the late 1800s as the empire becomes increasingly vulnerable and functions as a source of cultural anxiety.
[147] *Jane Eyre*, p. 345.
[148] *Jane Eyre*, p. 353.
[149] *Jane Eyre*, p. 357.
[150] Ibid. p. 353.

is an 'absence of any patent love for God and his Son.'[151] St. John speaks of his desire for 'the destiny of…anything other than a priest,'[152] before his 'powers heard a call from Heaven to rise…a missionary I resolved to be.'[153] St. John then does not pursue the call of missionary work out of a sense of Christian love, but rather out of an attempt to resolve the conflicts with his self-confessed 'human weakness,'[154] that he fails to integrate into his overall theological understanding. For St. John, missionary work is the specific end of the ways in which religion has developed his own original qualities – meaning that his faith, rather than emerging from his own dependence on grace, comes forth because of his personal commitment to a specific kind of religious practise. For a clergyman, particularly an evangelical, dedicated to proclaiming the *evangel* or good news, there can be no greater failure than to be what he himself confesses he is – 'a cold, hard man,'[155] who has supressed his own emotional and spiritual nature in the service of a strict religious order.

In this respect then, the reasons for the basic incompatibility between Jane and St. John become clearer as well as the reasons for why St. John's offer of missionary partnership proves to be so tempting. Offering Jane the opportunity to 'enlist under the same banner'[156] (in a typically militaristic bit of evangelical terminology, considering St John's colonialist mission), he seeks to give Jane 'a place in the ranks of His chosen.'[157] In response, Jane asks whether, if she is truly qualified 'will not [her] own heart be the first to inform?'[158] Quite arrogantly and with typical patriarchal nerve, St. John responds that if Jane's own heart

[151] Thormählen, p. 208.
[152] *Jane Eyre*, p. 362
[153] Ibid.
[154] *Jane Eyre*, p. 363
[155] *Jane Eyre*, p. 376.
[156] *Jane Eyre*, p. 402.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

remains silent, he 'must speak for it.'[159] As Thormählen argues, Jane is a far better evangelical theologian than St. John, aware that no Christian can speak for another's calling from God – St. John commits the sin of spiritual pride – 'arrogance in a peculiarly literal sense.'[160] It is not the offer of missionary work that divides Jane and St. John (this commitment to productive labour, in and of itself, is probably what connects them most deeply) but rather the idea that St. John can master Jane's soul. Such a martyrdom, as Jane herself admits, would be 'monstrous.'[161] Whilst Jane admits his greatness, she adds to this that 'he forgets, pitilessly, the feelings and claims of little people in pursuing his own large views.'[162] St John in his theological arrogance, comes close to a type of Gothic villain who seeks not just to imprison the Gothic heroine, but rather more seriously, seeks to possess her very soul and calling before God.

Thus, as with *Wuthering Heights,* the novel puts forward a stern critique of a specific kind of institutional religion and practise, but unlike Brocklehurst or the cantankerous old Calvinist, Joseph, St. John is not entirely condemned – although in practical terms both St John and Brocklehurst share a great deal of common ground. St. John provides the impetus for a new, re-made and redeemed Lowood, but at the same time, given St. John's propensity for a repression of the heart (in contrast to Brocklehurst's own repression of the flesh) the two are often uncomfortably similar. After Jane refuses his marriage proposal, he preaches from Revelation 21, once again drawing upon the apocalyptic language of eschatology that forms the crux of a type of theological threat that aims to ensure Jane's submission:

> 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But,' was slowly, distinctly read, 'the fearful, the unbelieving…shall have their part

[159] *Jane Eyre*, p. 403.
[160] Thormählen, p. 209.
[161] *Jane Eyre*, p. 406
[162] *Jane Eyre*, p. 417.

> in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' Henceforth, I knew what fate St. John feared for me.[163]

After her condemnation to the hell of Lowood School was interrupted by the heaven of her time with Rochester, once again Jane is confronted with the apocalyptic language of hellfire and eternal death. The threat of eternal damnation, coupled with what is admirable about St John, produces a profound effect, a deep and powerful impulse to forsake the world and to heed the call of God, presented in a series of short, staccato phrases. 'Religion called — Angels beckoned — God commanded…all here might be sacrificed in a second.'[164] In this moment, Jane comes closer than at any point of the novel to finally accepting the theology of those like Helen Burns, who spurn their own agency for the greater glory of God. Such is St John's oratorical ability and theological powers of persuasion that his desire to control Jane can only be thwarted by a seemingly divine (or, at the least, supernatural) revelation. From a theological point of view, St John makes the categorical error of assuming the power of authority over Jane's own spiritual condition and attempting to reinstate the kind of spiritual submission she has consistently resisted. As Kathryn Swanson argues, whereas Rochester tried to force Jane to be his spiritual better half, St John attempts to become Jane's spiritual whole.'[165] Hearing the voice of Rochester, Jane responds that 'I am coming…Wait for me! Oh, I will come!'[166] She acknowledges that 'it was *my* time to assume ascendency…I mounted to my chamber; locked myself in; fell on my knees and prayed.'[167] Here, the power of female subjectivity is married to both theological language and practise – some critics identify this moment as a type of feminist assertion of selfhood[168] — that should be affirmed, and

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[163] *Jane Eyre*, p. 418.
[164] *Jane Eyre*, p. 419.
[165] Kathryn J. Swanson, *A Liberative Imagination: Reconsidering the fiction of Charlotte Brontë in the light of Feminist Theology* (Unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of St Andrews), p. 127.
[166] *Jane Eyre*, p. 420.
[167] *Jane Eyre*, p. 421.
[168] For examples, see Milbank, (1992) Showalter, (1977) and Hoeveler, (1996).

furthermore this is also a moment of theological significance. Freed from the constraining ideology of St John which seeks to erase Jane's subjectivity — what Swanson calls the 'sin of fusion,'[169] that women under patriarchy are forced into — she is liberated by what seems to be a call from heaven that draws her back to the now blinded Rochester. Understood this way then, the logic of a binary opposition between Jane's theological convictions and desire for companionship and love can be subverted. In leaving St. John she does not reject her religious beliefs or ideas – rather, read theologically her actions are 'consistently recognizable as a turning towards life, affirming her right to be loved with integrity and to love freely.'[170] Thus, it is not simply the systems of enclosure and limitations that can be seen as Gothic elements within the text, but also the theological ideas which seek to force Jane into the sin of either idolatry or spiritual self-abnegation. In contrast to this kind of monstrous theology, Eyre consistently clings to the ideas of God's provision and grace whilst refusing the theological logic that would imprison her once again.

The conclusion of the novel sees the two reunited – Jane, now sure of her selfhood, and economically independent could easily be read a model for escaping (or at the least, taming) the wild and patriarchal Byronic Rochester.[171] However, as previously argued such a position sets up an unnecessary binary between theological consistency and her marriage. What truly makes the reunion and marriage of the two possible is Rochester's 'voluntary subjugation to Divine authority.'[172] On her return, his 'heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this earth just now'[173] and he confesses to a kind of conversion experience, beginning to pray, humbled by God and expressing the 'wish for reconcilement' that is the

[169] Swanson, p. 121-131.
[170] Ibid p. 131.
[171] Such an argument being one made by Diane Long Hoeveler throughout *Gothic Feminism.*
[172] Thormählen, p. 218.
[173] *Jane Eyre*, p. 447.

mark of repentance.[174] The union of the two in marriage must necessarily be coupled with a spiritual dimension to allow marriage to function as something more than another system of enclosure. At the close of the novel then, Brontë suggests that it is in the sacrament of marriage – lived 'entirely for and with what I love best on this earth,'[175] that there can be a possible liberation and authentic Christian belief. Yet, this is not held up as an exclusive model – somewhat akin to *Wuthering Heights* the ending refuses absolute judgements. However, whereas *Wuthering Heights* insists upon the contingency and openness of the relationship between God and humanity, in the case of *Jane Eyre,* the ending is more akin to 'a balancing of the books' as Thormählen argues[176] - after all, the closing line is spoken in the expectation that God's judgement is, inexorably, coming. Jane has united her emotional and sexual desires with spiritual fulfilment in the sacrament of marriage, whereas St John remains, resolutely unmarried in the colonies, living out what remains of his life in service to a God that, for him, appears to be ever nearer to a second coming. Despite his theological hubris and his many other flaws, there is a deeply serious admiration for St John at the close of the novel. As DeLamotte writes,

> Brontë pays homage to the aspirations of souls that can find transcendence only through the search for a "world elsewhere." But Jane must find her fulfilment in the world, in fellowship with her "kind."[177]

Finally, then, both of these classic Gothic novels present two distinct critiques of theology. *Wuthering Heights* is a text wrought by the contingency of faith, a Gothic environment that reveals the fundamentally flawed nature of humanity and the impossibility of clearly separating the Gothic and the religious. The novel presents a staunch resistance to a vision of

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[174] Ibid.
[175] *Jane Eyre*, p. 451.
[176] See Thormählen, p. 217-220.
[177] Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth Century Literature,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 225.

the divine as a Calvinist who eternally punishes before ending with a detailed examination of the ways in which grace functions as a means of breaking out of the patterns of sin. Theology in *Wuthering Heights* is a fragile and uncertain endeavour that can all-too-easily be shattered by the ghosts of the past. This awareness of the proximity of ghosts could potentially re-invigorate theology, but this is by no means guaranteed as the Gothic elements of the text make such certainty seem at best, tenuous. In the case of *Jane Eyre,* the inclusion of St John at the close of the novel may seem something of a strange choice when contrasted with the satisfied and sanctified life that Jane builds for herself. However, as Thormählen argues, the inclusion of St. John serves to show the radical complexity of the Brontë's theological investigation.

> The mixture of extreme qualities that is St John Rivers thus illustrates the radical enquiry into religious thought, feeling and conduct which is so characteristic of all the Brontë works. It is in evidence, for instance, when Emily Brontë stands back from articulating a definite scenario for Catherine's and Heathcliff's afterlife and when Anne Brontë refrains from even suggesting whether Helen Huntingdon's hopes for her husband's ultimate salvation are likely to be fulfilled. The Brontë spirit of religious enquiry has always affected readers – even readers not fully aware that it was a religious challenge they were responding to[178]

Still, the theological critiques that the Brontës provide highlight the extent to which orthodox presentations of Christianity were increasingly untenable - the Gothic text functioned as a space by which the fragility of Christian faith could be examined and possible imaginative solutions and reworking of theological ideas could be presented. However, as the nineteenth century advanced, the theological themes and concerns of the Gothic novel would become more urgent as the advancements of the fin-de-siècle would increasingly seek to provide a wholly materialist account of existence. Despite this, the theological persisted within the Gothic, moving further beyond the grounds of theological orthodoxy, whilst exposing the

[178] Thormählen pp. 219-20.

limitations of strict materialism. It is this productive tension that will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Four: The limitations of materialism: Fin-de-siècle Gothic, Sin and Subjectivity and the Insufficiency of Degeneration.

The period of the fin de siècle is often theorised through a broad set of materialist non-theological discourses and critical practises classified as degeneration theory.[1] This opening section will outline degeneration theory and the challenge it poses to theology before offering, in response, a theological reading of the fin-de-siècle Gothic. In brief, the common critical position is that in an era of ever-increasing technological sophistication, profound scientific successes, powerful British imperialism and the epistemic impact of works such as Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), a more generally secular society emerged, and this secularism exerted a concomitant impact on cultural works. Crucially for the Gothic, within Darwinian thought was 'the spectre of its own inversion'[2] – not an evolution towards greater sophistication, but rather a degeneration or biological reversion. As Edwin Ray Lankester's *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880) argues, Darwinian natural selection had within it the potential to produce 'a gradual change in the structure in which the organism becomes adapted to less varied conditions of life.'[3] Lankester goes on to claim that this biological process could be seen in humanity as, for example, 'an active healthy man sometimes degenerates when possessed of the riches of the ancient world.'[4] A lack of moral behaviour, and even crime, could be

[1] An exhaustive list is, due to space, impossible, but key studies include Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the fin-de-siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), as well as Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-De-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), plus Kirsten MacLeod, *Fictions of British Decadence, High Art, Popular Writing and the fin-de-siècle*, (London: Palgrave, 2006).
[2] Stephen Karschay, *Degeneration, Normativity and the Gothic at the Fin De Siècle*, (London: Palgrave, 2015) p. 30.
[3] Edwin Ray Lankester, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (London: W.W. Norton, 1880), p. 32.
[4] Ibid., p. 32.

explained in biological and strictly non-theological terms.[5] This was expanded in the work of criminal anthropologists such as Cesare Lombroso, who became famous for his theories of the born criminal, a figure explained by Kelly Hurley as someone

> Whose innate propensity for criminal behaviours could be explained by his atavism, or reversion to now latent characteristics that had been dominant in some earlier moment of the species-history.[6]

Thus, biological determinism becomes linked to ontology as the understanding of the nature of the human subject becomes framed in strictly non-theological terminology – theological concepts are perceived as increasingly superfluous – persisting in language but becoming increasingly emptied of content. Alternatively, where appropriate, theological language was simply mapped onto the emerging scientific discourses.[7] Instead, in the fin-de-siècle, subjectivity becomes shaped by 'mere instruments of some ulterior, altogether impersonal evolution.'[8] Existence, rather than operating on the divine preordination of God and heading towards a specific teleological end, was instead dictated by strictly materialist ideas of evolution and progress. Thus, the theological becomes either usurped by new rationalist ideas of human advancement, or in other cases, these discourses of evolution and progress form a kind of materialist theology – the transcendent, non-materialist ideas of Christian theology have been removed and replaced with materialist, scientific ideas. However, despite the ostensible secularity of the fin-de-siècle, the discourses of evolution and degeneration still retain theological notions of a specific end for humanity and the dangers of a possible fall into

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[5] The extent of this shift can be seen when contrasted with the position of earlier thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham who argued in *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781) that criminal action was the result of conscious motivation, based in the exercise of free will rather than any kind of biological pre-disposition.
[6] Hurley, p. 92-3.
[7] Simon Marsden makes a similar argument in his essay 'Nothing moved. Nothing was Seen, and Nothing was heard and nothing happened: Evil, Privation and the Absent *Logos* in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle,' Gothic Studies,* 19.1 (May 2017) pp. 57-72.
[8] Terry Eagleton, 'The Flight to the Real,' in *Cultural Politics at the Fin-de-siècle,* ed. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.16.

a state somehow below the level of human. This is true even if this is framed in the context of biology rather than theology – there is a kind of theological logic still at work even within the ostensible secular and scientific theories. This persistent theological presence goes some way in contributing to the consistency of religious belief at the time. As Owen Chadwick has argued in *The Secularisation of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century,* secularism, whilst an unsettling force for the Church through the century, was not necessarily a negative issue for mainstream Christianity, with many religious figures arguing for a secular public and political sphere as a means for securing greater religious freedoms and opportunities for proselytizing.[9] Furthermore, as the work of Callum Brown shows, an increasingly secular society was not evidence of a marked decline in religious involvement — rather; the population growth in urban centres was coupled with an increased and sustained effort at evangelization.[10] As opposed to secularity or even science or the scientific method, the far more profound issue for Christian theology at the time was the broader issue of materialism. The work of Darwin, and to a greater extent that of popular Darwinian polemicists such as Thomas Huxley, provoked a stern challenge to theology,[11] proposing not just a scientific but a strictly materialist understanding of the world. As Huxley argued throughout *Evolution and Ethics: Delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre, May 18, 1893* there was no conflict between evolutionary materialism and ethical judgments. Furthermore, his essay, 'On the Physical

[9] Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century,* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1975). As a side note, Shadi Hamid argues that Christianity could adapt to changing societal values as its founders never articulated a specific political vision for the organisation of society and thus the faith was capable of shifting its relationship to the state in an era of secularisation. In Augustinian terms, Christianity always saw the City of God as distinct and in many ways, separate from the City of Man. See Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World,* (London: St Martin's Press, 2016).

