

GOTHIC FANATICISM: CHRISTIANITY, POWER, AND DISCOURSE IN NINETEENTH-  
CENTURY BRITISH GOTHIC FICTION

by

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## ABSTRACT

# GOTHIC FANATICISM: CHRISTIANITY, POWER, AND DISCOURSE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH GOTHIC FICTION

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This project explores religious fanaticism in long nineteenth-century British Gothic fiction. Gothic fanaticism is defined as a specific literary device useful for discrediting religious outsiders and critiquing religious phenomena. This study outlines and focuses on three arenas that feature Gothic fanaticism: excessive romantic love, religious nationalism, and vampire fiction. I focus specifically on nineteenth-century British Gothic fiction because of the shifting religious landscape. The introduction traces religious movements and defines Gothic fanaticism, using the concept to read James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

In chapter one, I argue that the language of Gothic fanaticism describes excessive religious practices alongside problematic romantic relationships in Gothic romances like Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. In chapter two, I compare the ways Arthur Conan Doyle and Elizabeth Gaskell depict American forms of Protestantism as deviant and fanatical to recenter English superiority through Gothicized religion. While Gothic fanaticism discredits Mormonism in *A Study in Scarlet*, Gaskell's *Lois the Witch* goes beyond this othering impulse and can best be read as a juridical parable asking readers to identify fanaticism in a Gothicized other before rooting out

their own problematic religious impulses. The final chapter explores the Gothic vampire, suggesting Bram Stoker and George MacDonald police gender norms through Gothicized fanaticism. The study concludes with a reading of Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*, in which the heroine's psychic vampirism stems not from a literal thirst for blood but from her parents' quintessentially Gothic identities as fanatical villains.

Each chapter includes a coda tracing contemporary residues of Gothic fanaticism. Gothic depictions of religious fanatics continue to demonstrate how the discourse shapes conceptions of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" religious belief and practice. Generally, they remind us that monstrosity resides primarily in human action and that the best way to evaluate religion is not through its creeds but through its effects on others.

## INTRODUCTION

James Hogg's short novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) chronicles the strange case of Robert Wringhim, starting in the circumstances surrounding his birth to a prudish and fanatical mother. He becomes convinced that as one of the elect, his sins cannot count against him; further, he believes he is called by God to slay the wicked and those who preach different creeds from his own antinomian breed of Calvinism. Wringhim believes, from the moment he is confirmed by his adopted father Rev. Wringhim as a member of the elect, "not that I should be a minister of the gospel, but a champion of it, to cut off the enemies of the Lord from the face of the earth," a calling he rejoices in as it is "more congenial to my nature to be cutting sinners off with the sword, than to be haranguing them from the pulpit" (Hogg 93). He murders and commits various crimes, encouraged by his adoptive (and possibly biological) father and goaded by an evil supernatural double he calls "Gil-Martin." Wringhim believes, since "God had from all eternity decided the fate of every individual that was to be born of woman, how vain was it in man to endeavour to save those whom their Maker had, by an unchangeable decree, doomed to destruction" (94). Hogg horrifically satirizes this antinomian perspective.

Fanaticism provides a core concern in his novel, which was in fact republished in 1837 under the title *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Fanatic*.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning, readers have acknowledged the work's interrogation of religious fanaticism. Hogg's novel also participates in the Gothic, using topoi like the supernatural, the demonic double, and the emergence of troubling historicity into the present to examine religious fanaticism. In various

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan notes, "The revisions, which are almost certainly not by Hogg, erase or blur the original's theological arguments, remove all hints of impropriety, and undo some of its technical experiments" ("Introduction" xvi).

ways, Hogg breaks with the initial templates of early anti-Catholic novels. Among other writers, he uses the Gothic to depict a form of Protestantism, rather than antique Catholicism, as fanatical.<sup>2</sup> A persistent concern for fanaticism, which appears both as a discourse and as a phenomenon, appears at the nineteenth-century literary intersection of religion and the Gothic. Fanaticism itself becomes Gothicized in early anti-Catholic Gothic, Hogg's novel, and throughout the nineteenth century.

The question of when religion turns into fanaticism is an integral line of inquiry from the Gothic genre's beginnings, exemplified in the scene of Jerome and Hippolita worshipping at Alfonso's tomb in Horace Walpole's 1764 *The Castle of Otranto* as well as in Robert Wringham's faith-inspired murders. This interest in religious fanaticism also existed beyond the pages of Gothic fiction. Protestants often accused each other (and Catholics) of fanaticism, whether their accusations were based in actual analysis of religious practice or pure prejudice. Expanding religious instability, stemming from factors like the Oxford Movement, a broader use of Higher Biblical Criticism, and increasing globalization, propelled these accusations. Throughout the century, denominations and sects proliferated even as in many arenas, secularization increased. These changes contributed to concerns about fanaticism, particularly as groups and individuals often defined their faith through what they were not. I contend that the Gothic, persistently concerned with the monstrous, becomes a vocabulary employed to discredit certain forms of religion, critique others, and work out concerns about religious enthusiasm.

In the Gothic genre, fanaticism wears many faces, whether that means early Gothic caricatures of Catholics, later caustic portrayals of Evangelicals, or satirical depictions of Methodism and dissenting practices. Fanaticism haunts the Gothic. Although it is also a concern

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<sup>2</sup> As Duncan writes, Hogg's novel "completely reworks the Continental Roman Catholic settings of late eighteenth-century English Gothic fiction," shaping the book and the genre ("Introduction" xviii).

in other literary subgenres, such as the social reform novel, fanaticism is particularly relevant in the Gothic because of the genre's interest in what constitutes monstrosity. The Gothic uses its degree of removal from the modern world that permits sharper critique to explore concerns about isolation, emphasize the uncanny and the supernatural, consistently condemn all kinds of tyranny, and ask questions about spiritual truth. Gothic forms and fanaticism share investment in types of power and its abuse. Gothic elements, structures, and topoi provide writers the means to creatively discuss and, at times, powerfully critique fanaticism, whether these critiques are aimed at actual fanatics or simply across religious difference. Fanaticism in literature often becomes a strategy of othering and a means of rendering religious practices of outsiders uncanny. I focus specifically on representations of Protestant fanatics, which become especially uncanny since they are often written from a differently Protestant perspective. Thus, these maladaptive religious practices become dark mirrors for a Protestant audience. Gothicized religion is not merely depicted as problematic but as actively monstrous.

While I am interested in fanaticism as a historical and psychological phenomenon, this study specifically focuses on Gothicized fanaticism, a discourse I outline that is used within fiction to monitor the boundaries of appropriate religious practice. Gothic fiction helps reveal both the literal and discursive power in fanaticism, which empowers disenfranchised individuals, if only temporarily and at great cost. Excessive religion can mentally and emotionally sustain people or groups that are outsiders in some way, often to troubling degrees. The weaponization of religion has proved to be devastatingly powerful in contemporary political realities; this is nothing new. Moreover, fanatical religion can become a tool and a means of controlling true believers. Gothicized fanaticism also reveals the way individuals and outgroups can be marginalized through a "fanatical" religious affiliation. Different nineteenth-century religious

sects were vulnerable to accusations of fanaticism on varying grounds, depending on the accuser's position and their own practices. Using the discourse of fanaticism to describe religious others strengthens the speaker's own perspective. Gothicizing the practices of another could not only criticize and warn against certain practices, but it could also become an inroad or tool for thinking about religion and devotion more broadly. In this study, I identify and explore three specific nineteenth-century arenas in which the discourse of Gothic fanaticism is used: romance, nationalism, and vampire fiction. Gothic religion and its language frequently describe obsessive, consuming romantic love that detracts from "appropriate" devotion to God. Further, Gothicized fanaticism becomes a useful way to recenter one's own affiliation with a normative group, whether this is religious, national, or both. Finally, Gothic tropes depict fanaticism as a draining, vampiric force that can suck the life out of a community. Gothic fanaticism remains a useful set of shapes and tropes as diagnosing and interpreting dangerous religion, which was important to many in the nineteenth century, is relevant to this day.

### **Defining Fanaticism**

Ultimately, I define fanaticism as unchecked zeal, typically religious, that is uncritical of the self and the group, blind to one's own or one's group's faults, intolerant of other perspectives, and unrooted in history or diverse community. It manifests in behavioral action, often includes violence, and authorizes the self. As a literary example, Robert Wringhim clearly meets all of these criteria. Wringhim's epistemological frame is constructed only with his parents, then alongside Gil-Martin, whom he ensures he shares beliefs with, and no one else. His belief system impacts his behavioral system in negative ways, and his fanaticism manifests not in his antinomian beliefs but in his violent actions for the cause. He cannot accept critique from others, nor can he critique himself. Further, he is an outsider due to his birth status. He is not

merely a fanatic: he is a Gothicized fanatic and a religious monster. While this project is built on others' useful definitions of fanaticism, I work to define not just the phenomenon but the specific discourse I term "Gothic fanaticism," demonstrating the means and ends of using Gothic shapes and language alongside religious ones in the contexts of excessive romantic love, religious nationalism, and the vampire.