[10] Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (2nd edition) (London: Routledge, 2009) pp. 35-57.

[11] For an exploration of the impact of Darwinian thought on Christian theology, see James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to come to terms with Darwin, 1870-1900,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Basis of Life,' (1868) argued that 'the materialistic terminology is in every way to be preferred,' and that any alternative, theological understanding of the world 'is utterly barren, and leads to nothing but obscurity and confusion of ideas.'[12] Unsurprisingly as a result, theologians increasingly turned to advancing the arguments of 'natural' theology, building upon earlier work from figures like William Paley, relying on reason and observations of the natural world to construct arguments about God.[13] With the undeniable cultural impact that discourses of degeneration had, Gothic narratives of the supernatural also increasingly reflected a more materialist understanding of phenomena.[14] Critics claim that as a result, the Gothic text becomes concerned with the condition of the subject framed in materialist terms often focused through the discourses of Darwinian evolution, criminology or anthropology. Kelly Hurley's landmark work, *The Gothic Body*, proposes that the fin-de-siècle Gothic enacts, almost obsessively, the 'ruination of the subject' replacing it with an 'abhuman' figure,[15] symptomatic of a broader metaphysical estrangement. Stephen Karschay follows Hurley's lead and links the Gothic fin-de-siècle more explicitly to the work of Nordau and Lombroso,[16] tracing the various disciplinary procedures at work, be they criminological, sociological and medical that sought to contain and police these degenerate figures.[17] In contrast to these

[12] T.H. Huxley, 'On the Physical Basis of Life,' http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/CE1/PhysB.html (first accessed 14/02/17).

[13] The Gifford Lectures, still one of the preeminent lecture series on Natural Theology in the world, first began in the period (from 1888) and were established by a bequest in the will of the Scottish jurist, Lord Adam Gifford. The Gifford bequest makes allowance for a series of public lectures on Natural theology and specifically asks that the lectures 'treat their subject as a strictly natural science… without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation.' See http://www.giffordlectures.org/lord-gifford/will (first accessed 14/02/17).

[14] Knight and Mason explore this in the work of George Eliot and Sheridan La Fanu where encounters with the supernatural are mediated through materialist understandings of cause and effect. See Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Literature and Religion,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 158-161.

[15] See Hurley (1996) p.1-2.

[16] See Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: Appleton & Co, 1895) and Cesare Lombroso, *Crime, Its Causes and Remedies,* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1899/1911).

[17] See Karschay, (2015), particularly the Introduction.

theories, Robert Mighall sees the fin-de-siècle Gothic as staging the return of history into the present upon and through the bodies of 'savages, criminals and degenerates,' that threaten the civilized present.[18] For Mighall, the late nineteenth century Gothic shows the fear of 'going native,' a reversion explained by reference to the criminologists and psychiatrists of the day.[19] Mighall's concern is instructive for contextualising the fin-de-siècle Gothic and its criticism, highlighting a connection between the degeneration theory of Lombroso and the imperialism of the British Empire, which constructed a feared Other out of not just the degenerate criminal underclass, but also so-called 'lower races,'[20] that the empire must civilize and bring to humanity. Stephen Arata notes that, just as with Lankester quoted above, the idea of degeneration serves as a kind of fin-de-siècle 'common-sense' (in the Gramscian understanding of the term) that 'mapped onto older paradigms of decline and fall from the Old Testament,'[21] removing the need for theology in exploring the state of man in the present moment. Knight and Mason go further, arguing that by the time of *Jekyll and Hyde* 'religion has been translated into a veneer of bourgeois respectability that can no longer offer a meaningful distinction between the morality of Jekyll and his alter ego.'[22]

However, close reading of the Gothic texts of the period reveals profound, albeit marginalised and often latent, theological anxieties even in this era of scientific materialism. Drawing on a triptych of novels from the era, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *Dracula* (1897), this section will argue that theological understandings of subjectivity, sin and evil offer new ways of conceptualizing

[18] See Mighall, Both the introduction and Chapter One.
[19] See Mighall p. 139.
[20] See Hurley, p. 94.
[21] Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian fin-de-siècle, Identity and Empire,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 3.
[22] Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth Century Literature and Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 176.

issues of degeneration and decadence that expand the critical field and offer greater depth to Gothic studies and its approach to the fin-de-siècle text. Throughout these texts, I argue, there is a vacillation or movement between the fear of that which lies beyond the boundaries of accepted knowledge and at the same time a desire, driven by new discoveries, constantly to violate and redefine the limits of the "acceptable."[23] Jekyll's interest in transcendent medicine, Gray's desire for the height of aesthetic experience and the deviance of Dracula all demonstrate, to some degree, awareness of this vacillation between acceptability and the violation of normative boundaries. As Glennis Byron writes, 'as concerns about national, social and psychic decay began to multiply in late Victorian Britain, so Gothic monstrosity re-emerged.'[24] Yet, to consider these concerns without examining the theological discourses that inform them significantly reduces critical understanding of the scope and power of the narratives in question. Whilst the scientific and materialist discourses of Huxley, Darwin and Lombroso detailed above were all undoubtedly influential and critically productive, the underlying questions regarding the status of humanity, the nature of morality and the ethical or moral norms of a cultural moment are all deeply informed by theological discourses and are thus productive sites of theological and critical inquiry. The fin-de-siècle Gothic text refuses to foreclose the theological nature of the fear of the time, whilst at the same time serving to highlight the necessary, painful and often impossible task of cultural, societal and individual change — what in theological terms is known as repentance. The theological scope of the fin-de-siècle Gothic is thus, like the texts themselves, constantly held in tension between multiple

[23] Hurley labels this ambivalence to the natural sciences as one of the key markers of the fin-de-siècle Gothic text. See Hurley (1996) p. 18.
[24] Glennis Byron, "Gothic in the 1890s" in *A Companion to the Gothic,* ed. David Punter, (London: Blackwell, 2000), p. 132.

discursive positions: between the possibility of change and renewal and the possibility of falling into sin and corruption. Whatever change may come can never be embraced as wholly positive – the transformations of the Gothic whilst undeniably new, are also horrifying. Just as with Darwinian natural selection, within every change is the threat or possibility of a degeneration or fall into something less than human. Rather than progress or perfectibility, change threatens to emerge as disaster –a regression destructive to both body and soul. In a cultural moment of increasing secularity, wherein the language of theology had been replaced by more evolutionary and criminological discourses, evil increasingly becomes something which culture lacks the appropriate vocabulary to describe. As Rowan Williams argues, 'secularism, as the necessary companion of modernity leaves us…[conceptually] bereaved; we are vulnerable because we have no way of making sense of the most deeply threatening elements of our environment.'[25] The fin-de-siècle Gothic embodies this impoverishment of language, resorting to the discourses of degeneration and corruption as moral language becomes emptied of theological content. Thus, a theological reading of these novels articulates not just the thematic content of the texts individually but serves to highlight something of the broader cultural moment— namely this sense of an inability to articulate evil as something other than a 'trivially emotive way of referring to what we hate or fear or just disapprove of.'[26] The fin-de-siècle Gothic is not just a collection of cultural and material anxieties around degeneration but rather serves to illustrate a moment where new secular discourses are revealed to be insufficient in describing metaphysical and horrific encounters.

[25] Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London, Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 11
[26] ibid

Jekyll and Hyde – The Law and the Divided Self: Fractured Subjectivity and Theology

Of the three novels under consideration, Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* is most overtly concerned with scientific discourses, taking as its main character a medical doctor and scientist. The text follows a model of middle-class, bourgeois professional respectability in the figure of Dr Henry Jekyll, who through various chemical experiments manages to create a draught that allows him to take on the identity of the repulsive Mr. Hyde and indulge in various immoral or hedonistic behaviours. Hyde's appearance, in contrast to that of the eminently well-thought-of Jekyll, is 'hardly human… something troglodytic,'[27] and thus much criticism has focused upon physiognomic or racial and Darwinian discourses and the role class may play in the reading and construction of criminality.[28] Arata frames Hyde as embodying middle class fear — both the fears of a criminal lower class as well as simultaneously expressing horror at the idle aristocracy, that in the age of industrial revolution has fallen into the very worst kind of slothful corruption.[29] Of greater interest here however, given the critical prominence given to the division between Jekyll and Hyde and the subsequent discursive focus on categorising and classifying Hyde's nature, is the role of the divided self. The idea of a divided self is anathema to discourses of degeneration which would seek to explain subjectivity in terms of biology or evolution, yet the idea of a fractured or otherwise divided self is familiar and productive ground for the Christian theological tradition.[30] In the section of the text where Jekyll finally contributes directly to the narrative, from the opening,

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[27] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories,* (London: Penguin Classics, 1979) p. 40.
[28] See Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin-de-siècle: Identity and Empire,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 33-4 as well as Karschay pp.89-91, plus Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson: Science and the fin-de-siècle,* (London: Palgrave, 2006).
[29] Arata, p. 36.
[30] It has been a part of Christian thought throughout Scripture but gains the fullest articulation in the work of the apostle Paul. The nature of man (in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ) was a recurring theme throughout early thought too – see particularly St Augustine's *Confessions.*

the presentation of subjectivity is clearly divided — a division which Jekyll himself seeks to minimize. Whilst the 'worst of his [Jekyll's] faults' is presented as nothing more than a 'certain impatient gaiety of disposition' these run into conflict with his 'imperious desire to carry my head high'[31] – a desire perfectly in keeping with his public personae. As previously explored in this thesis, (see Chapter Two on Calvinism and James Hogg) this stark division between the appearance of things and the spiritual reality that is unseen is a theme common to a certain tradition of Christian theology to which Gothic writing has repeatedly alluded and found to be a productive source of cultural fear.[32] The split between what is seen and what is unseen (what in the broadly Calvinist tradition might be phrased as the spiritual vs. the flesh) lends itself, without much difficulty, to Jekyll's moral division.

> Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views I had set before me, I regarded them and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame.[33]

Yet despite the use of the word "shame" Jekyll goes on to claim that he is 'in no sense a hypocrite'[34] but, rather, views both sides of his personality and their actions with complete sincerity. There is no lack of genuine feeling, either when Jekyll indulges his vices or practises his more respected virtues, indeed Jekyll goes so far as to practise and refine his doubled lifestyle. Thus, much critical work has been done exploring the nature of the connection between Hyde and Jekyll. Arata argues that Hyde is no anomaly, but rather the very essence of bourgeoisie masculine behaviour.[35] However, even as Arata identifies the class discourses and latent misogyny that permeate this novel of professional men, and while this certainly

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[31] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 81.
[32] Particularly Calvinist discourses, which Stevenson was well acquainted with thanks to the influence of his nanny. See Jenni Calder, *RLS: Life Study of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Chambers, 1990).
[33] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 81.
[34] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 81.
[35] See Arata, p. 33-54.

serves to indict a certain presentation of middle-class professionalised bourgeois masculinity, this point does not necessarily approach the divide in subjectivity that Jekyll establishes as being foundational to his own sense of self. Arata's class analysis is essentialised to the level of ontology here, equating social standing with being. Whereas Lombroso equated biology with ontology, Arata makes the same mistake with class position. Rather than functioning as a social construct from a particular set of historical and material conditions, Jekyll's class position is claimed as the determining factor in his ontological status. Furthermore, this argument also relies upon ignoring or eliding the scope of theological language in the novel, claiming that language is, in the last instance, a marker of a certain class position, rather than demonstrating anything else. Rather than merely dismiss theological language as a sign of a class signification, theology must be engaged with upon its own terms.

Jekyll's admission of his own fundamentally divided nature, between the immoral and respectable sides of himself, coupled with the use of the term "shame" and his secrecy throughout the text does challenge his own claim that he was in no way acting hypocritically. Despite the stated belief in his own integrity, the linguistic choices throughout the novel bespeak of an awareness of a normative ethical standard and his own violation thereof. He details certain 'indiscretions' in his youth, and furthermore, Jekyll is ostracized from much of the company he would normally keep further reinforcing the impression of the generalized ethical norm he has in some sense transgressed. From the opening of the novel, Jekyll is perceived by others as the very 'pink of proprieties.'[36] Yet Jekyll himself is glaringly absent from the opening of the text – the reader is left with the words and impression of other characters, but little by way of direct interaction. He becomes therefore, the cause of, or

[36] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 33.

catalyst for the plot through the traces that he has left behind – the most important of these traces being the will delivered to Mr. Utterson, by which Jekyll's secret relationship with Hyde is exposed.[37] Utterson's first encounter with the mysterious Hyde is much quoted in criticism of the novel for the reference to Hyde's troglodytic appearance —Hyde becomes a figure for the concerns of atavism and degeneration thanks to the condition of his material body.[38] Yet what the degeneration critics miss is the fact that Utterson goes on to reference Hyde's appearance with theological language as well as the language of animalistic degeneration. Hyde's appearance is described as 'the radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures its clay continent.'[39] The implication here is perfectly clear — exposure to Hyde's physical form is only a foretaste of the potential spiritual corruption that can be exerted upon those such as Jekyll. Furthermore, Utterson raises the possibility that Jekyll has, spiritually speaking, placed himself in danger, as Hyde's face bears 'Satan's signature' upon it,[40] and he is concerned that the presence of Hyde in Jekyll's life is explained through 'the ghost of some old sin.'[41] Here Utterson deploys theological language but its seems disconnected from any question of theological belief. Neither Utterson or Jekyll exhibit any sincere religious commitment in thought or action. Utterson admits that he sees no need for religious belief to influence the behaviour of those he knows, preferring to 'let my brother go the devil in his own way.'[42] The theologically inflected language of sin and the devil he uses, has therefore been emptied of any theological referent, coming to stand in for ideas around

[37] The relationship between lawyer and client seems analogous to the secrecy and confidentiality of the confessional – one can imagine a more "Catholic" writer could have written a similar tale with a priest in the role of discoverer.
[38] Discussed at length in Hurley (2015) and Arata (1996).
[39] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 40.
[40] Ibid.
[41] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 41.
[42] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 29.

class position, propriety and public respectability.[43] Utterson's use of this language suggests therefore that, at the end of the nineteenth century, not only does theological language now refer to a somewhat poorly defined moral ideal, but that there is no viable non-materialist language provided by the secular discourses the characters inhabit that would adequately encompass figures like Hyde. This brief aside on Utterson's part evidences the broader point made by Williams in *Faith in the Public Square* — Utterson is left conceptually impoverished by fin-de-siècle secular materialism and thus reaches back to a language of theology despite no longer professing any sincere theological commitment but merely the appearance of respectability.