Fanaticism is not bound to a specific religion; rather, it is the product of insular groupthink, over-reliance on emotion, intolerance of difference, and a lack of critical approaches to power structures. According to Laurie Calhoun, "fanaticism embodies not only a moral stance regarding the necessity of acting upon one's beliefs ... but also an epistemological position regarding the incontrovertible authority of one's own opinion" (250). She identifies neither the fanatic's stance nor commitment to beliefs as the problem, but instead "their complete lack of epistemological humility" (Calhoun 350). Fanatics exhibit an inability to admit when they are wrong; they become self-authorizers who claim access to the sole truth. Further, fanatics share a "self-sacrificial devotion to the goal" (Marimaa 42). Fanatics believe they "posses[s] the absolute truth and that [their] own opinions define reality" (Calhoun 350). H. J. Perkinson notes that fanatics lack self-critique and ignore the human "condition of fallibility" (172).<sup>3</sup> Fanatics see themselves as incapable of being wrong. Often, acting in fanatical ways serves to strengthen the bonds and boundaries of a community. As Alberto Toscano points out, fanatics are not necessarily irrational and may act based upon very rational group needs and goals (xi). Alan Jacobs has demonstrated that thinking happens communally and never "independently of others," and although fanaticism can emerge individually, it becomes most dangerous when it infects

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<sup>3</sup> He writes, "A fanatic is dogmatic. He insists that his theories, his ideology, his solutions are *the* correct ones. A fanatic is obscurantist. He ignores (or cannot perceive) arguments, facts, or consequences that refute his solutions. Finally, a fanatic is authoritarian. When he has power he tries to impose his answers on others. Dogmatism, obscurantism, and authoritarianism are all out of keeping with the human condition of fallibility" (Perkinson 172).

communities willing to act violently for a cause (62). Furthermore, fanaticism can internally encourage and motivate individuals when they are disenfranchised in some way, especially when they perceive themselves as martyrs. Those who employ fanaticism's mechanisms over others can also use it to wield power over large groups.

Fanaticism is useful as a discourse, particularly when employed against others. As Haynal, Molnar, and Puymége point out, like many labels, "fanatic" is often applied from the perspective of an outsider in the process of oppositional identity creation and stabilization. Typically, writers use the term "fanatic" to describe "what is foreign," either literally or "in the cultural, ideological—even in the political and sociological—sense" (Haynal et al. 11). Toscano reads fanaticism as a set of indictments that can accuse others of not being rational when in fact they very well may be. Calling an outgroup fanatical allows one to be critical without actually having to engage with outsiders. Toscano posits the real problem may not be religious at all: fanaticism is both political and discursive (xxii). As Haynal et al. suggest, the term is typically a pejorative that "enables us not only to place a value judgment on those who oppose our ideals, but also to condemn out of hand their mode of behavior, without delving deeper, simply by saying: 'They're fanatics'" (4). Fanaticism is always preoccupied "with the religion of the other" (Toscano xvii). Labeling an other a "fanatic" transforms them into a religious boogeyman one need not actually socially or intellectually engage with. As Haynal et al. observe,

No one recognizes himself as a fanatic, except perhaps a few isolated individuals or limited groups who deliberately flaunt it. ... Does fanaticism really even exist as a historical phenomenon ... or does it boil down to a concept that tells more about the person who utilizes it than about the one it seeks to elucidate? (8)

The diagnosis of fanaticism always comes from outside. In literature, few fanatics self-identify as such. Fanaticism can be relative, even though patterns typical to the phenomenon are identifiable. The definition of fanatic itself proves to be somewhat malleable. Haynal et al. note that fanaticism as a phenomenon “does not lend itself to a scientific examination because of the moving scale of criteria by which it can be identified” (231). Thus, it is important to discern the position from which the label is applied. While criteria, such as willingness to resort to violent action based on belief or view of the self as infallible, can help identify fanatical tendencies, “fanaticism” often rests in the eye of the beholder. Notably, Gothic fanatics generally demonstrate some degree of difference from socially determined norms, whether those are class, gender, or religion-based.

The etymology of fanaticism, its history, and its relationship to the Gothic prove useful to deeply defining the term. According to the OED, “fanaticism” historically carried connotations of possible demon possession, although this tends to be an earlier usage of the word. However, by the later nineteenth-century, the term “fanatic” was primarily linked to one “[c]haracterized, influenced, or prompted by excessive and mistaken enthusiasm,” “insanity linked to being a ‘religious maniac’” or “A fanatic person; a visionary; an unreasoning enthusiast” (“fanatic”). The term “enthusiasm” was often used for the concept we now refer to as fanaticism, especially earlier in the century. Philosopher William James defines fanaticism as “loyalty carried to a convulsive extreme,” as imbalanced devoutness that prompts “jealousy for the deity’s honor” (106). Haynal et al. suggest that fanaticism, which does not have to be religious, is always invested in an object, whether that is “Faith in the party, the leader, or the family,” and fanaticism arises “by virtue of its exclusivity and the unique saving function it invests in its object” (33). Dominique Colas defines fanatics as those who lack the “need to construct or

discover what is true, or to take the mystic's slow and solitary way through the dark night toward God" (5). Instead, they exhibit

an immediate and unmediated kind of total certitude which inhabits, possesses, and violently propels [them]. ... They erase themselves as subjects, as loci of self-conscious subjectivity, to the point of considering of no account their pilgrimage on earth, of no account the lives of those who gather elsewhere than in the love of their master whose absolute authority they wish to impose. Their 'egos' are swallowed up in the truth they love and by which they desire to be loved, while those who ignore, reject, or combat their just cause are necessarily doomed to annihilation. ... fanatics move to attack the unbearable disorder of an imperfect, impure, inadequate world. (5)

Fanaticism is also marked by generalized intolerance and a willingness to resort to violence.

These elements contributed to historical concerns about fanaticism.

For Colas, the historical fanatic phenomenon has always been deeply political. He argues that the terms "'civil society' and 'fanaticism' have mutually defined each other since the beginning of the sixteenth century" (xv). As John Mee demonstrates, Enthusiasm was linked to radical politics as well as radical religion (which, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was associated with progressive rather than conservative faith). Enthusiasm was generally used as a pejorative to refer to religious practitioners outside the establishments who gave credence to passion, feeling, and individual empowerment. There were clear benefits for those who practiced systems accusable of Enthusiasm; however, those in power found it deeply concerning as it threatened established institutions and order.<sup>4</sup> For some Romantic writers, literature became a way to restrain and filter Enthusiastic impulses. Coleridge and others thought

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<sup>4</sup> Additionally, political enthusiasm's role in the French revolution tainted any perceived benefits.

an established church could “channel enthusiasm” in productive and protective ways (Mee 168).<sup>5</sup> Coleridge worked to desynonymize enthusiasm and fanaticism, “shifting the negative connotations of enthusiasm on to the word ‘fanaticism’” (Mee 164). Similarly, Kant distinguished between the two, thinking fanaticism “believes itself to feel an immediate and extraordinary communion with a higher nature” while enthusiasm is “the state of the mind in which it has become inflamed by any principle above the proper degree” (Kant, qtd. in Toscano 123).<sup>6</sup> Thus, for Kant fanaticism retains an inherently religious or quasi-religious connotation. Colas writes, “‘Fanaticism’ is often used to describe and disqualify different forms of religious fundamentalism which have in common their refusal to accept duality between state and religious order” (xxiii). Fanaticism is often political. Gothic fanaticism engages with politics in addition to the deeply personal and the theological.

Fanaticism and fundamentalism share much conceptual territory. Whereas Kalmer Marimaa suggests fanaticism is not necessarily synonymous with fundamentalism, Olivier Roy uses the terms interchangeably. Roy links the spread of secularization with the rise in modern fundamentalisms. He contends that a divorce between culture and religion has led to this rise as well as an increase in religious choices, mirroring market choices (Roy 24, 115). Roy defines fanaticism as faith untethered to culture, calling it “pure religion,” which often appears as “revivalism or fundamentalism, as a reaction against secularization, either through emigration or

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<sup>5</sup> Coleridge believes the Anglican church’s obligations to England go beyond the spiritual: they are also cultural and educational. In his model, the Church would send out a “clerisy” that could both culture and educate the public. Through this dissemination of education and culture, the establishment had the potential to help quell dangerous or fanatical approaches to religion and politics. He believed inspiration and emotion needed to “be properly regulated” and eventually grew to think “only the institutional authority of the Church could provide the security he sought from the vicissitudes of ‘the low-born mind’” (Mee 135-6). Class-based prejudice aside, Coleridge believed a clerisy could also help restrain the combustible power of affect and was concerned about “benevolence untethered by Christian principles and knowledge of the Bible” (Mee 140).

<sup>6</sup> Toscano points out that Kant was somewhat hypocritical in that while condemning fanaticism, he himself could be accused of a fanatical “defence of the ethico-political rights of abstraction, or his related account of revolutionary enthusiasm” (138).

conversions” (69). Additionally, Roy notes that fundamentalists often take pride in existing differently from a culture they perceive as hostile; they are similarly proud of their lack of rootedness in a holy text. This in turn yields an increase in religious practice without religious knowledge (part of the titular “holy ignorance”<sup>7</sup>). Without religious knowledge or cultural engagement, fundamentalism and fanaticism rise. For Roy, the two are synonymous products of secularization and globalization, which have led to religion becoming untethered to culture and community.

Although fanaticism has obvious similarities to fundamentalism, I distinguish between the terms for the purposes of this project. The two overlap a great deal, as both manifest extreme dedication and intolerance to outside perspectives. Fundamentalism occurs when believers pare down and oversimplify religious concepts. As Roy observes, fundamentalism “rejects the complexity of all religious learning” (117). For me, fundamentalism resides primarily in belief, whereas fanaticism emerges mainly in actions and behaviors. Gothic fanaticism highlights this distinction as it reveals the possibility of being a fanatic but not a fundamentalist (as in the case of *Wuthering Heights*’ Heathcliff) or vice versa (as in Mr. Clare in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*). Fundamentalists do not necessarily act on their beliefs in violent or nonviolent ways, and fanatics do not necessarily have an oversimplified religious belief system. Fundamentalism is marked by literalism, fear, and a stripping away of the richness of any brand of religious belief and practice down to basics that become strict rules. Clearly, the two concepts overlap. Fanaticism is a stance and approach to devotion, religious or otherwise; fundamentalism seems always to refer to

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<sup>7</sup> “Taken to extremes, this rejection of profane culture also turns into suspicion of religious knowledge itself, with the notion that, firstly, there is no need for knowledge in order to be saved, and secondly, that knowledge can distract from true faith. ... It is not erudition that enables people to discover the truth beneath the Biblical text, it is because this text is God’s living word, because it speaks the truth. One must allow oneself to be inhabited by the Word. ... The obliteration of language in favour of the Word is probably the most perfect example of holy ignorance” (Roy 145).

religion, can be a concept fundamentalists have varying degrees of commitment to, and is religion stripped bare. Neither tends to value religious higher education. Both strongly police “acceptable” forms of belief and practice. But the fanatic always acts.

Fanaticism resides primarily in action, rather than in belief alone. Roy agrees with Marimaa and Calhoun that individuals’ behaviors, not internal beliefs, are what religious practitioners can be punished or persecuted for (28, 349-50). Although belief and culture are linked, fanaticism is most harmful in behavioral manifestations of religion, whether these are self-inflicted or aimed at others. For Roy, culture grounds religion, and faith without community cultural markers (behaviors) appears fanatical. Conversion to an alternate faith system itself can also lead to accusations and suspicions of fanaticism as it usually accompanies a religion “not rooted in culture” (Roy 34). When individuals convert to a religion from an external culture, their new practices may not share cultural roots with their community and thus appear fanatical. The behaviors, rather than the beliefs, tend to qualify an individual or group as fanatical. Some critics have suggested that historically, fanaticism was the norm (Haynal et al. 20),<sup>8</sup> could be relatively productive for societal progress, and could possibly “be considered a virtue, as it was by Rousseau and certain Marxist thinkers” (Colas 6). Perkinson thinks human nature itself “propels toward fanaticism” (171). Nonetheless, against the nineteenth-century backdrops of rising science and globalization, defining religion and fanaticism became ever more important.

Secularization became a significant component of the trajectory of nineteenth-century belief. Charles Taylor describes three interlocking definitions for the term: first, the removal of religious requirements from the political sphere; second, “the falling off of religious belief and

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<sup>8</sup> They cite ancient Rome, Medieval Catholics, and France’s Old Regime as examples where fanaticism was a societal norm, writing, “It was only when fanaticism ceases to be society’s unnamed norm—unnamed because unobjectivized—that it becomes the object of fear and repulsion for the pluralist world of the Enlightenment” (Haynal et al. 20).

practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church;” and third, “a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (2-3). In the first sense, the English narrative certainly adheres to this definition; additionally, as Taylor observes, this description is entirely compatible with individual, private belief. Owen Chadwick similarly defines this narrative as involving a secularization of the political realm and individuals increasingly losing individual faith. As A.N. Wilson writes, unbelief “accompanies wider symptoms of disturbance, a deep sense (personal, political, social) of dissolution” (11). Secularization is neither “change in fashion or custom” nor “change in Christian doctrine” (Chadwick *Secularization* 15-16). For Taylor, it is also not merely a subtraction of faith (22). Chadwick suggests the path to secularization starts with a variety of denominations, then dedication to toleration of a minority religion, which leads to “equality before the law” (21). Having options and permission to select from any or none of them without social punishment or stigma supports free choice; however, as Roy suggests, the perceived sense of persecution can actually increase fundamentalisms alongside this growing secularization.

Specific artifacts and moments are often highlighted as major players in the English secularization narrative. For example, Catholic (1829) and Jewish emancipation (1858) decreased the power of Protestant religion in politics by granting non-Protestant groups political equality. Chadwick adds that Marxism, working-class atheism (sparked in a sense by elements of the French revolution), rising anticlericalism,<sup>9</sup> and a free accessible press all contributed to European secularization (88). Notably, secularization often involved primarily middle-class

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<sup>9</sup> “Anticlericalism was a function, not of the weakness of the Catholic Church, but of its growing power in a modern democratic society” (Chadwick *Secularization* 118).

groups.<sup>10</sup> Intellectual thought was also shaped by the continued rise of science, especially Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and the application of Higher Criticism to the Bible. Higher Criticism referred to a form of biblical scholarship that worked to establish "the dates, authorship, sources, and interrelations of the various books of the Bible, often with disturbing results for orthodox Christian dogma" (Baldick). Higher Criticism applied scholarly rigor to biblical texts, and its scientific approach to the Bible contributed to a weakening of faith in traditional forms of Christianity. As Morris observes, Higher Criticism "opened up a gap between the Church of the New Testament texts and the Church of the 19th century" ("Scholars" 225). The 1860 publication of *Essays and Reviews* as well as the translation of *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* shocked many readers as they demythicize Christianity, destabilizing faith in many readers and encouraging intense reactionary defensiveness in others. Finally, the expanding empire meant an increased awareness of global religions, which contributed to the sense of religion as a choice from a wide menu of denominational and religious options.

Secularization contributed to the philosophical perception of religion itself as somewhat fanatical. As Haynal et al. point out, as a concept, "fanaticism remained unnamed in both Latin and French before the eighteenth century" (20). During the Enlightenment, as Cavanaugh observes, fanaticism shifted "from an accusation against heretics to the accusation against intolerance," coming to indict "an irrational and violent passion" and becoming linked to religion itself (234). In many ways, the earlier Enlightenment and its philosophers' concerns about fanaticism set the stage for the growth of secularization. Taylor writes that the eighteenth century had three categories of "dangerous religion": "'superstition', 'fanaticism', and 'enthusiasm,'"

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<sup>10</sup> As Chadwick observes, between 1860-80 "the tone of society in England was more 'secular'" in "middle-class conversation; the kind of books which you could find on a drawing room table, the contents of the magazines to which educated men subscribed" (*Secularization* 37).

which were in some ways an extension of the “existing Protestant vocabulary of condemnation of Catholicism” (239). As Cavanaugh notes, “fanaticism” came to indicate “intolerance of doctrinal difference” and could thus be “used to denounce rival Christian sects” (231). Colas observes that some eighteenth-century philosophers participated in differentiating “between an ‘enthusiast’ – one who believed himself to receive God’s light – and a ‘fanatic’ – one who was ready to ‘act out’ in the name of that illumination,” a distinction each thinker drew differently (18). This distinction tends to lie between belief and behavior, which is also the line I draw between fundamentalism and fanaticism. For example, a modern Christian fundamentalist might believe in Biblical literalism and a seven-day creation but not act against or harm others on the basis of those tenets. Conversely, a fanatic acts, usually violently, upon their beliefs, regardless of how closely they are held. When religion and institutions become linked, the stakes rise. Locke separated the concepts of individual, personal religious belief and the political power of institutionalized religion, supporting “toleration for ‘Fanatiques,’ in which he includes Protestant sects dissenting from the Church of England, despite their wish to realize their vision of the Kingdom of God on earth, because they are easily divided and conquered by the state” (Cavanaugh 231). Locke’s tolerance was not universal. For Kant, fanaticism impeded Reason, which he differentiated from enthusiasm, although he suggested religious enthusiasm often led to violent fanaticism (Cavanaugh 231-3). Voltaire believed “religion” was nearly synonymous with “fanaticism” and that both impede reason; he condemned fanaticism but supported “state religion to maintain civil order” (Cavanaugh 232-4). Between Enlightenment philosophy, secularization, the rise of Higher Criticism, globalization, and other cultural factors, concerns around fanaticism continued to be relevant in the nineteenth century.

While secularization was undoubtedly rising, as LaPorte and others have observed, the secularization narrative should be seen as one of many important pieces of the story of nineteenth-century religion. Mark Knight calls for a literary professional vocabulary that “stops instantiating a simplistic secular/religious binary” (21).<sup>11</sup> Notably, religious service attendance in the nineteenth century was fairly high. In the edited collection *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion*, Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner suggest religion, like any other theoretical category, is continually constructed.<sup>12</sup> Roy suggests secularization and fundamentalisms rise together. Cavanaugh, like Roy, links fanaticism directly to secularization (226). Toscano concurs that “enthusiasm could drive processes of secularization” (119). Some in the nineteenth century believed an ever more secular society required a different moral center of gravity. For instance, Matthew Arnold criticized the masses for their blind adherence to monolithic religion. In the late 1860s he prescribed culture (defined as the “pursuit of perfection”), rather than an established church, as a remedy for problems that included fanaticism (Arnold 53). From his perspective, middle-class evangelicals and nonconformists were the “chief agents of anarchy,” and he “(in)famously warned of middle-class Dissenters’ dangerous combination of anti-intellectual moralism, or ‘Puritan ... Hebraising,’ with blind faith in individualism and economic gain, or ‘Philistinism’” (King 100). Arnold’s solution, perhaps an intellectual descendent of Coleridge’s clerisy, proposed culture as a remedy for anarchy. Thus, literature itself had the potential to take on a culturally religious role, if not to quell fanaticism then to caution against it. Of course, as

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<sup>11</sup> Another often-made critique of viewing secularization as the primary religious player in the nineteenth century is that it can lead us to overlook women writers whose work is primarily devotional or religious.

<sup>12</sup> They take a postsecular approach, by which they do *not* mean “denial of the secular or secularization; championship of the religious repressed or naive confidence in widespread religious resurgence ...; or naturalization of the Western secular/religious binary” (King and Werner 4). For them, “postsecular” indicates “a new attitude toward secularism and the secular” (4).

LaPorte and others have pointed out, this can lead to a self-justification of literary studies when it views itself as taking on the social and moral functions of religion.

Secularism shares an important relationship with the Gothic. Gothic fanaticism often engages with science and the scientific changes that came about during the century. The Gothic seeks an alternative mode of perceiving reality that pushes the boundaries of what the scientific method and factual knowledge can provide. The genre does not require epistemological certainty, and its use of the supernatural (both real and explained) underlines its investment in using non-scientific paths to understand the world. Diane Long Hoeveler suggests, “The gothic secularized the uncanny by making traditional religious beliefs and values both familiar and strange, both immanent and transcendent, both minimal and powerful at the same time” (*Gothic Riffs* 2). Particularly within the genre, as Alison Milbank points out, religion remained an important category, and late nineteenth-century work is often more religious and enchanted than earlier Gothic. She argues that “Gothic becomes an explicit mode of religious defence” (Milbank 305). The Gothic has been read as a reaction against secularism; however, Hoeveler argues it should instead be interpreted as a “part of the ambivalent secularizing process itself” (*Gothic Riffs* 6). In the real world as well as in the Gothic, nineteenth-century science and positivistic knowledge provided an alternative epistemological path from religion. In various ways, scientific progress paved the way for Christian denominations to gravitate toward more emotivist, fundamentalist ways of practicing faith. In part, nineteenth-century Biblical literalism came to be considered a form of positivistic knowledge that attempted to rival similarly positivistic truth-claims made by modern scientists. *Essays and Reviews* and *On the Origin of Species* in particular contributed to the divorce between science and religion, which prompted some to choose between the two.