Whilst Jekyll may well indulge both sides of his nature, the terms in which this is presented reflect an awareness that his behaviour is in some sense, running contrary to the commonly accepted or normative moral standards within which he exists. His colleagues refuse to associate with him, because of his 'scientific heresy' and fondness for 'unscientific balderdash.'[44] The link here to *Frankenstein* is instructive, as while Victor Frankenstein was fascinated with the idea of overcoming death, Henry Jekyll is most concerned with overcoming the societal expectations that would shame him for his apparent moral failures. As a medical man, he is isolated from not just the material realities of a scientific community but whatever normative ethics might govern the practise of medical science against which he deliberately pushes in order to advance knowledge. Furthermore, the very first moment that he appears in the novel he is described as having 'something of a slyish cast'[45] about his appearance. Given the cultural impact of evolutionary and physiognomic discourses, this

[43] In a sense, this can be seen as a consequence of the theological/religious tension that so preoccupied Emily Brontë – for more on this, see Chapter Three.
[44] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 43, p. 36.
[45] Ibid p. 43.

implies a certain degree of disingenuousness despite his class status and his treatment by others in the novel. However, the implication here should not be that Jekyll is personally responsible for this duplicity, but rather this hypocritical division of self is one produced by wider discourses. The scientific desire to push the boundaries of knowledge forms part of the normative standard of medical science whilst scientific materialism (that to which Jekyll has devoted his life) lacks the power of moral or theological ideas to explain his moral propensity for 'duplicity.' It is this which encourages Jekyll's interests in the transcendent whilst at the same time viewing him with suspicion and doubt. The monstrosity of Hyde is not, therefore, a case of an individual's moral failing, but rather a product of the operation of the materialist discourses of the fin-de-siècle. Hyde is not a monstrous presence that has come to disturb the genteel Jekyll; there is, in fact, no split or divide between the two on the level of ontology despite the critical attempts to divide the two, rather it is Jekyll himself who is the monster of the text.

Operating and existing in two separate spheres of life, Jekyll's division of his own self shares much in common with the Apostle Paul's description of a self divided between both moral and sinful activities or, in alternative phrasing, between the law and the flesh. In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul expands upon the nature of human subjectivity:

> For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want I agree that the law is good. But in fact, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.[46]

[46] See Romans 7:14-19.

Stevenson's novella provides a secularised version of Paul's writing. In the work of Paul, the law of God is perfect in its ability to reveal the fallen-ness of man – as Paul argues his knowledge of the sinful nature of his actions is revealed through the Law. The Law of God reveals the actions of man to be what they are, and thus perfectly justifies divine judgement and the necessity of grace in the salvation of mankind. The Law is for Paul the very basis of our shared condition of ontological sinfulness and is thus the basis of solidarity. If all have sinned, all are in need of salvation.[47] On the other hand, in *Jekyll and Hyde* there can be no such solidarity. Jekyll draws his knowledge of the nature of his own actions not from the Law but from public opinion and the potential for scandal that could emerge. Whereby in Scripture, Paul's understanding of his actions leads to his realisation of his dependence upon grace for redemption, Jekyll's realisation of his actions leads to secrecy — to confess for Jekyll would not bring salvation, but ultimately would only bring disaster. Furthermore, in this section of the Epistle, Paul frames in similar terms a comparable dilemma that is mentioned by Jekyll in his "full account" section of the narrative, but renders explicit what the degeneration theorists, referred to above, have left as merely implicit. Namely, it is a mistake to consider Jekyll and Hyde as separate or discrete individuals. Using sociological, criminological or evolutionary discourses that split the subjectivity of Jekyll away from Hyde inevitably allows for historicising and materialist criticism.[48] However, the consequences of such a move whether intentional or not, is to fundamentally alter the ways in which ontology is understood as being presented within the text. To treat Jekyll and Hyde separately, as

[47] For an excellent summary of this idea and its implications see Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin: A Cultural History,* (London: Harper Collins, 2008).

[48] This is a common critical trend which emerges from the 'Victorian impulse toward scientific classification and a subsequent normalization of the possibilities - bodily, subjective, sexual - of human identity' (Hurley, p.8). An excellent example of which is Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). In more modern criticism these materialist works are used as the means to read the Gothic text – for examples Karschay uses Nordeau and Krafft-Ebing to read the works of Oscar Wilde. See Karschay (2015) pp.71-84.

taxonomic categories that allow for insight into the anxieties of the age, effectively renders Jekyll as merely half – a subject rendered deficient by the intrusion of Hyde, or alternatively a subject that has become problematically corrupted by the arrival of Hyde's presence into consciousness. Throughout the novel, the correlations and areas of connection between Jekyll and Hyde are striking. Jekyll himself admits to Utterson that despite his own apparent reluctance to discuss the issue, he has 'a very great interest in Hyde,'[49] a loaded reference to the fondness for duplicity that Jekyll claims has marked his life. Hyde also has huge freedom in Jekyll's home – with Jekyll giving explicit orders to servants and staff that Hyde is to be obeyed just as they do for Jekyll.[50] Furthermore, in the wake of the vicious murder of Danvers Carew, Hyde's murder weapon is discovered to be Jekyll's possession – given to Jekyll by Utterson himself.[51] When Hyde is eventually tracked down, the separation between Hyde and Jekyll becomes even more difficult to maintain. Despite residing in a particularly dingy quarter of Soho, the rooms Hyde rents are 'furnished in luxury and good taste,' along the same lines of fashion enjoyed by Henry Jekyll.[52] For as has been already pointed out, Hyde is not some sort of supplement or add-on to Jekyll's moral self, but is rather a product of the moral discourses that have informed the construction of this apparent model of moral respectability. Hyde is, quite literally therefore, an externalisation and embodiment of the moral failings and tensions within Jekyll's own subjectivity. Rather than attempt to wrestle with any kind of theological introspection, an example of which is provided by Paul in the letter to the Romans,[53] Jekyll uses the tools of fin-de-siècle modernity to attempt to solve the

[49] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 44.
[50] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 41. For more on the spatial aspects of the novel see Linda Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) particularly, pp. 102-108.
[51] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 47-8.
[52] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 49.
[53] See Romans Chapter 6-7 particularly 7:24, 'Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?'

problem once and for all. Rather than grapple with the tension of both law and flesh (to phrase the issue in Pauline terms) Jekyll simply prefers to forcibly externalize the tensions and moral failings which go so far in defining the nature of subjectivity. What is important to emphasize here is that there is no divided self – only a singular self, torn between the law and the desires of the flesh, or rather between the strictures of public opinion and personal morality. Thus, Jekyll is left riven by the need to aspire to 'exacting aspirations' whilst simultaneously being guilty of a 'profound duplicity of life.[54] This duplicity of self is maintained not only through his actions, but also through the lack of a theological vocabulary that allows him to articulate both wrong-doing and confession more generally.

Despite the constant references to the scientific and medical throughout the novel, the problem of the self is most clearly stated in theological terms. Jekyll wistfully wonders if each side of his self 'could but be housed in separate identities' as such a split would allow for his good half to proceed through life without further spiritual endangerment or moral trouble. Despite the critical notion of such desires being linked to evolutionary, sociological or criminological concerns, Jekyll frames it in the language of theology and salvation:

> The unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely, on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil.[55]

The Scriptural allusions here are to the images of divine judgement – specifically ones mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew – the broad and narrow way of Matthew 7:13 as well as the division of the sheep and goats from Matthew 25: 31-46. Here Jekyll divides the world into the just and unjust, placing himself in the position of God. Even the arch historicist Robert

[54] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 81.
[55] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 82.

Mighall acknowledges the signification of the 'theological path of righteousness and the notion of social betterment'[56] that the passage reflects. With this in mind, and given the comparison to the section of Romans, Jekyll's experiments function as an attempt to solve the theological dilemma experienced by Paul through the application of medico-scientific means. The eventual catastrophic failure of Jekyll's endeavour thus attains greater significance, as Stevenson's novel suggests that the application of these medical and scientific discourses could *never* satisfactorily contain or defeat Hyde. The externalisation or splitting of subjectivity through the discourses of medical authority and modern science are doomed to fail in their quest to resolve the dilemma expressed in Romans 7 and heightened in Stevenson's novella. By framing Hyde in the terms of evolution, criminology or biology, subjectivity is externalized once more. The common critical stance on the fin-de-siècle Gothic, can only frame Hyde as a lingering problem that could or should be solved — the failure to do so being the true cause of the anxiety which gives rise to Stevenson's text. Thus, treating Hyde as an evolutionary, bio-medical or criminological anxiety only risks repeating the doomed endeavour of Henry Jekyll himself – namely attempting to solve through historicist or scientific discourses what is, at root, a more metaphysical issue.[57] In effect, the realities of human nature ensure that all have the capacity for committing harm and a theological understanding of sin as intrinsic to human nature is not only necessary but allows for a broad solidarity between individuals.[58] A theologically inflected reading of the novel sees the split between the two as a concretizing of a pre-existing issue in the construction of subjectivity

[56] Mighall, p. 147.
[57] As Reid articulates it, 'Stevenson attributes degeneration to modernity's attempts to stifle the savage elements which have survived in the modern psyche.' Yet despite this insight, the metaphysical implications are not engaged with, remaining as a purely psychological insight ignoring the theological language of the novel and the long history of theological engagement with precisely this point. See Reid, (2006), p. 98.
[58] Once again, see Jacobs, (2008).

whilst problematising the concept of evil. Furthermore, it is a theological reading that allows for an answer to the question posed by critics such as Hogle, who asks that 'surely we must wonder…why he [Jekyll] feels impelled to follow this course?'[59] Simply put, Hyde is an embodiment of the fallen condition that affects all people regardless of the scientific discourses of which he is ostensibly a product.

Furthermore, Hyde is consistently framed in terms that present him as both simultaneously human and less than human, he gives an 'impression of deformity without any malformation,'[60] as Utterson expresses it after their first meeting, and this is reinforced through the references to his ape like appearance and gnome like stature. He is throughout the novel both present and absent — a recurrent figure often only partly glimpsed, hiding in doorways or skulking through the most dangerous and depraved parts of London.[61] As Zoë Lehmann Imfeld expresses it, 'the ghost-story demon is given its horror because it cannot *be*…it is at once impossible and recognisable.'[62] Hyde is both ontologically lacking and somehow perverse, and thus can be read within Augustinian terms. The two foundational premises which the Augustine argument rests upon are firstly an ontological *lack* — there is something missing from Hyde which, whilst some may be unable to clearly articulate, those who come across him seem very aware of. Evil is best understood not as an existing thing, but rather as an absence – a privation of something that should in ordinary circumstances, be

[59] Jerrold E. Hogle, 'The Struggle for a Dichotomy: Abjection in Jekyll and His Interpreters,' in *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde after One Hundred Years,* ed. William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988) p. 161.
[60] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 40.
[61] Utterson's tongue in cheek remark that 'if he shall be Mr. Hyde, I shall be Mr. Seek' highlighting the extent to which Hyde remains ontologically speaking, rather difficult to pin down.
[62] Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: From La Fanu to James,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) p. 29.

present.[63] Secondly, Augustine's theory of evil extrapolates an anthropological conclusion for the human subject from this first premise – namely evil involves a *perversion* of the Imago Dei in its effects upon the individual.[64] Throughout the novel, Hyde is described in these terms, as somehow less than human, smaller and more animalistic than the urbane Jekyll. Despite this, upon describing Hyde's appearance on his first discovery of the shift between these two aspects of his subjectivity, Jekyll mentions Hyde's stunted nature and troglodytic appearance as being nothing like his own. However, gazing at Hyde's reflection in the mirror he is 'conscious of no repugnance,' for '*this too was myself'*[65] (my emphasis). Despite the descriptive markers that externalize Hyde and attempt to establish a clear separation between him and Jekyll, this moment of self-revelation adds credence to understanding Hyde as expressing the perversion and privation of Jekyll's ontology; a theological disaster framed in scientific terms. The two figures are not separable, but rather serve as an exposition on the nature of man's ontological flaws.

The text itself provides much evidence for this understanding of Jekyll and Hyde's complex intertwining as being a theological issue that has been understood in materialist terms, namely degeneration theory. What this suggests is that the writing on degeneration carries within it a underacknowledged theological logic (particularly in contemporary criticism which seeks to make use of writers such as Nordau). Nordau himself writes that a key marker of degeneration is, 'the being constantly occupied with mystical and religious questions, an exaggerated piety etc.'[66] Such a point seems to hold for Henry Jekyll as after the murder of

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[63] For an example of how privation theory may interact with literary work see Mark Knight, *Chesterton and Evil,* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004.)

[64] For perhaps the finest introduction to the Augustinian approach and the contemporary merits of the argument, see Charles T. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.)

[65] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 84.

[66] Nordau, p.22.

Sir Danvers Carew, Hyde disappears and 'a new life began for Dr Jekyll.'[67] This life entails not just a reconnection with friends but piety too, for as the novella explains, 'whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion.'[68] Sadly, such a pattern of repentance and charity proves unsustainable. As a result, one of Jekyll's few friends, the more scientifically and medically orthodox Dr Lanyon sustains a fatal shock – the issue that causes it is 'accursed' and when pressed, Lanyon begs 'in God's name, go, for I cannot bear it.'[69] The shock Lanyon suffers is not just the discovery of the true nature of the connection between Jekyll and Hyde but also the failure of normative medico-scientific discourses to provide a satisfactory response to the fracture in subjectivity that Jekyll's work has, quite literally, made flesh. What ultimately kills Lanyon is not the discovery of Hyde and Jekyll as one person, but rather the truth that within him there are the same fractures, moral failing and depravities as reside within Henry Jekyll. In effect, the materialist procedures by which degeneration and depravity are safely taxonomised and externalised are revealed to be insufficient. As is revealed later in the text within Lanyon's own record of events, he observes the connection between Jekyll and Hyde not in the coolly dispassionate language of medical science but rather in a state of religious inflected terror. He is warned by Hyde that his 'sight will be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan.'[70] Despite Lanyon's retort that he hears 'with no very strong impression of belief,' he consents to stay and witnesses the transmutation of Hyde into Jekyll:

> He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp…and as I looked, there came, I thought a change — he seemed to swell — his face became suddenly black, and the features seemed to melt and alter…and at the next moment I had sprung to my feet

[67] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 56.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 57.
[70] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 79.

> and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror. O God! I Screamed, and O God! Again and again[71]

Despite the fact that 'duality is presented in the story as both a kind of illness,'[72] Lanyon's encounter, and the subsequent realizations that this experience carries, finds no other language to express itself than that of theology. His letter recording the events end with a bleak note that 'I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard and my soul sickened at it.'[73] In addition, Jekyll's take on the argument between him and Lanyon, mentioned never directly, but in writing to Utterson again frames the issue theologically. As Jekyll speaks to Utterson,

> You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also.[74]

Despite the general critical insistence upon the concretizing[75] of Hyde as a medical and scientific breakthrough, within the text the emergence of Hyde is framed as a moment of horrific theological revelation. The disingenuous Henry Jekyll goes so far as to tell the reader of his narrative that he 'will not enter deeply into this scientific branch of my confession,'[76] as he recasts his scientific quest into a theologically inflected revelation of the 'doom and burthen of our life.'[77] Jekyll implicitly references Scripture in his articulation of his attempt to bring forth Hyde — 'plucking back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion.'[78] The Scriptural referent here is Matthew 27:51, whereby at the moment of Christ's death the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the

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[71] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 80.
[72] Colin Davis, 'From Psychopathology to Diabolical Evil: Dr Jekyll, Mr Hyde and Jean Renoir,' *Journal of Romance Studies,* 12.1 (spring 2012) (http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.mmu.ac.uk/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mmucal5&id=GALE|A292992929&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon&authCount=1# first accessed 02/09/17).
[73] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 80.
[74] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 58.
[75] I hesitate to use terms such as "the creation of Hyde" for reasons that, thanks to the previous argument, I trust to be somewhat self-evident.
[76] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p.83.
[77] Ibid.
[78] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 82.

temple was not simply plucked aside, but torn in two. In an echo of the crucifixion, Jekyll seeks to go beyond the limits of physical human nature, but where Christ's transcendence is both suffering and sacrificial, reuniting God with fallen mankind through the atonement of the cross, Jekyll's suffering is for reasons of ego.[79] Rather than seek to reunite God to man through substitutionary atonement, Jekyll's moment of pushing aside the veil fundamentally divides man from himself. Just as with Christ on the cross, Jekyll's first dose of the formula inflicts a 'horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death.'[80] Yet, as Christ rises to glory, Jekyll rises as Hyde, a figure he labels as 'alone in all the ranks of mankind,' a figure of 'pure evil.'[81] The formula he discovers, Jekyll claims, is 'neither diabolical nor divine, it but shook the doors of the prison house of my disposition; and like the captives of Philippi, that which stood within ran forth.'[82] Yet despite the scriptural allusion here, Jekyll falls far short of the mantle of the Apostle Paul he lays claim to. Unlike Paul, Jekyll's 'virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion.'[83] Once again, the text repeatedly links Hyde's rise and dominance to Jekyll's own moral or theological passivity. His fondness for undignified pleasure and an aversion to the dryness of a life of study that is required of a doctor[84] are long standing factors that Jekyll has no metaphysical or theological resources to deal with, and thus it comes as no surprise when Jekyll describes his increasing vulnerability to Hyde as a 'falling into sin.'[85]

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[79] Here Henry Jekyll can be linked to the hubris of another Gothic scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who, like Jekyll wishes to go beyond the materialist constraints of the physical world, but lacks the theological understanding to comprehend the extent of his own egoistic hubris.
[80] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 83.
[81] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 85
[82] Ibid – the Scriptural reference here is to Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 16:16-40, where an earthquake frees the apostle Paul and Silas from a jail cell, yet despite what Jekyll claims, neither run forth, but stay where they are to save their jailer from committing suicide after losing his prisoners.
[83] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 85.
[84] Ibid.
[85] *Jekyll and Hyde,* p. 85.