Considering scientific progress can show how certain versions of Christianity in the Victorian era could be accused of being irrational or fanatical as self-avowed atheists became linked to positivistic scientific knowledge. In Gothic fiction, these shifts manifested in the “mad science” seen in works like *Frankenstein* or *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Gothic fanaticism often describes the mad scientist. For example, Victor Frankenstein repeatedly uses the language of enthusiasm to describe the energetic time in which he birthed his creature, a period in which he “was attacked by the fatal passion” (Shelley 39). Later, he thinks about the Creature’s crimes and shares that his “hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation” (62). In reflection, he realizes that fanaticism blurred his conscience: “During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment...” (118). As demonstrated by *Frankenstein*, the mad scientist figure can be described in explicitly fanatical terms and characterized by uncontrolled emotions and actions that appear to serve the pursuit of knowledge; quasi-religious fanaticism propels dangerous discovery. These and other works often portray scientists as at risk of fanaticism due to their pursuit of single-minded truth, obsessions that border on the religious in pursuit of scientific excellence, and time spent in isolation. The mad scientist is typically only nominally religious and undergoes punishment for his pursuits. Beyond this trope, Gothic’s investment in the supernatural, real or explained, heightens the sense that the genre becomes an inroad to searching for meaning and possible epistemological truth.

### **Gothic Fanaticism**

Defining the Gothic has been a topic for scholars for decades as the flexible genre resists firm boundaries. It is important to articulate what is important for my purposes and to set out what I believe is a specific trope in the genre: Gothic fanaticism. The Gothic tends to include

topoi<sup>13</sup> like potentially supernatural events, a heroine entrapped by an evil guardian, ruined houses or abbeys linked to historic Catholicism, usurpers seizing power tyrannously (both in families and in governments), the uncanny, an investment in historicity, and, significantly, the legacy of Catholicism.<sup>14</sup> Despite repeatedly depicting Catholicism, as Patrick O'Malley points out, the English Gothic novel's "ideological structure" is rooted in Protestantism, which, through showing "Catholic deviance and horror on the Continent ... exposes England itself, reflecting and refracting eighteenth-and nineteenth-century concerns about the self through the lens of alterity" (32). Critics do not agree on one definition of the Gothic; however, patterns in canonical Gothic literature provide fertile ground for an exploration of the implications and dynamics of fanaticism.<sup>15</sup> Gothic fanaticism thus becomes a generative heuristic.

Early Gothic iterations are often extremely anti-Catholic, as in Matthew Lewis' salacious *The Monk*, in which Catholicism is associated with magic and sexual deviance. Other early Gothic authors like Ann Radcliffe are somewhat subtler in their anti-Catholic tendencies, portraying Catholics in a negative light. Since most of England's eighteenth and nineteenth-century foreign enemies (France, Spain, Italy) were Catholic, national pride and identity were at stake in depictions of Catholics. Thus, Early Gothic anti-Catholicism reflects concerns about national loyalty. For the most part, Gothic anti-Catholicism participates not in critique but in caricature. In addition to providing "an exotic background," Robert Kiely writes that most Protestant English readers "would have taken it for granted that where Catholicism reigned,

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<sup>13</sup> "Topoi," defined by John Frow, is "a commonplace, something originally written in a commonplace book as part of a store of possible topics of conversation or writing" (176). The term refers to the recurring common patterns and elements in a genre.

<sup>14</sup> Although the term "Gothic" can be used in various ways, this project primarily focuses on literary Gothic.

<sup>15</sup> Common critical approaches include psychoanalysis, Marxism, gender, and postcolonialism. Robert Mighall uses historicism and contemporary discourses and literatures to show how the Gothic often reflects prescient concerns and horrors. Sedgwick suggests the Gothic "became then a great liberator of feeling" because the genre "acknowledged the non-rational" (3).

reason was deposed,” leading to “almost a cliché of Gothic fiction that there was a ratio between religious suppression of reason and emotional extravagance” (31). Catholic practice of the sacraments (which, for instance, Wordsworth thought were idolatrous), belief in the pope or transubstantiation, celibate clergy, and withholding of access to the Bible were all targeted by critics. As Diane Long Hoeveler and Patrick O’Malley show, Gothic literature tends to depict Catholics as idolatrous, sexually deviant, superstitious (and sometimes demonic) fanatics. Representations of Catholics as fanatics and idolaters reinforce national religious identity while entertaining an audience with Catholic prejudices by sensationalizing stories built on their biases. Although Maria Purves argues that popular Gothic novels were less anti-Catholic than is commonly believed, Diane Long Hoeveler shows the ways popular Gothic fiction capitalized on anti-Catholic tropes to create a sense of English national Protestant identity through anti-Catholic hysteria. Her book *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880* demonstrates how early Gothic often featured Catholicism as demon-infested in pornographic ways. Patrick O’Malley contends that Catholicism is regularly depicted as both sexually and religiously perverse in the Gothic. Victor Sage acknowledges political influences on the Gothic while arguing horror itself can typically be linked to Catholicism. In Gothic novels, the Catholic Church becomes the ultimate tyrant. Thus, the Gothic’s focus on tyranny becomes an interesting model of thinking through religious fanaticism. Gothic forms are uniquely equipped to ask whether or not fanatical religion constructs the tyranny and oppression the Gothic resists. This question is relevant in *The Castle of Otranto* and the residues of Catholicism in Ann Radcliffe’s novels, where issues of rightful leadership and Catholic abuses of power take center stage. As the genre evolved throughout the century, Gothic fanaticism came to play a role in discussing Protestantism as well. While Gothic

fanaticism is obvious in representations of Catholicism, my focus in this dissertation turns on Gothicized representations of Protestant fanatics.

Outside the purview of anti-Catholicism, relatively little scholarly work looks at religious fanaticism in Romantic or Victorian Gothic texts. Alison Milbank argues that Gothic fiction imagines itself as working to ameliorate the loss of Catholic mediating religious practices as it seeks different avenues, from nature to magic, to mediate between the divine and the human.<sup>16</sup> Christopher Herbert's *Evangelical Gothic* explores the way many nineteenth-century novelists used the Gothic mode to harshly critique Evangelicalism's dogma and moral judgment. Conversely, Mark Knight argues that fanatical Evangelicals are more nuanced than we often remember in *Good Words: Evangelicalism and the Victorian Novel*.<sup>17</sup> Although scholars are beginning to show more interest in the intersections of religion and the Gothic, none have yet directly engaged fanaticism itself as a lens through which to read representations of Protestantism within the Gothic. This study primarily looks at Protestant (including Anglican) representations of fanaticism rather than Catholic ones.

Gothic fanaticism refers to patterns within Gothic literature in which religious fanaticism contributes to the construction of the monster, villain, or other, either as a critique of excessive religious practice or as a literary technique to enhance the picture of evil. Focusing on religious fanaticism in literature, as opposed to history, permits an analysis of issues from a more neutral standpoint; story allows us to engage in thought experiments that do not harm anyone in the real world while thinking through phenomena with real-world consequences. Fiction permits

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<sup>16</sup> Whereas in Catholicism the sacraments, clergy, and Church function as intermediaries for religion and the supernatural, Protestantism lacks some of these apparatuses. Christian faiths without mediation of some kind could become suspicious because a direct line with God seemed too empowering to the individual. Although Catholicism was susceptible to accusations of idolatry and tyranny, its structures helped solve the problem of mediation.

<sup>17</sup> He suggests Evangelicalism wielded massive influence over the content, characters, and shape of the novel form, and he shows, for instance, that despite Miss Clack's reputation as an Evangelical fanatic caricature, *The Moonstone* as a whole seems to endorse a major tenet of Evangelicalism: communal access to truth and interpretation.

experiments history cannot afford. Gothic works, as Mighall and others have pointed out, share a rich relationship with history, as they feature a persistent concern with eruptions of the past into the present. Nonetheless, the genre is, for the most part, clearly and unabashedly fictional. Further, genre is inherently relational (Frow 26). This means that these texts are considered “Gothic” partly because of the relationships they share, intentional or not, with each other. Even texts that do not “fit” the Gothic form proper but participate in some of its moods, such as Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, riff on aspects of the genre in productive ways.<sup>18</sup> John Frow contends that genre consists of more than a list of common elements across a category of works; instead, genre is a choice to read through a certain frame (133).<sup>19</sup> Texts perform their genres, which become tools for thinking. Nineteenth-century literature often performs the Gothic genre by employing its frames, tropes, characters, and topoi specifically to comment on religion. Frequently, these elements coalesce in depictions of fanaticism. Throughout this project, I discuss works that are considered canonical Gothic cornerstones as well as texts that participate in the Gothic margins or incorporate Gothic elements into realist or fantasy forms. This choice is intentional, as I believe Gothic fanaticism as a discourse becomes a way of thinking about and reading nineteenth-century literature and religion.

Significantly, the Gothic often uses religion and faith categories in the process of monster creation, which identifies and responds to outsiders. Judith Halberstam argues that Gothic monsters become loci for fears about race, nationality, and class, which can be marked on the body and skin. Surprisingly, in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, religion is omitted as a category that constructs monstrous others, both in Cohen’s

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<sup>18</sup> Diane Long Hoeveler uses the word “riff” to discuss the “highly repetitive” iterations of certain elements within the Gothic (*Gothic Riffs* 6). I use the term similarly here.

<sup>19</sup> Genre is “not about classification but about interpretation and use” (Frow 133).

introduction, which posits various theses about cultural interpretations of monsters, and in the collection's essays, which generally leave out religion as a category through which monsters are produced (except in a discussion of antisemitism). Religion is nonetheless a significant component of Gothic constructions of the other, whether these are explicit, as in the depiction of Mormons in *A Study in Scarlet*, or implicit, as in the use of antisemitic stereotypes in the creation of monstrous figures like Count Dracula.<sup>20</sup> Religious fanaticism can serve as a tool for constructing a horrifying other, as it certainly does in the case of Robert Wringhim, who has “ungovernable passions” and is marked in appearance by wearing black and having “a methodistical face” (Hogg 17,19).<sup>21</sup> Throughout the century as the empire expanded, fanatical tropes often become linked with actual foreign religious practices. Imperial Gothic often highlights this, as in H Rider Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure*, in which African and Egyptian religions are depicted as dangerous fanaticisms that could threaten the British empire and specifically its men.

Connotations of the demonic certainly relate to many Gothic works, from early anti-Catholic Gothic to *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* to Manasseh in *Lois the Witch* to *Dracula*. Toscano focuses on “the place of fanaticism in a discourse of demonization” (xxvi). Demonization is here an apt word for Gothic fanaticism, which often literally affiliates demons with fanatics, as in Gil-Martin's influence on Wringhim. Some early Gothic texts make this connection even more explicit, as in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), wherein the Gothicized villain who wields strong influence over the heroine (if we can call Victoria that) turns out to literally be Satan in disguise. By revealing at the end that Zofloya is the devil incarnate, accusations of fanaticism directed towards him go beyond othering a different set of religious

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<sup>20</sup> Judith Halberstam makes this suggestion that the vampire is coded with antisemitic stereotypes (86).

<sup>21</sup> Methodists had a reputation for “enthusiasm” and fanaticism.

practices<sup>22</sup> and define him as objectively evil. Gothic fanaticism, especially early in the century, chooses to portray certain extreme types of fanaticism, primarily those that show fanatics to be uncanny, obviously evil or demonic, and religiously indefensible. Taking Hogg's novel as an example, we are free to consider that Gil-Martin could very well be a demon afflicting Wringhim. Darkly echoing Christ, Gil-Martin tells Robert Wringhim to "Go thou then and do likewise," as a part of his "high vocation; to cleanse the sanctuary of thy God in this thy native land by the shedding of blood" (Hogg 112). Gil-Martin's voice supports Wringhim's most heinous crimes. His encouragement could be demonic, especially as the devil in disguise was a common figure in the genre at this time. Gothic fanaticism continues to carry these connotations.

Gothic fanaticism explores issues of isolation and community. Continually, isolation in the Gothic has dangerous consequences, whether for a Radcliffean heroine, Victor Frankenstein, or Robert Wringhim. In nearly every nineteenth-century Gothic work, the fanatic is isolated to some degree. Isolation, whether it impacts an individual or a group, dissolves the moral compass that communal accountability can provide. Deprived of community, Robert Wringhim is perfectly primed to conduct his crimes of religious zeal, spurred on by his spiritual father and a demonic double that may or may not be real. Fanaticism can exist in community as well, of course; however, fanatic communities are typically represented as isolated in some way as well, whether this is the Mormon community in *A Study in Scarlet* or the vampire coven in *Dracula*. Isolation contributes to the problems of fanaticism in the Gothic, heightening insularity and propelling characters to act in harmful ways against outsiders. Of course, fanaticism exists outside the pages of novels, and it becomes useful to briefly survey the major religious players in question. The general instability caused by continual expansion of nineteenth-century religious

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<sup>22</sup> Zoyfloya is coded with what readers may perceive as Eastern religious clothing, suggesting affiliation with blurred stereotypes of Islam or Hinduism.

denominations helps explain why the language and shapes of fanaticism so frequently emerge in Gothic fiction, describing both clear religious fanatics like Wringhim but also less obvious romantic fanatics like Jane Eyre. The sheer number of proliferating sects contributed to the dual phenomena of individuals accusing others of fanaticism and of people taking up extreme religious positions. A broadening religious marketplace meant individuals could select one of many positions to take up, especially under the umbrella of Protestantism, without serious consequences or persecution. The law no longer policed religion, but discourse remained an optimal tool for drawing religious boundaries.

### **Fanaticism as Discourse: A Nineteenth-Century Denominational Historical Review**

Multiplying religious denominations did not change the Protestant nature of Britain. As Linda Colley argues, Protestant identity worked to unify British subjects against Catholic countries, and “shared religious allegiance” became a “foundation on which their state was explicitly and unapologetically based” (18). Colley writes that Protestantism provided British citizens “a sense of their place in history,” “a sense of worth,” national “pride,” perseverance, loyalty, and “identity” (54). Further, it was important, particularly in light of Catholic Emancipation, that British citizens remain loyal to nation over religion in times of war. The Anglican Church, construed broadly, was envisioned as an institution that could help facilitate this loyalty. However, “Protestantism” did not necessarily unite disparate groups. LaPorte observes that

Denominational difference mattered immensely throughout the Victorian era ... In cultures where more or less everyone was presumed to be a Christian, specific varieties of Christianity meant more, and differences between, say, Anglicans, Presbyterians,

Quakers, and Catholics loomed larger. Umbrella terms such as ‘Christian,’ accordingly, meant less where their presence could be taken for granted. (143)

Nonetheless, throughout the century the Church of England shifted from playing the role of State Church into a position as one among many religious options. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (1828), Catholic Emancipation (1829), and the Reform Act of 1832 contributed to “a fundamental change in the relationship between Church and State” that led religious individuals “to rethink what it meant to be the Establishment, whilst giving the Church’s opponents the opportunity to call into question the whole idea of an Established Church” (Frances Knight 12). Throughout the nineteenth-century, the religious landscape transformed.

As Frances Knight demonstrates, Anglicanism remained relevant and central to nearly all English residents, despite the gradual shift from its primary role as a state church to a denomination. As a political entity with the monarch as head, the Church maintained relevance in the religious and secular realms. Ideally, the Anglican established church could regulate and channel emotion and faith<sup>23</sup> while rooting a sense of national identity and order. Further, it had the ability to prevent the individual from having too much power. Queen Victoria’s “own religious views – which tended towards sympathy with moderate Evangelicals and conservative Broad Churchman,” were also influential (Morris “Scholars” 223). In practice, of course, the Anglican church was filled with division, accusations, and strife. Class played a major role in the period’s religiosity. As Edward Norman points out, the “Victorian boom in religion” was “largely restricted to the middle classes, and reflected their inventiveness and social ambition” (219). Religious affiliation was a central component of identity for many, in ways that we might not always fully understand since contemporary Protestantism tends to be more ecumenical.

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<sup>23</sup> Properly channeling religious sentiment was a central component of the Oxford Movement’s Doctrine of Reserve.

LaPorte writes, “Historical figures whom we, in retrospect, might reasonably take for co-religionists did not always feel like co-religionists with one another” (144). In other words, sectarian differences we often retrospectively blur were quite serious for many religious people. Thus, it is important to lay the groundwork for understanding the practices and loyalties that could lead groups to accuse others of fanaticism.

Of course, affiliation with a certain sect was not necessarily a central component of identity for all Protestants. Frances Knight observes that it was common for Anglicans and Dissenters to attend services at a church that was not their preferred brand of faith (24). Brown cautions historians against exaggerating the divisions between various Protestant parties (51). In fact, “an Evangelical Anglican or a Wesleyan Methodist might well have been seen as lacking in religious seriousness if he or she did not take advantage of the spiritual opportunities provided by both communities” (Frances Knight 24). However, for many, denominational lines were of the utmost importance. As LaPorte writes, “widespread indifference to denominations among Christians is a new phenomenon” (145). The range of religious practices and beliefs was broad, and the stances individual sects took towards one another could be quite hostile. Within Protestantism, various rivalries existed; however, they paled in comparison to the “gulf between Protestant and Catholic” (Colley 19). Anglicanism specifically, but also Protestantism writ large, provided British-identifying citizens a unified approach against foreign enemies: the Catholics.

Notably, Catholics in Britain could not even vote until 1829, let alone participate in other state matters.<sup>24</sup> As Dominic Janes notes, anti-Catholicism (aimed specifically against Roman Catholicism) grew in response to Catholic emancipation and unity with Ireland, despite the fact that Anglicanism remained far more popular than Roman Catholicism (8). Although Dissenting

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<sup>24</sup> Chadwick notes that Catholic emancipation passed primarily because of concerns about an Irish civil war (8).

numbers were higher, Catholic foreign allegiances to the Pope rendered them of perceived greater concern (Janes 9). Catholicism remained the religious other against which English Protestant identity could be defined. Outsiders often critiqued the version of Roman Catholicism they thought existed, whether or not their perceptions were based in reality. Many English Protestants believed Catholicism was “bad for personal morality, inimical to national economic and social progress, and fatal for personal liberty” (Janes 9). Additionally, Catholic affiliation often led individuals to be accused of idolatry (Janes 15).<sup>25</sup> The Gothic genre, as various critics have shown, became a particularly apt arena for anti-Catholicism and depictions of it as irrational, deviant, or idolatrous (O’Malley, Sage). British Catholics were under a discursive, if not literal, attack. However, the ecclesial landscape of nineteenth-century England was not merely a Protestant-Catholic dichotomy. The wide range of Christian sects within and outside the Establishment meant groups were open to accusations of fanaticism and improper religion or worship on various counts, whether accusers had good intentions or not. This history describes the overt religious debates occurring across the century; the shapes of fanaticism emerge in less obvious ways in Gothic fiction, where one could paint one’s religious enemy as crudely or monstrously as one liked. Broadly speaking, three movements within the Anglican Church competed for dominance in the long nineteenth century: the Oxford Movement or Tractarianism, Broad Church, and Evangelicalism.