Jekyll's lack of pious aspiration is what he blames for Hyde's ontological fallen-ness but from a man who has from his earliest memories practised both moral and theological hypocrisy and duplicity this should come as no surprise and is consistent with Jekyll's disavowal of his own moral responsibility. The final pages of Jekyll's full statement of the case go into some detail to explain Jekyll's attempts to reconcile between the disparate parts of his own subjectivity. Hyde and Jekyll become entwined in terms of their living arrangement, their class position and even their finances[86] as Jekyll goes out of his way to ensure that he 'might enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss.'[87] What noticeably fails for Jekyll is any attempt to reform his, and Hyde's, behaviour. In the wake of the murder, Jekyll frames his actions as an act of repentance and conversion. Taking his draught, 'Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God.'[88] Once more the novella refers to the veil as Jekyll's sense of self was 'rent from head-to-foot,'[89] and what follows is described in terms of spiritual torment. With prayers and tears, Jekyll seeks to undo his own experimentation and reunite his subjectivity into a coherent whole through the appearance of penitence and renewed moral action. Yet, despite his recommitment to the markers of positive morality, his acts of charity and his 'labour to relieve suffering,' [90] Hyde proves irresistible. As Milbank writes, Jekyll seeks to solve the division of self 'not through acceptance of Christ's imputed righteousness, but by an avoidance of [genuine] penitence.'[91] After a few brief months of propriety and outwardly respectable behaviour, it was 'as an ordinary secret sinner that I at last fell before the assaults

[86] For more on this, see Kirsten Guest, 'Jekyll and Hyde Inc: Limited Liability, Companification, and Gothic Subjectivity,' *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 44, Issue 2, June 2016, p. 315-329.
[87] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 86.
[88] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p. 91.
[89] Ibid.
[90] *Jekyll and Hyde*, p.92.
[91] Milbank, 'Covenanter Gothic' p. 98.

of temptation.'[92] The passage sets up a telling paired opposition between the secrecy of Jekyll's "sin" and the public attempts at atonement. Jekyll's response to his theological blunder in concretizing aspects of his own subjectivity is revealed as woefully insufficient. The discourses of science may have motivated his initial experiments but it is through theology that Jekyll articulates the impact that Hyde asserts. Whilst the work of degeneration theorists has conceptualised Hyde as an abhuman subject or the re-emergence of a more barbaric past into the civilised present,[93] a theological understanding of the novella and of degeneration more generally adds greater depth to critical understanding of the text. Rather than see Hyde as an aberration or addition to subjectivity, a theological understanding of degeneration presents Hyde as an inextricable part of modern subjectivity itself. Hyde the monster is not a figure which has returned from the past, or an expression of devolved humanity — rather, the horror of the text flows from the notion that Hyde expresses an aspect of modern subjectivity that cannot be easily or safely externalised away and the discourses which have attempted this begin to fracture and break down.

In a novella so preoccupied with the scientific taxonomies of the fin-de-siècle these discursive techniques are revealed as being utterly inadequate to deal with the fundamental fracture in subjectivity detailed in Romans by Paul. At the close of the text, Jekyll, having finished the last of his scientific elixir, realizes that it is 'the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts and see his own face.'[94] What this neglects is the reality – Jekyll is not being replaced by an external force, but is simply unable to maintain a coherent subjectivity that aligns with the normative standards and discourses of his cultural

[92] Ibid.
[93] See Hurley (1996) and Mighall (1999) respectively.
[94] Stevenson, p. 96.

moment. The techniques and discursive practises which shape his being — medical training, class position and bourgeois morality fail to resolve this division between the different aspects of his self, and thus, by implication are revealed as insufficient on a systemic level, for not just Henry Jekyll, but for all. Removing a theological or metaphysical awareness from criticism and analysis of the text serves only to continue the same error that dooms Henry Jekyll. As Fred Botting acknowledges, these scientific theories only serve to 'expose the instability of the dualities that frame cultural identity.'[95] Degeneration, understood theologically is not simply a historical concern or the product of the barbaric past re-emerging, but something inextricably bound up with the nature of human subjectivity itself. Thus, any attempt to externalise it or concretize it through the discourses of materialism, no matter how sophisticated those discourses may be, is doomed to failure.

The realization of this failure is what kills off the conventional, orthodox and religiously sceptical Dr Lanyon in a moment of sheer theological terror, but the realization contained within the text extends further still. To recognize the failure of scientific, medical or criminological discourses in dealing with evil is to recognize that Jekyll and Hyde embody the 'Christian paradox of evil as both nothing and something.'[96] Thus, with the failure of the scientific and medical discourses to safely externalise and separate Hyde from Jekyll the reader too is challenged by the ontological connection between the two figures. Stevenson's novella is not something the reader simply observes, as in the manner of a scientific exercise, but becomes something that demands participation on the part of the reader. As Imfeld argues, we participate in a 'theological anthropology' through which we come to learn more not just about the ontology of Jekyll but of ourselves – an imaginative exercise, which

[95] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.91.
[96] Imfeld, p. 30

fundamentally alters the way in which we view the self. In a letter written to a friend, Stevenson shows great awareness of the impact of this ontological paradox and its effect upon the reader in reference to another great literary exploration of evil, Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*:

> Many find it dull: Henry James could not finish it: all I can say is, it nearly finished me. It was like having an illness. [Henry] James did not care for it because the character of Raskolnikoff was not objective; and at that I divined a great gulf between us, and on further reflection, the existence of a certain impotence in many minds of to-day, which prevents them from living in a book or character, and keeps them standing afar off, spectators to a puppet show. To such I suppose the book may seem empty in the centre; to the others it is a room, a house of life, into which they themselves may enter, and are tortured and purified.[97]

Stevenson's acknowledgement that those who participate within the horror novel as readers may find it a traumatic experience, a site of torture but also potential purification or redemption. Despite the grim end reached by Henry Jekyll, the novella still offers the potential for change, for redemption even if the experience of it is sometimes painful. This possibility however, requires a willingness to engage and participate within the theological nature of the text, and not, as Stevenson writes, stand afar off. Despite the bleak note that Jekyll's statement ends upon, the theological framework of the novel and the metaphysical questions it provokes in its reader do offer some modicum of hope. Through participation — that necessary act of entering the 'room' that Stevenson referred to, one may move beyond degeneration. The challenge of the text is to take seriously the theological point that subjectivity cannot be easily resolved into a coherent whole within solely materialist terms.

[97] The letter shows that the novel exerts such an impact that Stevenson makes a mistake on the title of the novel in question. See Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, Volume Five, July 1884-August 1887* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 221.

Oscar Wilde, Decadence, Sin and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

If Stevenson's novella exposes the limitations of medical or scientific discourses to adequately construct a coherent subjectivity as well as emphasising the divide between private sinfulness and public appearance, then Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) presents not a failure of subjectivity, but a turn inward towards narcissism — the subjective obsession with aesthetic appearance. Wilde's only novel, it details the life of a young aristocratic man known for his physical beauty who falls into vice and amorality. After sitting for his portrait, the young Gray, enamoured with his own beauty, trades his soul for immortality. As he indulges his own narcissism and aesthetic sensuality, the painting shows the corruption of his soul in its representation of his face, whilst his own physical form remains entirely unchanged. Wilde's novel works as an examination of the relationship between aesthetics and being as well as imaginative exploration of Augustinian privation theory. In contrast to Stevenson's grotesque Hyde, Wilde presents a monster whose deviancy is caused by his extreme narcissism, a 'decadent Gothic subject whose beauty is the wellspring of horror.'[98] Initially a theological approach to the novel may seem something of an anachronism – whilst tinged with supernaturalism the Gothic aspects of the novel 'would be quite ludicrous if introduced to Henry's drawing room society.'[99] In fact, Joyce Carol Oates has argued that the novel and particularly the character of Dorian is generally rather 'secular' and whatever supernatural element the novel contains is rather vague:

> Is the devil responsible? But does the devil exist? Hell is hardly more than theoretical to Wilde, and heaven is equally notional; when Dorian is attracted to the Catholic church it is primarily for the sake of exotic ritual, ecclesiastical vestments, and other somewhat ludicrous treasures of the church, which Wilde delights in cataloguing. The

[98] Dryden, p. 114.
[99] Joyce Carol Oates, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray: Wilde's Parable of the Fall,' *in Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 2* (Winter, 1980), p. 424.

> consequences of a Faustian pact with the devil are dramatized, but the devil himself is absent.[100]

Rather more frequently, the novel is categorised as Decadent writing – part of a trend of aesthetic practise in fin-de-siècle art and literature marked by an insistence upon the autonomy of art, disgust with the prevailing bourgeois utility and a seeking after rare and intense sensations.[101] Given the primacy given to the aesthetic throughout the novel, a critical focus upon the text as a Decadent work is hardly surprising.[102] From a theological perspective, Wilde's novel pairs well with Stevenson's novella in regards to the duel ideas of Augustinian privation theory — however, whereas with *Jekyll and Hyde*, the reader is allowed to see this ontological privation and perversion embodied in the figure of Hyde, Wilde's text presents perversion and privation within fundamentally aesthetic terms.[103] If, in the case of Stevenson, the aesthetic is an expression of the ethical — Hyde's appearance being an expression of the state of his being — Wilde subordinates ethics to the realm of the aesthetic. The preface to the novel makes this abundantly clear using Wilde's famous epigrams. No artist has any 'ethical sympathies,' for this is an 'unpardonable mannerism of style.'[104] Rather than any kind of mannerism, then, the role of the artist is to create beautiful things, to produce pleasurable sensations in the viewer, to reveal art and obscure themselves in the process. What is neatly ignored in Wilde's as-ever witty phrasing is the ethical implications of this approach when the subject of art is not an image but an individual. This kind of reduction of the individual to the image is broadly in line with privation theory more generally. Thought and language are made

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[100] Ibid.

[101] See MacLoed (2006) as well as David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism,* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

[102] MacLoed goes so far as to claim that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the first British decadent novel. See MacLoed, (2006) p. 79.

[103] In itself, this ties the work to wider issues around Wilde's body of work, especially as he made his public debut as a 'professor of aesthetics.' See Robert Mighall's introduction to Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000).

[104] *Dorian Gray*, p. 3**.**

into tools for the artist and vice and virtue become mere grist to the mill of aesthetic experience. It is this subordination of the subject to aesthetics that can be read as functioning as a type of privation of being. Thus, the following section will read Wilde's novel in Augustinian terms, reflecting upon it as not simply a Decadent novel but as an example of the potential risks involved in aesthetic experience as the basis for moral action and indeed, any kind of moral judgement. This section also engages with the historical context and criticism around aesthetics, particularly the work of Walter Pater, given his influence on Wilde's own thinking.

From the opening of the novel, the character of Dorian Gray first appears as his own image — the painting that so captivates Lord Henry Wooten, being worked on by Basil Haywood. Gray is introduced as a 'gracious and comely form,' his portrait being praised as the best thing that Basil has ever done.[105] Gray is physiognomic perfection, and through this first encounter with him in the text, there is no trace of any engagement with Gray as an individual but merely as *image.* Wilde here ironically reverses the equivalence between positive aesthetics and personal quality, where the good equals the beautiful and vice versa.[106] Dorian might be beautiful, but Henry hopes that his intellect or internal life does not match his outward appearance. Henry refers to him as nothing more than a 'beautiful, brainless creature.'[107] The character of Dorian is rather a mere *object d'art* — a motive for aesthetic reflection and an instrument of the artist himself. Indeed, in a telling moment, Basil admits his fear of exhibiting the work — 'I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my

[105] *Dorian Gray*, p. 6.
[106] This was discussed in more detail in relation to Frankenstein's creature and the De Lacy family in Chapter One – the creature's appearance is equated with his moral quality and it is this which causes the De Lacy family to act so violently toward him.
[107] *Dorian Gray* p. 7.

own soul.'[108] Gray thus becomes a mere accident or motive for Basil's own aesthetic endeavours, reified into serving a means to an end — Dorian becomes an image from which Basil can experience aesthetic pleasure. Here then, subjectivity becomes reduced to the image, to be 'varnished, framed and sent home.'[109] The image of the subject becomes static, and for all its beauty, it involves a necessary dehumanisation of the individual – a privation of all that Gray may become in order to maintain and create the single unchanging aesthetic marvel of his self.

Strikingly, the first section of the novel provides evidence for both a privation of Gray's ontology and a perversion of his being. Gray's first in-person appearance in the novel shows him in remarkably straightforward, almost naive terms. He is 'wonderfully handsome…there was something in his face that made one trust him at once,' Henry notes.[110] His being equates to his aesthetic appearance too — 'one felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world,' a moral *tabula rasa* that appeals to the rather more predatory and amoral Henry. It is in the conversation with the older, worldlier Henry that a crucial point emerges — whilst frequently labelled a Decadent text Wilde's novel initially presents a *kind* of degeneration — in this case, that of the body in old age, as a disaster to be averted. Wooten's speech on the subject, a kind of aestheticized *memento mori* proves to be a powerful temptation for Gray:[111]

> The common hill-flowers wither, but they blossom again. The laburnum will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month, there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth. The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the

[108] *Dorian Gray*, p. 9.
[109] *Dorian Gray*, p. 29
[110] *Dorian Gray*, p. 19.
[111] For more on this see Karschay, p. 171-2.

> memory of the passions of which we were much too afraid and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to lead to.[112]

To live, argues the urbane Wooten, is to experience change and ultimately loss of that which he holds to be most valuable — namely beauty, pleasure and desire. Yet what Wooten misses (or rather artfully elides) is the extent to which pleasure in and of itself can all too often revert to selfishness. The 'passions' that Wooten speaks of are necessarily bound up in relationship with another – passion is, after all, passion *for* someone, even to consume the Other for the gratification of the self. Yet here, Wooten reduces it to the feeling itself, robbing the aesthetic of the relational aspect which infuses it with meaning. Gray's response upon first sighting the portrait seems aware of both the reduction of his self to the image and the sense of loss that such a reduction entails, yet at the same time it is also what provokes the Faustian bargain he immediately seeks to strike:

> How sad it is! Murmured Dorian Gray, with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. It will never be older than this particular day in June…If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young and the picture that was to grow old! For that — for that — I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that![113]

Once again, and as with Jekyll, Dorian seeks the means to sacrifice the invisible (namely his soul) for the promise of permanent aesthetic perfection. In a sense, Gray is perfectly correct – the progression of age and of bodily vulnerability is terrible, yet, quite arguably, abundantly necessary for the development of Being. Human finitude may well seem a grave injustice, (in fact to see it this way does presuppose a theological framework of some kind) yet without an awareness of it as a reality to be confronted, Gray lapses into a highly aestheticized antinomianism — where his beauty becomes a means by which to live outside of any type of

[112] *Dorian Gray*, p. 25.
[113] *Dorian Gray*, p. 27-8.

moral law and free of consequence. Without an awareness of our own finitude, the possibility for meaningful moral and theological reflection and action become limited — Gray retreats from the positive possibilities of the world towards the realm of the purely disinterested aesthete whereby being (whether one's own or another) becomes secondary to sensation and appearance.[114] Gazing at his own image, 'like a nineteenth century Narcissus'[115] Gray begins his descent into introspection, egotism and hedonism. It is through the pursuit of the aesthetic that Gray develops as a degenerate, it is through his fear of what he may become that he becomes monstrous. He reaches the point whereby his name becomes a byword for the scandals produced through his sensation seeking. He becomes, in Halberstam's terms 'a Gothic dandy' — representing simultaneously 'too much and too little, excess and paucity.'[116] Such dualism is in keeping with Augustinian approaches to evil, as Ewan Fernie points out, 'evil as selfishness expresses demonic negativity in the form of the self that is abstracted and alienated from the world.'[117] Dorian's hedonism then becomes an expression of his privation of being – an obsession with surface and artifice rather than any kind of genuine engagement with the life he encounters around him. Philosophically, the influence of Walter Pater seems clear here, and in a sense then the novel functions as an exaggerated and Gothicised application of Pater's aesthetics. In his work, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1893) Pater writes that

> The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations… What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of

[114] For a more thorough exploration of the link between pure disinterestedness and ontological evil, see Terry Eagleton, *On Evil,* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008). For a link between the removal of the subject from the status of being-in-the-world and the potential harm that emerges from this, see chapter one on *Frankenstein.*
[115] Dryden, p. 114.
[116] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters,* (Duke University Press, 1995) p. 62.
[117] Ewan Fernie, *The Demonic: Literature and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2013) p. 20.

> temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects.[118]

The issue here is not with the idea of art for art's sake – Pater's call, (which Wilde undoubtedly would agree with) to a life of 'constant and eager observation,'[119] would seem to lend itself to imaginative apologetics. Coupled with Vivian's point from *The Decay of Lying,* that art consists of the 'purely imaginative and pleasurable work dealing with what is unreal and non-existent,'[120] and the links to a theological understanding of creation seem clear. However, the fundamentally problematic area of the Paterian aesthetic within *Dorian Gray* is the basis in *sensation* rather than anything else. Pater argues that aesthetics and aesthetic judgement should be based in the pleasurable sensations produced in the observation of the aesthetic object. Such an aesthetic idea goes some way to explaining the initial infatuation Gray experiences with Sybil Vane – her theatrical talents are enthralling, precisely because of the pleasure they induce. However, sensual pleasure in the aesthetic object is unreliable and perhaps even dangerous – as Kate Hext argues, the main problem being that Pater locates the ethical sensibility in sensual pleasure of the beautiful. This sensuality is something which can bypass reason, as Pater 'compares sensuality to being in service to a band of madmen.'[121] Gray's callous treatment of Sybil Vane reveals this mania with surface, with aesthetic appearances and sensation, over any kind of meaningful relationship. Discovering her acting in a rather run-down theatre in a less than respectable part of London, he enthuses about her to Henry that she is 'all the great heroines of the world. She is more than an individual…my

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[118] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, The 1893 Text,* ed. Donald L. Hill (London, University of California Press, 1980) p. xxi.
[119] Pater, p. 188.
[120] Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying,* online http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/wilde/decay.html (first accessed 03/08/17).
[121] Kate Hext, "At the Burning Point of Good and Evil: Aesthetics As Ethics in Walter Paters Aestheticism," in *Leeds Working Papers, Victorian Ethics*, ed. Nathan Uglow (Leeds, Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2008) p. 50-60.

God Harry, how I worship her!'[122] Yet what Dorian is enamoured with is the pretence and artifice of performance that produces pleasure rather than anything about Sybil herself. After taking his friends to the theatre she performs in, and finding her performance rather curiously uninspired, he goes back stage to confront her.

> You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you, because you were marvellous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realised the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art…without your art you are nothing. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face.[123]

What she becomes is not an aesthetic object that produces pleasure, but rather something which demands a response from him. Encounters between individuals operate on a different level of feeling than that of subject and object – whilst Dorian may observe her as an object and experience aesthetic enjoyment, relationships between individuals are far more complex things and laden with many other feelings aside from aesthetic pleasure. As Sybil moves from being *objectified* to being *subjectivised* she becomes something other than an aesthetic phenomenon and demands from Gray, a degree of recognition. Confronted with Sybil's genuine declaration of feeling — confronted by her true self as it were, Gray responds with vicious invective. As Halberstam writes, 'it is precisely when the boundaries between the spheres of art and life are too dearly drawn that desire, for Dorian, disappears.'[124] In fact, Halberstam does not carry this argument far enough, thanks to the insistence, first planted by Wooten, upon separating desire from the constituting ontology from which it is produced. It is not simply that Dorian's desire for Sybil vanishes when she stops performing for him as an aesthetic object, it is a more fundamental ontological conflict: between private being and

[122] *Dorian Gray*, p.54.
[123] *Dorian Gray*, p. 85.
[124] Halberstam, p. 63.

authentic desires. Sybil's 'mistake' is to believe that theatre is a mask for life. Dorian's response is revealing of his own fear of authentic being and shows the extent to which more genuine expressions of feeling — an exercise that often carries with it pain rather than pleasure — is something with which he is unable to comprehend. Without the art (his own pleasing aesthetic appearance) he fears that Sybil will discover that he too, is nothing. That evening Sybil Vane commits suicide and the first traces of cruelty appear on Dorian's portrait.

Gray, on hearing of her death is wracked with guilt, and in the company of Lord Wooten — the one who has tempted Gray into indulging in aesthetics — exclaims that, 'Harry, Harry it is terrible.'[125] Yet at the encouragement of his friend and mentor he is persuaded to view her death again in aesthetic and distinctly dehumanising terms. She becomes a figure of art, an object rather than individual. As Harry argues:

> You must think of that lonely death in the tawdry dressing room simply as a strange fragment from some Jacobean tragedy…the girl never really lived, and so she has never really died…. Mourn for Ophelia… cry out against heaven because the daughter of Brabantio died. But don't waste your tears over Sybil Vane. She was less real than they are.[126]

Once again, at the price of subordinating ethics to aesthetics Dorian ends up forgetting his remorse and even his guilt for his culpability, scorning her for her commonplace life.[127] In a telling moment Gray is informed of the results of the inquiry into Vane's death and turns away, thinking 'how horribly real ugliness made things.'[128] Reality and aesthetic beauty have little in common with one another – especially if it is solely the pleasurable sensations upon which that aesthetics are judged. In the aftermath of Sybil Vane's death Gray's experiments in narcissistic hedonism accelerate. Yet despite this, Dorian's privation of being does not

[125] *Dorian Gray*, p. 96.
[126] *Dorian Gray*, p. 100.
[127] *Dorian Gray*, p. 106.
[128] *Dorian Gray*, p. 120.

detract from his aesthetic appeal. He remains ageless and beautiful, embodying the paradox of Augustinian understandings of evil, that for all its negation and privation, it retains an attractive glamour. Gray indulges himself in what Dryden labels, 'self-conscious malevolence… a Gothic tendency toward the weird and uncanny.'[129] Such a tendency is well known through theological writings — Fernie (referring to Augustine's *Confessions)* specifically mentions evil's demonic appeal and this further ties Gray's marked Gothicism to the tradition of theology in understanding evil:[130]

> If the crime of theft, which I committed that night as a boy of sixteen was a living thing, I could speak to it and ask what it was that, to my shame, I loved in it… It was not the pears my unhappy soul desired. I had plenty of my own, better than those, and I only picked them so that I might steal. For no sooner had I picked them than I threw them away, and tasted nothing in them but my own sin, which I relished and enjoyed. If any part of those pears passed my lips, it was the sin that gave them flavour.[131]

Whereas Augustine has a self to lose, the sense of the novel is that perhaps Dorian no longer has a self to be destroyed — rather he has become the embodied image. He forms a type of empty signifier – his aesthetic appearance has become, in a way, all that he is. As a result, Dorian's privation of being becomes more markedly visible in the painting, which becomes essentially an image or reflection of his true self. Hiding it away from public view, it becomes a source of his pleasure to stand and observe the spread of the degradation of his own being. He becomes 'more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.'[132] In a neat twist upon the old Gothic convention of the haunted mirror, the portrait allows him to see 'himself' — he becomes the perfected aestheticized body, whilst his soul becomes increasingly degraded. Gray literally comes to embody the

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[129] Dryden, p. 135.
[130] See Fernie, (2013) p 13-14.
[131] St Augustine, *Confessions Of A Sinner,* trans. R.S Pine-Coffin, (London: Penguin Great Ideas, 2004), p. 15-16.
[132] *Dorian Gray*, p.124.

division between the aesthetic and moral that the novel maintains and the toll of such a division is revealed through the portrait. His own aesthetic consistency and enduing attractiveness to others serves as both a symptom of his ontological privation whilst at the same time maintaining a sense of appealing glamour to his person. The novel repeats the phrase that 'he had always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world,' as well as this, his wealth and beauty are presented as a kind of purity that rebukes the suspicions of others.[133] Despite the shame, scandal and hedonistic passions he indulges in, and which dog his reputation throughout society, he is still possessed of a 'strange and dangerous charm.'[134] It seems to be this appealing glamour to Dorian Gray that leads to the outlandish claim from Halberstam that Gray is 'rewarded with longevity'[135] despite Gray's own admission that he 'looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful.'[136]

If Wilde's hierarchy of the aesthetic over the ethical does seem to be the root of both the privation and perversion of Gray's being, this serves to not only expand the depths to which *The Picture of Dorian Gray* serves as an exploration of evil, but also sheds new light upon Decadent writing generally as a source of potential theological significance. Read within Augustinian terms (or to express it another way, as a Gothic example of Paterian aesthetics), Wilde's novel and the character of Dorian in particular reveal the prevalence of a lack of theological articulation in the era of fin-de-siècle secular materialism. It would seem then, the theological challenge presented by the text is to find a way to respond to the evil of Gray without being seduced by the glamour of his decadence. For such a theological challenge to

[133] Ibid.
[134] *Dorian Gray*, p. 136.
[135] Halberstam, p. 64.
[136] *Dorian Gray*, p. 140.

be met would require a synthesis of the aesthetic with the theological in order to reconcile the split that Gray so appealingly embodies and proves so fatal to the more Calvinist Henry Jekyll. As Basil states at the beginning of the novel, in an aside referring to Dorian, 'the harmony of soul and body…we have in our madness separated the two and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void.'[137] This telling aside goes some way to articulating the theological problem, yet the novel does provide a few clues for where such a synthesis may occur — namely through an incarnational and confessional theology. The few direct references to any kind of theology through the novel are distinctly Catholic in nature. Gray's attraction to Catholicism is, like Wilde's own attraction, initially on the level of aesthetics.[138] The attraction of the religion is its rites, vestments and 'the allure of its ritual and costume, not its renunciation.'[139]

> It was rumoured of him that he was about to join the Roman Catholic communion; and certainly the Roman ritual had always great attraction for him. The daily sacrifice…stirred him as much by its superb rejection of the evidence of the senses as by the primitive simplicity of its elements and the eternal pathos of the human tragedy that it sought to symbolize.[140]

The daily sacrifice of the Eucharist is contrasted to the sacrifices of pagan religion and Christ as saviour is corporeally absent, yet theologically present. Thus, Christ forms the opposite of Dorian, a corporeally present, but spiritually void subject. This awareness of Christ as present in spirit but not in body is what makes the ritual seem so moving, and as Gray explains, the sacrament of the Eucharist is precisely what can bridge the divide between the material and aesthetic and the immaterial or spiritual:

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[137] *Dorian Gray*, p. 13.
[138] For a detailed exploration of Wilde as a queer theologian and his own interest in Roman Catholic practise and theology see Frederick Roden, *Same Sex Desire in Victorian Religious Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) particularly Chapter five.
[139] Roden, (2003) p. 140.
[140] *Dorian Gray*, p. 128.

> He loved to kneel down on the cold marble pavement, and watch the priest, in his stiff flowered dalmatic, slowly and with white hands moving aside the veil of the tabernacle, or raising aloft the jewelled lantern shaped monstrance with that pallid wafer that at times, one would fain think, is indeed the '*panis celetis,'* the bread of angels, or robed in the garments of the Passion of Christ, breaking the host in the chalice, and smiting his breast for his sins.[141]

Christ is here as both sign and revealed presence — the veil is moved aside and the pallid wafer is transformed into the bread of heaven. Receiving communion is an essentially embodied activity —it involves kneeling, consuming host and responding verbally but these gestures go beyond mere pleasurable aesthetic posturing. Sign and symbol combine and point to something greater than themselves and all of this is mediated through another body – that of the priest. In the Eucharist, the divide between aesthetic materiality and spirituality is overcome and both body and soul are united before God and with the other congregants. Yet Dorian seems unable to grasp the essentially communal and public nature of sacraments. In contrast to Jekyll who seeks a kind of public confession of his sins if only to exonerate his own standing, Dorian finds the prospect of public confession deeply terrifying. He acknowledges the portrait as a record and moral ledger of the state of his own soul yet refuses to allow Basil to exhibit it, for fear of what might be seen there. He is drawn to another sacramental tradition of Catholicism — namely confession, but once again, he recoils from it. He might 'long to sit in the dim shadow' of the confessional booth but never does and it remains 'black and impenetrable.'[142] Throughout the narrative, public confession is, as Knight and Mason note, continually 'held out to the reader,'[143] but always deferred and turned away from — another temptation to which Gray does not, and cannot, yield. Thus, the reader is left with a vision of a closed, closeted confessional, from which nothing can be heard and nothing

[141] Ibid.
[142] *Dorian Gray*, p. 128.
[143] Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Literature and Religion,* (Oxford: OUP, 2007) p. 205.

redeemed. This contrasts markedly to the high value that Augustinian thought has placed upon the idea of a public confession.[144] Ultimately, it seems that Dorian, and fin-de-siècle aestheticized culture 'struggles to comprehend the sacramental quality of language as public.'[145] As Catherine Pickstock argues, language is typically 'construed as innocuous decoration,' an image or ''adornment" of a prior frame of the "real.'"[146] In contrast Pickstock claims the 'liturgical city' is 'avowedly semiotic.'[147] Thus, rather than functioning as signs that conceal or adorn the real, these 'signs are both things and figures or signs — of one another and of that which exceeds appearance.'[148] Theological language is also communal, passed on to others 'and itself constitutes the offering and the consummation of the citizen's subjectivity as a "living sacrifice."'[149] This inability to grasp the essentially public nature of confession and faith more widely is a key to the novel more generally. As with Jekyll, in a society where the Law of God has been replaced by the rule of public opinion and appearance, the question simply becomes 'why confess at all?' Public confession would once again not involve any kind of group solidarity and redemption but would irredeemably corrupt the image of Dorian Gray in the eyes of those who behold him. As the self has been subordinated to the image (which in Wilde's work becomes the only kind of true ontological nature) confession would destroy the image and reveal the fundamentally empty and privated character of what lies beneath it. It is, then, extremely telling that it is only behind closed doors that Dorian Gray's portrait is finally exposed to Basil Haywood, who sees the extent of Dorian's spiritual decay — how 'the leprosies of sin are eating'[150] him away. Basil, the priest

[144] Hence Augustine's most well-known work, *Confessions.*
[145] Knight and Mason, p. 205.
[146] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy,* (London: Blackwell, 1998) p. 169.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Pickstock, p. 170.
[149] ibid
[150] Wilde, p. 150

figure who through his mediation of the aesthetic form has inspired Dorian attempts a spiritual, rather than aesthetic intervention.