### **The Oxford Movement**

The Oxford Movement, or Tractarianism, spearheaded by John Henry Newman, John Keble, and Edward Pusey, sought to restore the Church of England not merely to its Reformation

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<sup>25</sup> “Catholics were widely believed, by Protestants, to fetishise the wafer of the mass as an object of magical efficacy ... Opponents thought such practices to be, at their very best, childish and feeble-minded...” (Janes 16).

heritage but to what they perceived as its status as the originally instated, primitive church. They took an academic approach, working to form a “nationally shared Christianity” (Knight and Mason 89). The conservative Movement was sparked by Catholic emancipation (1829) and the 1833 Government decision “to reform the established Church of Ireland,” which led to concerns that the government could bring about a “similar reduction of the Church of England” (Brown 270). The movement officially began with John Keble’s 1833 sermon on national apostasy, which responded to the way the Irish Church Temporalities Bill shifted the power dynamic between the Church and the state, representing “to churchmen like Keble a sacrilegious interference with church order by the secular power” (Rowell 21). Keble suggested that as a Christian nation, the Church should hold secular powers accountable, rather than the other way around. The Oxford Movement’s leaders wanted to protect the Church of England from secular political intrusions. To publicly argue their points, Tractarian leaders began to publish and disseminate *Tracts for the Times*. Early Tracts argued the Church of England “was nothing less than a true branch of the holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” (Brown 274). Tractarians positioned the Anglican church as the original church’s successor, rarely questioning their own authority, which Chapman links to political concerns that “Roman Catholics in parliament and in other positions of power posed as much of a threat to the established order as did dissenters” (10). Leaders of the Oxford Movement argued that at its core the Church of England was a third entity, neither truly Protestant nor fully Catholic. Mediating between Catholicism and newer forms of Protestantism was a central doctrine of the Oxford Movement, which worked to cultivate a *via media*, or middle way, between the two. Newman initially saw both the “Church of Rome” and “dissenting bodies” as “equally in error” (Chapman 16). As a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Puritanism, Anglicanism could perhaps embrace moderation as a

version of the original church, “reform[ing] the excesses of Roman Catholicism” while avoiding “the deficiencies of more strident Protestant reforms” (Holtzen 61).<sup>26</sup>

Tractarians specifically wrote about ways to protect faith from growing fanatical. Keble “was suspicious of the easy religion of slogans and the equally easy religion of superficially stirred emotions, both of which he saw as characteristic of much of the popular Evangelicalism of his day” (Rowell 33). Newman argued, “Reason is not the safeguard of faith” because if it were, it would “become detached” and “hold the facts of religion at arm’s length, instead of embracing them, will examine and dissect them, will pass into irreverence. God cannot be God if the proper human attitude is to dissect His qualities and prove his existence” (Chadwick *Mind* 44).<sup>27</sup> Thus, he felt fanaticism could not be stopped by rationality or reason alone. Newman discerns between faith and right faith to show the difference. He writes,

Faith is an intellectual act; right Faith is an intellectual act, done in a certain moral disposition. Faith is an act of Reason, viz., a reasoning upon presumptions; right Faith is a reasoning upon holy, devout, and enlightened presumptions. . . . wherever Love is wanting, so far, and there, Faith runs into excess or is perverted. (Newman, Sermon Twelve, qtd. in Chadwick *Mind* 92)

Therefore, Newman believed Reason could validate faith but that love and a “right state of heart” alone could prevent faith “from fastening upon unworthy objects” (Chadwick *Mind* 45). Hence, his answer to protecting faith was universal love and Christian charity.

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<sup>26</sup> Newman addresses this in Tracts 38 and 41.

<sup>27</sup> Chadwick conjectures that “enthusiasm” ran in Newman’s family, as his “brother Charles was soon planning to be atheist and socialist in a day when those professions were fanatical as well as wicked, and another brother Frank joined an expedition to convert the Persians to the doctrines of the Plymouth Brethren” (*Victorian Church* 65).

For some, the Oxford Movement was altogether too close to Catholicism and did not represent the catholic interests of a universal church.<sup>28</sup> Newman's *Tract 90* (1841) is of special note. Therein, he controversially argues that the Thirty-Nine Articles<sup>29</sup> had the potential to be compatible with the Roman Catholic Church (this preceded his own conversion to Catholicism). Newman writes that "the statements of the Articles are not in the number" of "real difficulties to a Catholic Christian in the ecclesiastical position of [the Anglican] Church" (5). He systematically addresses fourteen of the Articles and demonstrates how they all "may be subscribed by those who aim at being catholic in heart and doctrine" (Newman 9). His defense rests upon the language of universality; he suggests that Catholics could reasonably agree with many of the Articles. This tract responded to criticism from other parties, like Evangelicals, who often "attacked the Tractarians for their 'Popish' innovations in liturgy and clerical dress" (Brown 289). Newman hoped *Tract XC* could "halt secessions to Rome from among advanced Tractarians" (Brown 289). Newman made a case that "there was no need for those attracted by Catholic practices to secede" (Brown 290). Unfortunately for Newman, many opponents read *Tract 90* as "a subtle form of Romish aggression" (Brown 290-1). This led to a poor reception in the press, which effectively "led to the end of the Tracts, shattered Newman's self-confidence, and hacked away at those roots in Protestant tradition out of which the Movement had grown" (Chadwick *Mind* 53). Newman's own eventual conversion to Catholicism also contributed, but the interest in the boundaries between Protestantism and Catholicism persisted throughout the century, whether these boundaries were conceptualized as rigid or blurry.

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<sup>28</sup> Patrick O'Malley suggests that the Oxford Movement accounts for the nineteenth-century Gothic shift from Catholic as foreign to domestic threat (3).

<sup>29</sup> The Thirty-Nine Articles are the formally written doctrinal creeds of the Anglican Church.

As the movement continued, ritualism became linked to Tractarianism (despite its leaders not being ritualists themselves), and in the late 1840s ritualists began to “distinguish between ‘Roman Catholic’ and (Anglo-) ‘Catholic’” (Janes 7). Tracts “grew less alarmist and more academic in tone” (Brown 277). By the 1860s, Ritualism had emerged as a dominant form of “high Churchmanship” (Morris “Scholars” 227). The Oxford Movement also worked to “incorporate the new Evangelical emphasis on religious feeling into the formal frameworks of the Church of England” (Blair 29). The movement linked aesthetics and art with faith, reimagining a “Catholic past in a modern form of Anglicanism” (Knight and Mason 89). Notably, the movement, like neo-medievalism, was “deeply conservative” and marked by resistance to “secularizing forces of modernity” (Chapman 4). Ritualism led to criticism by some who viewed it as suspicious, idolatrous, and perhaps fanatical.

The Oxford Movement was open to charges of dogma by outsiders, as demonstrated by Thomas Hardy’s lambasting of its exclusivity and rigid teachings in *Jude the Obscure* (Perkin 186). The Brontë sisters also took a critical stance toward the Oxford Movement (in addition to their glee in “mocking Dissenters”) (Pearson 17). The conservative movement saw Dissent as a “watering down of religion into secular politics” (Knight and Mason 79). Dissenters themselves made accusations against Tractarians (and Anglicans more broadly). For example, Robert Browning criticized High Church practices (as well as Catholic ones) for being ritualistic, hypocritical, and too concerned with the material in “St. Praxed’s Church” and “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.” Despite being a part of the established church, followers of the Oxford Movement were under suspicion due to its proximity to Catholicism. This was heightened when Newman converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845. Many other Tractarian leaders eventually converted, and although Pusey and Keble continued to lead, the Oxford Movement’s heyday had

ended. Its influence, however, continued in ritualism and in reasserting perceived Anglican dominance. Additionally, its reintroduction of high church practices brought religious anxieties formerly linked in the Gothic to the foreign and the past back to modern-day England, as O'Malley shows (13). The Oxford Movement, he suggests, shifted mid-century Gothic anxieties away from continental Catholicism and instead toward home, where some saw Tractarianism as one of many threats to Protestant religion.

### **Evangelicalism**

Evangelicals, who, as Herbert points out, are often depicted as fanatics in nineteenth century literature, were a complex demographic originating in the Church of England. As Mark Knight cautions, nineteenth-century Evangelicalism should not be confused for “modern American fundamentalism” (6). Evangelicals in this period “re-emphasised well ordered worship, including regular communion, sought to improve the standard of Anglican preaching, built churches to accommodate the growing urban populations, and injected a new sense of responsibility and seriousness into pastoral practice,” renewing a paradigm of “religion as personal transformation” (Morris “When” 196). Generally, Evangelicals “emphasized a heartfelt, Bible-centred gospel message, aimed at eliciting a personal decision for Christ” (Brown 37). They tended to prioritize “the invisible body of all believers” over external details like physical edifices (Carter 9). However, the group was (and is) difficult to define given its variety of perspectives and practices. As Mark Knight writes,

Evangelicals were a party within the Church of England *and* a pan-denominational Christian movement, and adherents could be Calvinist or Arminian, Tory or Whig, pro-imperialist or critical of the British empire. While evangelicals in the nineteenth century found plenty of common ground, they were sometimes even less united than George

Whitfield and John Wesley had been during the evangelical awakenings of the eighteenth century. (2)

He concludes that evangelicals are best defined not by their labels but through their “convictions and attitudes” (Mark Knight 4). Ultimately, perhaps the best definition of Evangelical, whether we examine nineteenth-century versions or more contemporary believers, comes from David Bebbington’s work. Bebbington recommends identifying Evangelicals through four main qualities: “*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (16). These four qualities taken together, which according to Bebbington “form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism,” can help us identify Evangelicals in literature and history (16). Of course, nuances were often overlooked by Evangelical critics.