> 'Pray, Dorian, pray,' he murmured. What is it that one was taught to say in one's boyhood? "Lead us not into temptation. Forgive us our sins. Wash away our inequities." Let us say that together. The prayer of your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished.[151]

As Roden argues, Basil attempts to spiritualize Dorian, 'He had worshipped Dorian's beautiful body instead of his soul. When Basil tries to rescue him, he is too late.'[152] His attempt to bring forth a public confession and some measure of repentance from Dorian (which would, necessarily, involve a drastic change in behaviour and the culture he exists in more widely) is met with rage.

> An uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him…the mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table more than in his whole life he had ever loathed anything… He rushed at him and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear…stabbing again and again.[153]

Unlike his callous dismissal of Sybil Vane, here Dorian is wracked with guilt in the aftermath of his murder and the blackmail he enacts to dispose of the body. Dorian seems willing to change his behaviour, but once again, the notion of a public confession strikes him as 'monstrous,' [154] — in a society where the aesthetic is so highly prized, confession could be nothing but a complete catastrophe. At the close of the novel, instead of engaging in reformed behaviour Dorian seeks the destruction of his self. Like Christ's body in the sacrament of the Eucharist, his body is destroyed and yet transformed. Whereas Christ's transformation is public, a destruction of the body in order to give out to the many, Gray's own transformation

[151] *Dorian Gray*, p. 151.
[152] Roden, p. 145.
[153] *Dorian Gray*, p. 151.
[154] *Dorian Gray*, p. 211.

is inward, private and monstrous. He is found with a 'withered, wrinkled and loathsome of visage,'[155] recognizable only through his jewellery. The possibility of confession and of the sacramental possibility of language is ultimately never permanently foreclosed, but Wilde shows the cost of refusing the sacramental possibility in language, and refusing the potential freedom of confession. Removed from a connection with authentic being, aesthetic desire is shown as a dangerous process, disastrously prone to a negation of being. Whereas in Wilde's novel the sacramental is a possibility that is ultimately unfilled, the final novel under consideration explores the potential for the sacraments and iconography of Christian theology for purification and redemption when confronted with evil.

***Dracula*, Iconography, Sacramentality and Purification**

Stoker's *Dracula* (1898) has had a colossal cultural impact and as such has produced a vast array of criticism. A complete and exhaustive list of all works is not possible here, but key texts include Christopher Frayling's historical overview of the vampire[156] as well as Clive Leatherdale's *Dracula, The Novel and the Legend*.[157] A more contemporary and highly influential work is Nina Auerbach's magisterial survey of the vampire and the wider role it plays in in culture, *Our Vampires, Ourselves.*[158] This 'textually dense' narrative and formally complex text has produced such swathes of criticism that Ken Gelder argues that there is no

[155] *Dorian Gray*, p. 213.
[156] Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1991).
[157] Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, The Novel and the Legend*, (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985).
[158] Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Our Selves,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Other key works include Peter Haining and Peter Tremayne, *The Undead: The legend of Bram Stoker and Dracula,* (London: Constable, 1997), James B. Twitchell, *The Living Dead, A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature,* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1981) and although not directly related, Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the fin-de-siecle,* (London: Virago Press, 1992) has been extremely important in discussions of gender and sexuality particularly in regards to Lucy Westenra.

original text — to read the novel is to inevitably produce 'new' versions.[159] Despite the proliferation of critical work on the novel it is the theological criticism that has been most neglected, or if not ignored, then unnecessarily marginalised. Thus, the aim of the concluding section will be to re-examine and re-assert the role of theological discourses at work within the novel. As Christopher Herbert asserts, 'Restoring its religious motivation to view is bound to complicate its standing as an icon of radical fin de siècle modernity'[160] but it will also encourage a fresh engagement with theological issues around sacramentality, purification and the complex ways that theology is appropriated as a key stratagem with which to bring about Dracula's defeat. Some critics seem to bypass this aspect of the text, theorising the novel and Dracula in particular, as a 'stereotypical anti-Semitic nineteenth-century representation of the Jew.'[161] Other critics seem to recognise that the text is frequently concerned with issues that are non-material yet a lack of theological engagement inevitably limits the critical work. Daniel Pick claims the novel is, at points, 'frozen between Victorian evolutionism and psycho-analysis,'[162] without posing the seemingly obvious question of what may lie between those two — namely theological ideas around the nature of being and subjectivity. A frequent approach in the scholarship is to focus on the novel as an example of "Imperial Gothic," seeing Dracula as a 'tempting figure around which the motif of invasion might be developed'[163] coming as he does from outside the British realm of control to the

[159] Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire,* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 65. Gelder's point proves not just true of the Gothic but of theology more widely. The Gothic, as with Christian belief, is consistently being (re)read and reinterpreted, with "new" versions being produced all the time.
[160] Christopher Herbert, 'Vampire Religion' in *Representations*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (Summer 2002), pp. 100- 121 – though it is perhaps worth acknowledging that Herbert makes an equivocation between the fin-de-siècle modernity and secularity that should not necessarily be accepted without question.
[161] Halberstam, p. 86.
[162] Daniel Pick, 'Terrors of the Night: Dracula and Degeneration in the Late Nineteenth Century' in *Critical Quarterly, Volume 30 No. 4* (1989) p. 71
[163] William Hughes, 'A Singular Invasion: Revisting the Postcoloniality of Bram Stoker's *Dracula'* in Andrew Smith and William Hughes, ed. *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre,* (London, Blackwell, 2003.) p.91

centre of the Empire wielding considerable power, particularly economically. However, given the extent to which the power of the British empire is bound up with Christian belief and justified through theological reasoning, an examination of a classic Imperial Gothic text without theological analysis is, at best, limited.[164]

On a theological level, the text presents itself as 'a solemn parable of what John Henry Newman called 'the warfare between the city of God and the powers of darkness.'[165] On first examination, the characters are explicitly religious when confronted with the supernatural powers of Dracula. Trapped in the castle with those 'women of the Pit,' Jonathan Harker makes his audacious escape attempt, comforted by the fact that 'God's mercy is better than that of these monsters.'[166] This religious concern is not just an articulation of the text's characters - the reader need only look at the 'frequent echoing of biblical verses'[167] and scenic moments such as Quincy Morris's death at the novel's conclusion, bleeding from a Christ-like wound in the side, expiring in the arms of his friends as they let forth 'a deep and earnest Amen.'[168] The clear textual allusion to the *pieta* of Christian art as well as Morris's resurrection in the form of Mina and Jonathan's child shows how redemptive Christian associations form the backdrop for the defeat and negation of Dracula. Stoker himself seems to have been aware of the theological associations of the text, writing in a letter to Gladstone that, though superstition is fought in it with the weakness of superstition I hope it is not irreverent.'[169] Characters cross themselves, pray, wield crucifixes and communion wafers as well as

[164] For the link between Anglican belief and the British Empire see Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c.1700-1850,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007).
[165] Herbert, p. 101.
[166] Bram Stoker, *Dracula,* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003) p. 61.
[167] Herbert, p. 100.
[168] *Dracula*, p. 401.
[169] Quoted in William Hughes, *Beyond Dracula: Bram Stoker's Fiction and Its Cultural Context,* (London: Palgrave, 2000) p. 15.

Winchester rifles and for all the novels fascination with modernity[170] it functions as a narrative deeply invested, albeit ambiguously so, in religious and theological discourse. However, the large amount of theological iconography present, exists alongside folk medicine and superstitions such as garlic, suggesting that there is a degree of fragility and even limitation on what theology may do alone.

Thus, the idea of the novel functioning as a relatively straightforward religious parable of good vs. evil is a position that should not be accepted uncritically. This argument usually focuses upon what is assumed to be a prevailing Catholicism within the text with some critics claiming that 'the novel's religious analogy is obvious' as 'Count Dracula is the figurative anti-Christ who promises eternal life through the ingestion of actual human blood.'[171] The error here is to assume that the concept of Eucharistic sacrifice is exclusively Catholic — whilst the two religious traditions would find differing elements of the text sacrilegious, it should not be ignored that Protestants would still recognise and abhor this corruption of the Eucharist. The religious elements of the text are historicised as a reaction to the decline of the strength of the Church in the new Darwinism of Victorian England.[172] Whilst giving valuable wider context, both perspectives are greatly hindered by a limited understanding of how religious ideas function in the text, and of theological thinking generally. Crucially, the combination of the Protestant and Catholic theological influences connects the Irish Protestant Stoker with Oscar Wilde as another theological influenced author who drew from both Protestant and Catholic theological semiotics. As Alison Milbank points out, Stoker had a bourgeois

[170] Franco Moretti famously reads the novel sociologically, seeing Dracula as a model of capitalist predation. See Franco Moretti, 'The Dialectic of Fear,' *in New Left Review*, 136 (Nov.-Dec. 1982), 67-85.
[171] D. Bruno Starrs, 'Keeping the Faith, Catholicism in Dracula and Its Adaptations' in *Journal of Dracula Studies* Vol 6, 2004.
[172] See Herbert p. 102.

Protestant Ascendancy background similar to that of…Wilde.'[173] This Irish Gothic tradition not only situates Ireland as a site of Gothic barbarism and powerful superstition, but also allows for figures such as Stoker and Wilde to offer themselves as the class 'to control its primitive force.'[174]

Turning to the text the evidence quickly problematizes this idea of a simple divide between either Catholic or Protestant, or religion and superstition. The religious imagery and iconography that the characters appropriate is an unexpected mix of Protestant and Catholic religious discourses. Importantly, it seems that symbolism can be extracted from a wider religious tradition and yet retain its efficacy. One of the first key moments of the narrative shows the blending of the two theological perspectives. Harker, travelling through the regions of both Eastern European superstition as well as orthodox theology, reveals his final destination, which draws the following reaction from a nearby observer:

> She then rose and dried her eyes and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me. I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well.[175]

Here then, Harker, as a self-identified 'English Churchman' takes on the theological accoutrements of the Catholic and Orthodox churches out of a sense of 'grace.' This use of the religiously shaded word 'grace' casts serious doubt upon the idea that this represents the start of Harker's journey of conversion from Protestant to Catholic theology – rather, it seems that Harker's journey is not only geographical and temporal, but spiritual as well. In the moment quoted above it is rather the combining of the two theologies - the foreign crucifix

[173] Alison Milbank, 'Powers Old and New': Stoker's Alliances with Anglo-Irish Gothic' in *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic* ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (London: Palgrave, 1998) p. 12.
[174] Ibid. p. 13.
[175] *Dracula,* p. 11.

in the possession of the Protestant Harker - that both physically and spiritually, protects him from Dracula. Harker himself comes to a similar realization when he first begins to be confronted with the true nature of Dracula:

> Bless that good, good woman who hung the crucifix round my neck! For it is a comfort and a strength to me whenever I touch it. It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to regard with disfavour and as idolatrous should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort? Some time, if it may be, I must examine this matter and try to make up my mind about it.[176]

Harker's question raises interesting possibilities about the potential sacramental nature of Christian iconography that emphasises the divide between Catholic and Protestant theologies. The object that to the English Protestant is to be regarded with disfavour comes to have some mysterious efficacy, though the source of its spiritual power remains a rather less important point than the fact that this power is a source of reassurance. However, the text is no simple paean to the powers of ecumenicalism, as it is when Dracula achieves his aim of transporting himself into the West that the complexity of the theological discourse becomes revealed. Stoker does not treat religion as a non-rationalist system in comparison to the prevalent scientific ideology of the day. Rather, the theological emphasis rests on the dangers that Dracula poses to the ordered systematized theology back in the 'civilised' world.[177] As Herbert notes, 'the evil Count is above all… an image of a terrible menace posed by the superstitious mentality to decent Christian existence.'[178] For evidence one only need to read Harker's thoughts on the risk of Dracula's arrival in England – 'where, perhaps for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood.'[179]

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[176] *Dracula*, p. 35.
[177] Here Stoker shares much in common with William James, in his psychological investigations of religious belief. See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Penguin Classics, 1985).
[178] Herbert, p. 101.
[179] *Dracula*, p. 60.

Interestingly, it seems that the source of religious danger is from the wildness of the 'horseshoe of the Carpathians,' and its 'people who are without religion, save superstition.'[180] What these two points highlight is the extent to which in the Age of British Imperialism, theology has become instrumentalised as both rational, homely belief, useful for upholding the virtues of capitalist exchange and Empire, and at the same, a superstitious force that endangers the status of the British middle classes. The fin-de-siècle materialism of Stoker's novel is not opposed to religion (Harker for example makes frequent reference to God and faith) but rather the threat lies in religious faith that is not under the control and in the service of good Protestant patriarchs. Thus, it is not rational science that is the danger to religion but rather ordered religion — the religion of 'English Churchmen' as the text articulates it — manages to co-exist with the science of the time as both of these ideologies are opposed to the uncontrolled superstition that Dracula embodies (which by this point in the development of the Gothic is not linked with Catholicism as it was with Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*).

The personification of this fusion of both religion and science within the text can most clearly be seen in the character of Van Helsing. Van Helsing is an open-minded Dutch doctor, part-exorcist, part-philosopher who is introduced as a physician to attend upon Lucy when she begins to fall prey to Dracula. Van Helsing is 'a philosopher and a metaphysician and one of the most advanced scientists of his day'[181] but functions as both doctor and priest, drawing upon scientific and superstitious techniques, from blood transfusions to garlic flowers. His language also serves this initially odd combination of 'nineteenth-century medical and

[180] *Dracula*, p. 8.
[181] *Dracula*, p. 122.

scientific knowledge with vampirological lore drawn from superstition and ancient belief.'[182] This combination of both the materialist and the religious is expressed in one simple sentence: 'my thesis is this: I want you to believe.'[183] This is language that fuses the theological and scientific into a singular whole poised against the influence of Dracula. The point Van Helsing makes is that confronting Dracula on the grounds of rational secularity is ineffective — to see this one only need turn to the failure of modern medicine that leads Seward to call in the services of Van Helsing in the first place. Rather, in dealing with the embodiment of superstition, Van Helsing tells Dr Seward that he must 'believe in things that you cannot'[184] — Seward must go beyond the ostensibly rational and the secular to understand the extent of the power and danger that the vampire poses. Essentially, Van Helsing challenges the doctor to re-examine the non-materialist discourses and fields of knowledge that have come to be considered as superstition. The character of Van Helsing essentially converts Seward from what William James called his 'medical materialism…a too simple minded system of thought,' that cannot fully account for the reality of the vampire.[185] Seward's mode of thinking seeks to clearly demarcate the separation of what is scientific and what is religious, but Van Helsing's call to believe in that which he cannot highlights the extent to which such a separation is not necessarily clear or easy to maintain. Van Helsing's initial encounter with Lucy precedes very much as a doctor and patient. His first diagnosis is that she is not anaemic although 'there has been much blood lost,'[186] and so Van Helsing's initial reaction is to look for a traditionally rationalist cause, 'this disease – for not all to be well is a disease – interest

[182] D. Bruno Starrs, 'Keeping the Faith' (2004)
[183] *Dracula*, p. 206.
[184] Ibid.
[185] James, p. 13.
[186] *Dracula*, p. 125.

me.'[187] However, his response to the failure of the rational is an 'exclamation of horror, '*Gott in Himmel!*'[188]

From this point, Van Helsing's actions begin to reflect more theological language, and he begins to reject any attempt to classify Dracula with conventionally rationalist language – 'it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explains not, then it says there is nothing to explain.'[189] The implication is that there are certain limits to rationalist knowledge, and that beyond these limits is accessible only by priest figures such as Van Helsing. Dracula, the powerful figure of wild superstition, exists outside of these limits and to contain and confront him Van Helsing turns to a potent admixture of folkloric superstitions and practises as well as Christian theology and iconography. The use of garlic raises a quizzical response from Seward (perhaps still expecting a more rationalist method of treatment) that Van Helsing appears to be 'working some spell to keep out an evil spirit.'[190] Given his hidden knowledge at the real nature of Dracula, Van Helsing responds that 'perhaps I am.'[191] Yet this treatment proves insufficient, and so Lucy, left alone, can turn only to prayer — 'what am I to do? God shield me from harm this night…god help me!'[192] The churchyard where Lucy is buried serves as the geographical representation of this re-examination of the non-material discourses as characters have to travel to a traditionally sacred space to confront and contain that which the rational has no ability to fully comprehend and understand.