As Chadwick writes, “To many Victorians evangelical doctrine was the authentic voice and the scriptural piety of Protestant Reformation,” ensconcing Evangelicalism firmly within the Anglican tradition, at least for some (*Victorian Church* 5). Despite Anglican origins, Evangelicals were not necessarily welcome to the Establishment. Instead, they were met with suspicions regarding their dedication to the Established church and concerns that their theology was too akin to “militant Puritanism” in its “theories of justification by faith alone, ‘enthusiastic’ views of the need for drastic regeneration by the Holy Spirit, potentially antinomian ideas of predestination and final perseverance,” all of which opened them up to accusations “of a bygone fanaticism” (Carter 1). Evangelicals considered themselves “rooted firmly in the theology of the Anglican reformers,” but their outward expressions of faith were significantly “influenced by Methodism, and through that by Pietism and the Moravian Church” (Morris “When” 195). After

a burst of growth following the “social and political unrest of the 1790s,” Evangelical Dissent (Evangelical attitudes and practices in those outside the Church of England) also emerged (Brown 37). Janes notes that Evangelicalism’s highest point of influence was between the 1840s and 1860s (52). Anglican Evangelicals generally respected the Establishment, but they “did not share to the same degree the High Church reverence for the visible Church” (Brown 55). Additionally, Evangelicals often looked down on the poor (Herbert 55-6). Methodists tended to be working class, and Evangelicalism tended to be a middle-class phenomenon.

High Church critics often denounced Evangelicals “as ‘Dissenters in the Church’” with questionable loyalty as they were associated with “the irregularity of the Methodists” (Carter 12). Although Evangelicals often belonged to the established church, their practices could be similar to some Dissenters, and their willingness to get along with and work beside Nonconformists and Methodists only opened them up to further suspicion (Carter 1). Herbert demonstrates that contemporary individuals saw Evangelicalism and Methodism as two occurrences of a similar religious revival, except that one (Evangelicalism) existed inside the establishment (12). Both focused heavily on personal morality (Herbert 13). Typically, accusations of fanaticism aimed at Evangelicals focus on a faith that was too individualized and too empowering to the individual. Further, these charges could be based on degree of closeness to Dissenters or the potential for hypocrisy and lack of self critique; one can see these in Dickens’ Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, Collins’ Miss Clack, or Hardy’s fence-painter in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.<sup>30</sup> In each of these literary examples, Evangelicals are portrayed as judgmental, self-righteous, and uncritical of the self and establishment. Further, they are often described with Gothicized language, as Herbert argues, showing how many nineteenth-century novelists incorporated

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<sup>30</sup> As Mark Knight points out, however, Evangelical caricatures like these are often more complex than we initially recall (*Good Words* 11).

“specifically ‘gothic’ tonalities and implications” in their satires of Evangelicals (8). Acts of “charity” are lambasted as self-affirming and neglectful of true community, and Evangelicals’ supposed inability to see themselves as they truly are rendered them, in the eyes of critics, dangerous fanatics. Accusations of fanaticism, then, could be aimed at those whose practices were too Evangelical as well as too Catholic, whether accusations were fair or not.

### **Broad Church Movement**

The Broad Church movement was in some ways sparked by Thomas Arnold, a liberal Anglican. He believed the established church needed “to be transformed into a broad, inclusive national Church” that would “contribute to the religious life of an increasingly democratic and pluralistic society” (Brown 187). He believed the only way to protect the established Church was to allow a greater range of Dissenting thought and practice, “to establish a church broad enough to contain the great majority of the English people” (Chadwick *Victorian Church* 44).

Theoretically, this Broad Church would “allow variety of opinion and of ceremony” through a minimized and “conciliatory” set of “dogmatic articles” that would be “kept as few as possible—belief in God, in Christ as Saviour, in the scriptures as containing the revelation of God’s will to man,” and “notions of right and wrong” (Chadwick *Victorian Church* 44). Despite not having a clear organizational system or stated doctrines, leaders hoped the generally liberal Broad Church movement could unify society and improve living conditions and education. This ideal Church would focus less on “theological and liturgical distinctions” and provide “more emphasis to social ethics” (Brown 188). It could hypothetically encompass a wide range of dissenters and Protestants in a way that could religiously unify the country.<sup>31</sup> Addressing education and poverty

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<sup>31</sup> Arnold acknowledged that his conceptual Broad Church would likely not include Roman Catholics, Unitarians, or Quakers (Chadwick *Victorian Church* 44).

headed the list of Broad Church priorities (Morris “Scholars” 227). This social focus was attractive to many individuals. Other Broad Church players include Tennyson, Coleridge, and possibly F.D. Maurice, who did not claim the affiliation but shared similar goals.<sup>32</sup> Arnold’s vision would allow the Church to encompass “all trinitarian Protestant beliefs” and “draw Protestant Dissenters back into a comprehensive national Church” (Brown 188). Broad Church individuals tended to see the Church of England as an entity with the potential to unify a nation that needed to relinquish some of its peripheral tenets and refocus on social matters. Christian Socialism emerged from the Broad Church movement and the work of mid-century Anglicans like F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, who “were not socialists in any modern sense, but Tory paternalists” who “saw social commitment as intrinsic to the incarnationalism of Christianity” (Morris “Scholars” 228). The Broad Church approach was tolerant, educated, and practical, if paternalistic and doctrinally vague.

Ultimately, the Broad Church movement failed. The group lacked a formal leadership structure and doctrinal statements, and it suffered from too much breadth. Maurice critiqued the Broad Church as a party because it “was so wide in its sympathies that ‘it can hardly be called a party at all’” (Ellis 3). Without a creedal statement or institutional focus, the unclearly organized group lacked a focal point. As Ieuan Ellis writes, “The average Broad Churchman lacked a sense of direction, he knew what he disliked rather than what he held. . . . When called to subscribe to one point of view, the Broad Church ranks fell into confusion, and the reaction did the rest” (244). The 1860 publication of *Essays and Reviews* catalyzed the end of the movement. *Essays and Reviews* was initially an effort of Anglican clergymen who had begun to incorporate Higher Criticism to insure their religious freedom from forced subscription to the Thirty-Nine articles.

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<sup>32</sup> Maurice worked specifically on reforming the parish system, which could “shap[e] Christian communities at the grassroots level” (Brown 215).

Ellis marks the book's status as sparking "the greatest religious crisis of the Victorian age" (IX). *Essays and Reviews* highlighted Broad Church leaders' desires to incorporate scientific, more continental (German) ways of interpreting the Bible (Ellis 21). Essays covered the age's most complex, divisive topics, unabashedly practicing Higher Criticism.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, the book was not well-received.

*Essays and Reviews* handled controversial topics like denying miracles and prophecies, and the essays generally advocated for interpreting the Bible with the same approach one would use with any other text. Josef Altholz points out that, although this material was "new to most Englishmen," this Higher Criticism "was not the cutting edge of biblical scholarship" ("Mind" 186). Despite being generally accepted in certain academic and religious arenas, it shocked much of the English audience. The volume's inflammatory reception sparked accusations of heresy that led to court cases and a surge in responsive tracts. As Altholz observes, these responses generally followed a pattern: an *ad hominem* attack, questioning writers' morality, a pointing out that the Essayists were regurgitating German criticism "derived from the deism of the eighteenth century which had led to revolution and infidelity," and a suggestion that Biblical Higher Criticism was dangerous for faith before turning to refuting the Essayists' actual arguments ("Mind" 188-9).<sup>34</sup> Essayists Rowland Williams and Henry Bristow Wilson, as writers under clerical control, were charged with heresy in the Ecclesiastical courts (Altholz *Anatomy* 86). Although the ultimate legal ruling "established the right of Anglican clergymen to preach

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<sup>33</sup> *Essays and Reviews* included "The Education of the World" (Frederick Temple), "Bunsen's Biblical Researches" (Rowland Williams), "On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity" (Baden Powell), "Séances Historiques de Genève. The National Church" (Henry Bristow Wilson), "On the Mosaic Cosmogony" (C.W. Goodwin), "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750" (Mark Pattison), and "On the Interpretation of Scripture" (Benjamin Jowett) (Ellis 52).

<sup>34</sup> Ironically, "High Churchmen blamed the heresy of the Essayists on a reaction against the excesses of Evangelical Calvinism; low Churchmen blamed it on a reaction against the Romanizing tendencies of the Oxford Movement" (Altholz "Mind" 187).

biblical criticism and also to deny the eternity of hell-fire,” the controversy led to “a decisive shift in favor of the High Church party” that “delayed the general acceptance of biblical criticism for thirty years” and “ensured the collapse of the Broad Church movement” as a candidate for leadership (Ellis IX). The story of *Essays and Reviews* exemplifies how the liberal Church of England party lost out to the two conservative parties. It provoked outrage and deep emotion, continuing to destabilize the state of English Christianity and inspire hateful rhetoric across religious lines.

Broad Church individuals were not free from criticism; however, it seems they were rarely accused of fanaticism. Instead, they were criticized for irreligiousness, what many considered to be a profane approach to the Bible, general liberalism, and lacking a central unifying statement of belief. *Essays and Reviews* united both the High Church and Evangelicals “in denouncing the Broad Church minority” (Altholz “Mind” 187). By 1870, the potential of the Broad Church as “an alternative party to High Churchmen and Evangelicals” had disappeared” (Ellis 244). Broad Church individuals were often critical of the Oxford Movement. Thomas Arnold saw Tractarians as “seeking to impose on the Church of England the ‘mere foolery’ of rituals and clerical dress,” believing they “needed to be rescued from their ‘sectarian’ spirit of ‘High Church fanaticism’” (Brown 288). In addition to concerns over the Oxford Movement’s proximity to Roman Catholicism, Broad Church practitioners criticized its formalism, adherence to ritual, and sectarianism. Charles Kingsley was accused by conservatives “of confusing the body with the spirit” and “mixing social with sacramental equality” (Chadwick *Victorian Church* 361-2). While the Broad Church movement within the Established Church faded, movements outside the Establishment continued to proliferate.