It is in then that comes the climactic scene as Lucy is staked and 'killed' for a second time. The scene contains a powerful visual of the modern world surrounding and completely

[187] Ibid.
[188] *Dracula*, p. 137.
[189] *Dracula*, p. 204.
[190] *Dracula*, p. 141.
[191] Ibid.
[192] *Dracula*, p. 155.

defeating the vampiric force as well as exposing the vacuous argument that the novel can be reduced to a simple binary of good vs. evil. The character of Arthur has his 'true friends' around him, 'pray[ing] for you all the time'[193] as he 'strike[s] in God's name.'[194] Afterwards, the brutal and highly sexualised scene is followed by a 'holy calm,' of which Lucy's now redeemed body forms the visible symbol. Arthur goes so far as to specifically thank Van Helsing for the theological service he has done – 'God bless you that you have given me my dear one her soul again.'[195] What is interesting to note is the clear association between Lucy's transformation into this 'wanton' version of herself and the Arthur's notion of her own damnation. Whilst the vampire may herald a dangerously appealing and liberated sexuality, the expression of female sexuality is tightly bound up in the moral discourses of the day, and furthermore these policing discourses are riven with theological language.

Lucy appears as a sexually wild, voluptuous figure to the men who come to stake her but the encounter in the churchyard is not simply a case of sexual repression meeting sexual liberation. Lucy's fiancé is 'now in the bitter waters. By this time tomorrow you will, please God, have passed them, and have drunk of the sweet waters.'[196] Arthur's experience is not simply a sexual temptation, but akin to baptism — an induction into a new violent theological reality. Rather than read this section of the novel as a fear of unleashed sexuality in itself, this sexual 'wantonness' is a symptom of the dangerous, extreme and superstitious religious force that vampires embody. Her death, then, is not necessarily a punishment for her sexuality but rather a form of highly violent and patriarchal spiritual war-fare, curtailing the spread of Dracula's spiritual force in a brutal, yet effective manner using an act of physical violence not

[193] *Dracula*, p. 230.
[194] *Dracula*, p. 230.
[195] *Dracula*, p. 231.
[196] *Dracula*, p. 227.

only to kill Lucy, but to redeem her spiritually; freeing her soul and herself from Dracula's contamination. She is, by the scene's conclusion, 'not any more a foul Thing for all eternity,'[197] but rather she is 'God's true dead, whose Soul is with Him!'[198] The staking of Lucy is a penetrative act of re-inscribing her body with the theological inflected discourses of holiness, purity and chastity. Lucy therefore is punished for her desire for all three men (all three are present at the churchyard) and at the same time 'redeemed.' Here then, the modern theology of these new crusaders shows just as much propensity for violence as the foe they seek to attack. Theology and the rites of Christian belief become the visible sign of the theological conflict. Whilst the group do destroy a child-killing vampire, it should not be ignored that the prayers and appropriation of Christian iconography allow for the rites of purification to function as a performative justification of physical violence.

However, rather than see the novel in binary terms of theological righteousness combatting the spiritual darkness of the vampire, the text shows the ways in which theology can all too easily be used to provide a discursive framework for violence and domination. Those who stake Lucy co-opt the language of theology for their actions and in this the distinction between themselves and the work of Dracula becomes increasingly unstable. Throughout the novel, not simply in the character and redemptive death of Lucy, one can see Dracula's attempt to spread his influence in theological terms. The inmate of the insane asylum, Renfield, seems to be the clearest formation of how the perverted 'theology' of Dracula is articulated. With his constant displays of devotion and the quasi-scriptural references to the idea that 'the blood is life,'[199] Renfield serves as a John the Baptist type

[197] *Dracula*, p. 232.
[198] Ibid.
[199] A Scriptural referent here is to Levitical laws around sacrifices – consumption of blood is strictly forbidden, as it is through blood that the atonement of the Lord is granted, and life sustained. As all life ultimately belongs to the Lord, such consumption is an act of colossal spiritual arrogance and hubris.

figure, locked away 'as the best way of silencing his sacrilegious evangelism.'[200] He is the first person in the civilised contemporary world of fin-de-siècle London who theologises Dracula. He refers to him as 'the master' as Dr Seward nervously 'thinks it is some form of religious mania which has seized him.'[201] The allusions are further strengthened when Renfield is overheard talking to Dracula:

> I am here to do your bidding master. I am Your slave and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that You are near I await Your commands and You will not pass me by will You, dear Master.[202]

To separate this from the idea of a specific religious ideology is rendered impossible by Dr Seward's response, which neatly encapsulates the fundamental selfishness at work, 'He thinks of the loaves and the fishes even when he believes he is in a real presence.'[203] It seems then, when examined in combination with Lucy's reportedly grossly exaggerated desire for her fiancée, that the fundamental tenet of the vampire theology is one of extreme self-interest and self-gratification. Renfield enacts a kind of linguistic parody of religious language, using it for his self-interested ends and once again showing the fragility and corruptibility of theological discourse. It is for this reason that vampires are positioned as fundamentally opposite to a civilised modern world – in the civilised world of British imperialism, it is simply not possible to be as exploitative and self-interested as Dracula as it serves as both a societal and spiritual danger, threatening the theological justifications for the hegemony of empire.

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[200] Herbert, p. 107.

[201] Seward claims that a religious mania is something that can be medically diagnosed. Once again, this links to the emerging field of psychology and in particular the work of William James. James specifically distinguishes between the 'ordinary religious believer' and those who have 'excessively pursued' the religious life which results in 'abnormal psychical visitations.' (James, p.6) There is, it seems, an appropriate amount of belief or religious faith that it is psychologically dangerous to exceed. Thus, the novel further destabilises the divide between religion and science in fin-de-siècle materialism.

[202] *Dracula*, p. 113.

[203] *Dracula*, p. 113 and a reference to Matthew 14 and John 6, the moments in the Gospels where Christ feeds thousands through a few loaves and fish. Seward's point is that Renfield's aims are remarkably base — concerned only with his physical desire for consuming, to the extent that he ignores the theological realities at play.

Renfield is contained within the asylum, limiting his potential to damage to society, both politically and theologically, and Dr Seward immediately highlights how self-involved this self-aggrandising faith is:

> How these madmen give themselves away! The real God taketh heed lest a sparrow fall, but the God created from human vanity sees no difference between an eagle and a sparrow. Oh! If only men knew![204]

Rather than encourage any kind of humility and value in others, Dracula (and thus all he influences) sees no distinction between people, dividing them into either prey or a threat. The eternal life he offers is a mockery of the sacrifice of Christ, as rather than shed blood for the sake of others Dracula is only capable of taking from those who worship or encounter him. Thus, Dracula's 'faith' involves a forcible taking from others – physically and spiritually for his own purposes. However, Dracula's actions are uncomfortably similar to those of Harker, Van Helsing and the rest who seek his destruction. Whilst cloaked in the language of religion the language used throughout the novel is annihilationist — Harker calls on God to allow him to 'destroy that earthly life of him which we were aiming at.'[205] Further still, Harker seeks to 'send his soul for ever and ever to burning hell,'[206] for Dracula's feeding on Mina. One of the heroes of the novel is, just as with Dracula, a force of great power, capable of using sophisticated systems and technologies for exploitation and domination. Through the appropriation of the language of morality and theology, violence is justified, made into something not just necessary, but divinely approved. This divine sanction for violent retribution allows for a collective response to the emergence of the vampire. This notion of collective faith or common Church widens the access to the necessary materials with which to further the fight against Dracula. In collective belief, the group wields crucifixes as well as

[204] *Dracula*, p. 113.
[205] *Dracula*, p. 328.
[206] ibid

guns, both of which, by this point in the narrative, are held up as products of civilised, fin-de-siècle society. This is due to the influence of Van Helsing whose exhortation to believe in what is beyond the material has encouraged the rest of the crew of light to utilise the power of the non-materialist (in this case crucifixes) alongside the technologies of the materialist age.

In other words, the fundamental sacrilege of the vampire is a perversion of the Eucharistic sacrament, whereas in the orthodox theology of the church it brings the many desperate parts of the body of Christ around the same table. Here Dracula is the one feeding on the many. The best example of this is shown in how both Mina and Renfield are treated in their encounters with Dracula. Mina's encounter with Dracula that 'Van Helsing misleadingly terms the vampire's baptism of blood…is given the form and discourse of a communion'[207] which shows how the Vampire corrupts the sacraments of the church. Mina is forced into drinking the Count's blood, whilst her husband impotently stands and watches —reduced to both theological and material spectator. Dracula transforms her into the 'bountiful wine press' and his 'companion and helper'[208] through this ceremony. An orthodox theological understanding placed great emphasis on the Eucharist and the act of Holy Communion as a process of the transmission of the nature of Christ: here, the '*cordon sanitaire* between religious piety and superstition'[209] has been collapsed as Dracula blurs and corrupts the lines between the sacrament and sacrilege. As Girard point out, this religious impulse to separate the sacred and the sacrilegious 'is not dissimilar to that of medicine when suddenly confronted with an unknown disease,'[210] that given Dracula's need for blood, further connects both fin-de-siècle science and a distinctly theological discourse. The conclusion to

[207] Noel Montague-Etienne Rarignac, *The Theology of Dracula, Reading the Book of Stoker As Sacred Text* (London: MacFarland and Co, 2012) p. 115.
[208] *Dracula*, p. 306.
[209] Herbert, p. 110.
[210] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* trans. Patrick Gregory, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) p. 36.

the Vampire Eucharist is how Dracula treats Renfield; savagely beating him to death, soaking him in the blood upon which Dracula feeds. The end point of the Vampire Eucharist then, is not the spiritual sustenance offered in the sacrifice that the Christian Eucharist is based on but rather Dracula forces Renfield into a sacrifice solely for his own ends – as soon as Renfield is no longer fit for Dracula's purpose, he is brutally disposed of. This physicalizing of the transcendent sacrament offers a vision of theology as a weapon and provides an uncomfortable similarity between the spiritual power of Dracula and the theological legitimacy of those who seek to confront him.

The important idea of collective faith and action lends credence to the notion that the confrontation with Dracula is a form of missionary evangelism. The group of Mina, Jonathan, Arthur, Quincy Morris and Dr Seward form around the charismatic leadership of Van Helsing. Together the group goes back from the civilised world into Transylvania. The group, now well armed in both the technological and spiritual sense,[211] return to the superstitious land in which the novel opened. Rather than an individual alone, the return to Dracula's homeland is a collective endeavour. As one critic notes, 'Harker instead of being alone, unsure, and Protestant, he is now in a group, experienced, and quasi-Catholic.'[212] Stoker defines the journey back into the region as not simply a geographical journey, but rather a 'time-journey into a stratum of the European mind prior to the supposed conquering of pagan magical thinking by Christianity.'[213] The superstition of the area is defined anthropologically and in going back in to Dracula's own country the characters appropriate theological language of the

[211] They go having experience with the effectiveness of the Host and crucifixes in dealing with Dracula as well as carrying weapons – the combination of physical weaponry and spiritual force proves to be highly potent.
[212] Kellie Wixson, "Dracula: An Anglo-Irish Novel." In *Dracula: The Shade and the Shadow* ed. Elizabeth Miller. (Westcliff-on-Sea: Desert Island Books, 1998.) p. 254.
[213] Herbert, p. 102.

crusades, thus framing the conflict as not just a religious quest but also a spiritual battle, in the tradition of the bloody past of Christian colonialism:

> thus are we ministers of God's own wish…he has allowed us to redeem one soul already, [the death and salvation of Lucy Westenra] and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more. Like them we shall travel towards the sunrise…[214]

Thus, as with the Crusades of old, it is not simply a moral divide between Dracula and these new nineteenth century crusaders but rather the journey of the group into the East and fight against Dracula represent the age of modernity in its struggle against pre-Christian superstitions. This is not simply a religious quest though, as Dracula's opponents always manage to utilise the technology and privileges of the modern world that Dracula cannot use. For example, the group manages to use the technologies of travel that Dracula does not, as Van Helsing explains that whilst Dracula travels by boat, 'It will take her…three weeks to reach Varna,' the others can 'travel overland to the same place in three days.'[215] Not only do they take advantage of the industrialisation[216] that modernity brings that advantages them over Dracula they also make the conscious decision to go 'armed against evil things, spiritual as well as physical.'[38] Just as the Crusaders took arms, here the group adds 'Winchesters to our armament,' and set out to defeat Dracula with not only the powers of heaven but with all the powers of the modern industrial age.[217]

It is in the novel's conclusion that this synthesis of science, technology and religion is used most explicitly to finally bring about Dracula's death. The final religious mark is the scene where the men of the group swear to release Mina's soul back to God, kneeling before Mina

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[214] *Dracula*, p. 341.
[215] *Dracula*, p. 345.
[216] For the connections between modernity and the figure of the vampire, see Stacey Abbott, *Celluloid Vampires: Life After Death in the Modern World* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2009)
[217] Notably the group take Winchester rifles thanks to the American Quincey Morris, this incidental detail serves as both a material and theological link to the United States, itself a nation founded on the principle of theologically justified colonialism discussed in reference to the short stories of Hawthorne in Chapter Two.

and promising to kill her rather than allow her to fall victim to Dracula for eternity. The scene is laden with religious overtones that unsettle the characters and reinforce the sacrificial religious traits that Mina's character takes upon herself. As Dr Seward writes:

> How can I…tell of that strange scene, its solemnity…its sweetness. Even a sceptic, who can see nothing but a travesty of bitter truth in anything holy or emotional, would have melted to the heart had he seen that little group of loving and devoted friends.[218]

Mina, stricken with the taint of "impurity" poses a danger to the entire group. As Girard notes, there is only one way to purify her infected blood – 'only blood itself - the blood, in short of sacrificial victims – can accomplish this task.'[219] This scene serves as not only a form of spiritual redemption for Mina, allowing her to sacrifice herself for the sake of others and thus achieve some form of redemption from Dracula but has a crucial role for the other characters. The men in this scene are commissioned by Mina, to go out to fight Dracula — 'What will each of you give? Your lives I know…Your lives are God's, and you can give them back to him.'[220] The scene finishes with Seward noting that the 'coming relapse from her freedom of soul' now did not seem so 'full of despair.'[221] In a sense, the group have been consecrated by Mina's sacrifice to go out and redeem the modern, civilised world from the Vampire's influence. This point is further proven by Mina's note in her journal that 'we are truly in the hands of God,' suggesting divine providence behind the actions of the characters out to destroy the vampire and thus behind the whole of the material, fin-de-siècle civilised society that they represent. What this implies is that there must be both the actions of the individual and the divine providence of God acting in combination with one another to control and defeat Dracula.

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[218] *Dracula*, p. 354.
[219] Girard, p. 39.
[220] Stoker, p. 351
[221] *Dracula*, p. 354

In conclusion, the theology of the novel and the ways in which the theology is enacted is a highly effective blend of both contemporary Protestant identity coupled with the ancient sacraments and iconography of the Catholic Church. As such, the use of theological sacraments and iconography is at best eclectic, mixing Catholic hosts with the detail of Protestant testimony narratives. Perhaps we mistakenly assume that this book, 'hybrid as it is of Gothic horror-mongering and religious earnestness will prove to be fully coherent in its thinking.'[222] Alternatively, this mix of the ancient and modern, the Catholic and the Protestant might be seen as attempting a type of syncretism. As Alison Milbank writes,

> Stoker used a demonic character to unite a disparate opposition. So, Dracula calls forth a union of Protestant word and Catholic sacrament, figured as modern and ancient modes of communication.[223]

However, the claims of syncretism do not seem totally convincing — functioning as an attempt to apply systematic definitions and dogmatic separations to an imaginative presentation of the role of sacramentality and iconography in dealing with an encounter with monstrous evil. Rather than this kind of theological literalism, the text is more hermeneutically fruitful than simply bringing together Catholic and Protestant traditions. Fundamentally, the novel shows that rather than being antagonistic, Christian theological discourses and modernity can be brought together to serve the same function in different ways. The rationalist and materialist ideology can only explain a small part of the nature of the vampire and must necessarily be paired with religion. The use of Christian iconography, sacraments and theology allows characters to find the means to 'engage the world beyond the self, whether of material or spiritual objects, as truly real.'[224] In effect, this means that the

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[222] Herbert, p. 102.
[223] Alison Milbank, "Powers Old and New: Stoker's Alliances with Anglo-Irish Gothic." In *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic*, ed William Hughes and Andrew Smith. (London: Macmillan, 1998).
[224] Alison Milbank, Apologetics and the Imagination In *Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition*, ed. Andrew Davison, (SCM Press, London, 2003) pg. 33.

rational world of fin-de-siècle modernity could not defeat Dracula and thus without a religious or theological aspect to the civilised world, there would be no way for the individual characters to be capable of engaging with the irrational and spiritually powerful force that Dracula embodies. Through the technologies of modernity, the vampire can be fought, but it is through the iconography and sacraments of Christian thought that Dracula can be defeated. However, this relationship is not unproblematic, as within the novel, theology and the rites and symbols of Christian faith are not excused from violence, but are weaponised, drawn into the culpability of violence and domination that Dracula embodies. Thus, not only does *Dracula* serve as an imaginative re-engagement with the nature and true theological significance of sacraments, but also poses a profound challenge. If a sacramental theology can reinstate purity through violence, then the theologically aware reader is forced to confront the vulnerability of theology.

Finally, the fin-de-siècle Gothic text reveals itself to be theologically productive as well as highlighting the extent to which theological understandings of Sin contribute to understandings of the Gothic in the light of degeneration theory's failure to properly engage with non-materialist discourses. Theological readings of the novels reveal the necessity of understanding degeneration in more than solely materialist terms, as discourses emptied of theological content leave understandings of these texts conceptually impoverished. At the same time, a theological understanding of these three texts reveals a greater complexity and conceptual richness that degeneration theorists, through their materialist biases, cannot help but miss. However, theology does not stand above, or separate from, the materialist discourses of degeneration, as throughout the fin-se-siècle Gothic, theology is instrumentalized in similar ways to degeneration theory into a tool of violence and imperialism, frequently used to justify colonial domination and class oppression in the name

of God. Theological readings of these texts thus provide both much needed depth to degeneration theory as well as a means by which understandings of evil and the supernatural find new expression outside of the strictures of Christian theology which becomes increasingly reliant on natural theology. The fin-de-siècle Gothic text functions not simply as the embodiment of materialist anxieties around the status of human subjectivity as these texts consistently resist simply materialist explanation. Criticism that rests upon the materialist ideas of degeneration theory is theologically ignorant and is methodologically flawed, unable to adequately engage with the non-material aspect of the Gothic that emerges during the fin-de-siècle. However, as *Dracula* clearly shows, the distinction between the material conditions of the fin-de-siècle and the theological elements are not necessarily clear – theology and theological anxieties are both produced by a particular set of historical and social conditions and are simultaneously a response to these conditions. Within *Dracula,* theology is both a part of the materialist, technologically sophisticated and imperialist society that battles the vampire, yet at the same time, the power of Dracula resides in his superstitious and theological nature. What these texts prove, through a theological reading, is that the Gothic text allows for an exploration of theological anxieties in new ways. As materialist discourses became increasingly widely accepted, there remains within the Gothic a strain of theological discourse which responds to the predominant materialist degeneration discourse of the cultural moment. Thus, despite the proliferation and wide spread acceptance of degeneration discourses, even in a cultural era of ostensible secularity and materialism, and even within a technologically sophisticated and imperialist nation such as Britain, these materialist discourses alone are insufficient. Augustinian notions of privation and evil are not reducible to discourses of biological destiny or degeneration that were so prevalent in the post-Darwinian age. That said, the entanglements between theology and the materialist

discourses of the fin-de-siècle Gothic render theology unstable and vulnerable — as much as a theological reading of these three texts may highlight the need for theological awareness (indeed it is essential in combatting Dracula for example) it is all-too-easily co-opted and used to justify violence, misogyny and oppression. The challenge for criticism on the fin-de-siècle Gothic is to explore and engage the theological and non-material element of the language and themes of the text whilst interrogating the ways in which this language is complicit and bound up within on-going violence and oppression.

Conclusion: Through the Gothic Castle, Back to Theology.

From beginning at a theological starting point from which to investigate the Gothic nineteenth-century novel, the conclusion returns to theology, having passed through the Gothic text. This thesis has argued that the nineteenth-century Gothic narrative expresses theological and imaginative concerns that have, thus far in criticism, remained either latent, under-acknowledged or ignored. Utilising an imaginative apologetics, the texts have been read as expressing a variety of theological issues outsides the strictures and limitations of conventional theology or orthodox religious practise, whilst at the same time seeking to remain aware of the historical and critical contexts that inform the text's production. What emerges from the preceding chapters is the ways in which theological readings can provide new insights into the Gothic novels studied, as well as contribute to the fields of both Imaginative Apologetics and Gothic studies more widely. The scope of the texts chosen have led to theological examinations of personhood and subjectivity, the tensions between religion and theology, political theology and the importance of sacramentality. Such theological content has, thus far been given insufficient critical attention.

As argued in the introduction, if the Gothic novel is read as possessing a theological content, no matter how heterodox or ambiguous, this carries an implicit challenge to the wider field of theology. Within the Gothic, theology is held in ambiguous tension with the supernatural, yet, as Hughes points out, 'the conventional closures which characterise many Gothic works,'[1] aim at a restoration of Christian morality and at fictionalising a reassuring belief in the omnipotence and omnibenevolence of God. However, as argued throughout the readings in the thesis, the Gothic relationship to theology is not limited by narrative closure. Rather than read the Gothic novel as staging something as straightforward as a morality play

[1] Hughes, (2000) p. 14.

or pious ethical allegory, the thesis has shown that throughout the Gothic closure is never final or ultimate as the texts consistently emphasize both the reality and power of supernatural experiences alongside the role of theology. Thus, as Hughes writes, 'the Gothic retains a commitment to an ongoing ontological dialectic in which the credible and the orthodox are presented as relative rather than Absolute, if only for a time.'[2]

This relativity of the credible and realist alongside the orthodox, religious and supernatural insights of the Gothic novel, revealed through this Imaginative Apologetic reading can, and indeed, must, be worked back into the wider, ongoing and multifaceted development of Christian theology and practise. Furthermore, this persistence of the theological content of the Gothic novel and the productive readings generated through Imaginative Apologetics would seem to require a more theologically open aspect to Gothic criticism. As Geary argues, Gothic criticism has, through its history, generally seen the religious as something explicable in psychological terms — this he pins to the influence of Freud and his essay on the uncanny. 'Since the supernatural was but a covert means of exploring more forbidden themes of the self and the other, it no longer has a place in the post-Freudian world.'[3] Yet, as proven through the course of the thesis, solely psychological readings of the Gothic do not adequately explain the proliferation of theological and religious theme, imagery, trope and symbol that persist throughout the texts in question. With this in mind, the conclusion seeks to establish the ways in which the gothic informs and challenges theological thought and, in addition, the ways in which Imaginative Apologetics may continue to inform and add to the ongoing investigation of Gothic literature in all of its forms. The

[2] Ibid, p. 15.
[3] Geary, p. 127-8.

challenge that emerges from the investigations in previous chapters is to articulate how and in what ways theology must respond to the insights generated from Gothic sources.

In her book on women writers of the nineteenth century, Rebecca Styler argues that 'it was necessary for these writers to create a literary theology because female writers were denied any formal theological role in the church and academy.'[4] Whilst a promising starting point, Styler's argument does not necessarily extend to the writers considered here – whilst the Brontë sisters may fit Styler's model, that certainly does not hold true for writers such as Hogg and Wilde (see chapters two and four respectively). Rather, it seems that regardless of the theological position of the authors of the text, the Gothic novel can function as a space within which theological ideas are explored outside of the institutional boundaries of a religious denomination or the discursive boundaries of theology itself. Thus, rather than follow Styler and argue that these writers produced a "Gothic theology" as a consequence of a lack of formal theological authority, the texts instead function as a way in which orthodoxy can be bypassed and the limitations of denominational acceptability can be ignored. However, it would be a mistake to consider the Gothic as a kind of "repressed theology" as this steers too close to a psychoanalytic logic that would discount the theological within the texts. Rather, what is required is a more expansive view of theology that moves beyond the limitations and barriers of either religious practise, orthodoxy and denomination or the edges of a particular body of thought and scholarship. Such an attitude only serves to isolate natural theology from the culture in which it exists and thus restrict the ways in which theology and

[4] Rebecca Styler, *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2010), p.1.

culture may profitably interact. As David Brown explains in the conclusion to his work *God in Mystery and Words:*

> The art, music, architecture, and literature referred to are essentially illustrative of a more fundamental thesis: that both natural and revealed theology are in crisis, and that the only way out is to give proper attention to the cultural embeddedness of both. Religion does not operate in isolation, and so theology and philosophy as it reflects on religion is equally incapable of escaping that wider influence, however much it may pretend otherwise.[5]

Firstly then, the theological reading of the Gothic contributes to theology by revealing the extent to which Imaginative Theology is culturally embedded – even within what would seem to be an ostensibly "low" cultural form such as the Gothic novel. Crucially, this reinforces the point made by Milbank that the Gothic renders the familiar and mundane eerie and strange – and as a result, opens up onto the religious sense. Christianity, as Milbank writes, is 'not narrow but a vision that includes everything,'[6] — not just the literature of Christian writers, but the horrors and terrors of the Gothic novel are just as capable of leading upward to talk of God. The failure to acknowledge this seems to be both short-sighted and imposing a limit on where imaginative apologetics may turn for resources. In certain respects, it would seem that Brown's point about the crisis in theology shows that the suspicions of Coleridge over the Gothic's theological liminality, mentioned in the introduction, remain unresolved.

Here then, we may begin to articulate the theological challenge within the Gothic novel a little more clearly — with the caveat that the readings given in the previous chapters, whilst generally Augustinian in tone, should by no means be considered as a comprehensive

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[5] David Brown, *God in Mystery and Words,* p. 269. Whilst Brown's point regarding a crisis may be open to contestation, there are two points worth adding – that the natural theology of writers such as Brown and Milbank has done much to move theology beyond the point of crisis and furthermore, it is remarkable how little attention was given to this question through much of the history of Gothic criticism. Parenthetically it should be acknowledged that both Milbank and Brown are engaged in different projects, yet the work the two have done had expanded the field of understanding for examining the ways in which culture and theology interact.

[6] Milbank, 'Apologetics and the Imagination,' p. 44.

theological hermeneutic. Rather, it seems that the Gothic novel operates upon the same linguistic and imaginative ground as theology, whilst not necessarily sharing its commitments, or further still, opposing them completely. That said, the novels considered in the course of this thesis do operate upon the terrain of the theological, even if that is directed toward a non-theological or even atheist reader. The Gothic text uses much of the same language that makes talk of God (however conceived) possible in the first place. This inevitably has implications for both the theologian and the Gothic critic, as Imfeld writes:

> The supernatural tale provides a space in which the non-theological reader can participate in the theological journey. For the literary scholar, theological readings of the ghost story provide a recovery of a specific ontological vocabulary, and for theologians, they provide a reminder that 'the divine is there in the grotesque.'[7]

The Gothic novel, with its accompanying monsters, violence and supernatural occurrences serves as a fruitful site for theological engagement in terms that do not depend upon theological knowledge or even religious faith, and so should be seen as hugely valuable for any Imaginative Apologetic work. The Catholic philosopher William Desmond lays out the implications of this in striking terms:

> Why should only the faces of beauty show the divine, and not the faces of the repulsive? Startling us, sometimes monstrous faces seem truer masks of the divine, for even in the revulsion they call forth a reckless consent. The divine is there in the grotesque, disproportionate to our sense of finite harmony, shattering the concord of our finite measure of love. There is excess to the repulsive we cannot stand, but the ultimate stands with the monstrous too, and we must look at the monstrous differently to be with the ultimate differently. We need *agapeic* beholding of the beauty in the ugly, the eyes of God in the scabby countenance.[8]

The Gothic novel then, challenges the theologian to find the revelation of God in the strangest, most violent and unexpected of places. Read theologically and imaginatively, it issues a test to the theologian – to look into the very darkest possible forms of narrative and

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[7] Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: from Le Fanu to James* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 167.
[8] William Desmond, *God and the Between* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) p. 197.

culture and there discern the movement and action of God. In a secular age where religious faith is seen as no longer the easiest or perhaps even a defensible position, it seems that the Gothic novel possesses both a reach and imaginative capacity that theology as a whole should not ignore. Thus, the work of continuing to draw both Gothic studies and imaginative apologetics together must continue. As mutually beneficial and productive partners, the two fields may continue to reveal the extent to which God is at work, in all places – even if those places are wholly unexpected, terrifying and unpredictable, challenging and unsettling to believer and non-believer alike. As Augustine wrote of God as the water which permeates every aspect of the sponge that is the world, there is always more to discover if the idea of universality is taken with its due seriousness.[9] Read with imaginative engagement and theological awareness, the Gothic novel is shown through this thesis to be a part of this process. Even in the very darkest, most terrifying aspects of our culture and the world we share, we may, if we are willing to look carefully and with humility, find something of the nature of the Divine, where it is most needed and most unexpected.

[9] Augustine, p. 55-63. Whilst this is a point made by Augustine in his Manichean phase, it serves to illustrate the crucial point that revelation about the nature of the divine can and indeed does emerge from sources which are outside of the Christian tradition.

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