## Dissent

Protestantism existed outside the Church of England in a variety of forms of Dissent. Dissenting provided an avenue for individuals to “escape from clerical control” and “secur[e] some power in society” (Knight and Mason 20). Frances Knight adds that Dissent could be “a cry of protest at a multitude of injustices; an act of rebellion against a decaying social structure” (18). During the period, most Dissenting traditions, like Presbyterianism,<sup>35</sup> Congregationalism, Baptism, Unitarianism, and Quakerism held “emotive *and* rational relationship with God” as central, agreeing that “feeling was essential to sincere belief” (Knight and Mason 20). Of these primary groups, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists were “broadly Calvinist in theology,” while Quakers focused more on “a direct personal engagement with God” (Brown 35). Social class influenced the dynamic between the established Church and Dissenters, as class and church affiliation often correlated (Norman 215). Both Dissent and Catholicism tended to appeal more to the working class, especially in urban areas, as “Establishment tainted Anglicanism with the values and attitudes of the social *élite*” (Morris “Scholars” 226). Additionally, Enlightenment Reason was a central tenet of many brands of Dissent throughout the century, especially Quakerism and Unitarianism. Many Dissenting groups “moved towards a more intellectual faith, emphasizing freedom of conscience and the capacity of the rational individual to find religious truth in Scripture,” with ministers maintaining “high intellectual standards” (Brown 35). At mid century, Dissent and Anglicanism had similar numbers of adherents (Norman 217). Dissent was a flourishing option for many nineteenth-century believers. Dissenting churches and individuals

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<sup>35</sup> Although Presbyterianism was the established church in Scotland, it was still technically a form of Protestant Dissent. As Smylie notes, Presbyterianism was more successful in Scotland since “the Scots resisted English influence over their lives” (29). Further, Larsen and Noll observe that Presbyterianism is somewhat unique in its relationship to Establishment as it “has been a Dissenting tradition in England but a state church (and a Dissenting tradition) in Scotland and elsewhere” (xix).

gave credence to emotion and the individual in a way that an established church might not. Thus, these forms of faith could become tainted, like Methodism, with accusations of “enthusiasm.”

Methodists were considered Dissenters, but their approach varied greatly from, say, Congregationalists or Unitarians. The Methodist church constructed a variety of worship experiences, and it was initially intended to supplement the Church of England’s worship and sacramental practices (Rack 189). Thus, as Michael McClymond points out, “If one views Methodism as a single tradition, then it has to be categorized as *both* established *and* dissenting” (226). John Wesley “alienated many Evangelicals by attacking predestination and portraying salvation as something which could be as easily lost as gained”; his vision and nineteenth-century Methodism did not necessarily align in theory and practice (Rack 191).<sup>36</sup> He initially envisioned Methodism as operating within the Establishment. However, Methodism began to “forge a separate identity” from the Church of England and eventually exited its umbrella entirely (Frances Knight 202). Despite assumptions from the outside that the groups were similar, insiders drew clear lines between Methodism and Evangelicalism.

Methodism grew into its own denomination with a reputation that, from the beginning, was associated with fanaticism or “enthusiasm.” In a published letter to Reverends Whitefield and Wesley in 1764, A.T. Blacksmith condemns Methodism, not only for its “positive and dogmatical way of writing” but also for its “strict, absolute, or indubitable certainty in matters of faith” (5). Blacksmith criticizes them for what he sees as their own perceived infallibility, and he suggests that Methodists, whom he calls Enthusiasts, believe not through Reason but through

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<sup>36</sup> Wesley’s “perfection doctrine seemed to them dangerously optimistic, and suspiciously close to Roman Catholic notions of salvation by a mixture of grace and human effort” (Rack 191). “Perfection,” in this case, is “defined as perfect love, an uninterrupted communion between the believer and Christ and other people, conscious sin, at least, being overcome. ... Wesley saw the doctrine as a sovereign remedy against the risk of complacency...” (Rack 191).

feelings and emotion (8).<sup>37</sup> He is suspicious that their practice relies so heavily on personal experience, and he questions their authority to start this religion. Self-authorization is one of his major concerns. Blacksmith's tract is only one example of the rhetoric around Enthusiasm, a word which at the time could refer to "false or pretended divine inspiration," "excessive religious emotion or fervour, mystical, fanatical, or radical religious delusion," or even "a state of frenzy attributed to divine inspiration or demonic possession" ("Enthusiasm, n."). Frequently, it referred to Methodists who, in the minds of Blacksmith and many others, were fanatics. Blacksmith goes so far as to call Methodists "Usurpers" and "Anti-christian Tyranny" (20). Notably, themes of usurpation and tyranny are central to the Gothic, which as a genre also began to codify around this time. Of course, this label came from opponents. The leaders of Methodism, according to Mee, felt they needed to delineate sharp boundaries between "enthusiasm" and "real experimental religion," because "for some Anglicans, particularly those of a High Church orientation, merely to be a Methodist (even before its schism from the Church) or Dissenter was to be tainted with enthusiasm" (14). As demonstrated in Blacksmith's letter, Methodists were open to charges of Enthusiasm and fanaticism through their emphasis on personal revelation and relationship with God. This direct line to God was considered suspicious, and the emphasis on emotion could lead to charges of not being rooted in history, Biblical texts, or an establishment. Additionally, early Methodism allowed women to preach, despite eventually rescinding that permission. Methodism was often practiced by working-class individuals, making it "other" on socioeconomic as well as gendered bases. Methodist sermons were often marked by what Herbert calls "extravagant moral absolutism" (35). They did not usually emphasize theological training and instead focused on emotional and spiritual connection (Dieleman 55). Methodism

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<sup>37</sup> It is worth returning to Herbert's observation that nineteenth-century Evangelicalism and Methodism shared many similarities (12). The main difference is that Evangelicalism was usually inside the Church of England.

lent credence to emotions, and Anglicanism (especially of the Tractarian variety) tended to try to regulate them. Methodism was not the only dissenting group; however, they were the group most likely to be accused of fanaticism.

Dissenters' freedom from the Establishment was a double-edged sword in that Dissenting groups wielded the primary authority over their own congregations. On the one hand, this permitted them full control over their own ecclesial practices. On the other, it meant that their ministers could have minimal authority over the people they were hired to lead. A lack of Establishment also meant that the degree of theological education a group held could vary widely. In some cases, this could be a good thing. Karen Dieleman points out that Congregationalists emphasized "theological training, study of Scripture in its original languages, and careful textual exegesis," maintaining a scriptural rootedness (if not an ecumenical stance) (55). However, as Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* shows, in Dissenting congregations with lower levels of education, trained ministers could be entirely at the mercy of the capricious whims of the people they were supposed to lead. In her novel, the result is that Dissenting minister Arthur Vincent eventually resigns from his post, disheartened by the congregation's lack of support for him and his family. The conservative Oxford Movement in particular responded negatively to Dissent in what Knight and Mason call a "clear backlash against Dissent's liberalizing of Christianity" (79). This liberalizing could be doctrinal, but what concerned outsiders most was that power in Dissenting churches lay with individual congregations rather than a state-sanctioned church hierarchy. As Toscano points out, early Dissenters "threaten[ed] order with their pretensions to access an 'uncontrollable authority' that transcends established political and religious institutions," so they could be labeled fanatics (114). Dissenters had, according to critics, too much individual power.

Dissenting traditions lacked an establishment to filter or mediate faith practices; however, these groups still had access to self-critique, Biblical texts, history, and community. The wide range of beliefs and church identities meant that there could be a large gulf between different religious practitioners, even though some parachurch societies enabled members from disparate sects to work together. The mid-nineteenth-century story of ecumenicism is deep and complex, despite its relative unpopularity, according to Mark D. Chapman.<sup>38</sup> Although some Christians worked together, others were bitterly opposed to those who were not their co-religionists. As denominations proliferated and evolved, some began to perceive all religion as fanatical, which in turn led to impressions of persecution in believers. Ironically, accusations of fanaticism could center around the very aspects of faith Dissenters took pride in. Methodists, who could be accused on the grounds of individualism, emotivism, or a commitment to radical grace, embraced these qualities as their version of what true Christianity should look like. High Church Anglicans took pride in their reforms and origins in primitive Christianity that linked them to Catholicism, a pride others criticized them for. Evangelicals, though denounced for their often hypocritical social activism, viewed themselves as doing crucial, faith-motivated missional work. None of these denominations were necessarily fanatical at their core; however, they could be accused of fanaticism by other religious sects with different sets of beliefs and identities. These accusations often become a means of oppositionally shaping one's own religious identity and centering one's own perspective.

### **Fanaticism as Phenomenon: *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner***

As an example, it is useful to think through the ways in which Robert Wringhim qualifies as a fanatic and what the discourse of Gothic fanaticism allows Hogg to do. In *Confessions*,

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<sup>38</sup> Until the 20th century, Chapman writes, it was not “part of the ecclesiastical mainstream” (4).

Presbyterian Scotland, rather than Catholic Europe, provides the Gothic setting. Lines of succession, supernatural evil, madness, and ghost figures in the novel center the work among its Gothic relatives. Further, the novel deals with religious fanaticism using similar Gothic elements. *Confessions* offers few answers to the problems of fanaticism, but it does provide an exploration of the importance of religious tolerance, and its two-fold narrative demonstrates the dangers of fanaticism as a phenomenon and the utility of Gothic fanaticism both for the Editor, who uses it to unsympathetically dismiss and discredit Wringhim, and to Hogg, who uses the discourse to critique antinomian Calvinism.

Scotland's historical religious landscape looks a bit different from that of England. After the Act of Toleration in 1689, older forms of Dissent (Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Baptism, and Quakerism) "enjoyed legally protected freedom of worship," but some aspects of life remained limited (Larsen and Noll xvi). Meanwhile, Presbyterianism became Scotland's Established Church (Stewart J. Brown "Protestant Dissent" 139). During the long eighteenth century, Presbyterianism's "character changed beyond recognition" as it declined and, in many senses, was "replaced by Unitarianism" (Raffe 11). Eighteenth-century Reformed Presbyterians were generally "strict Calvinists, oath-bound to the Covenants, viewing religious toleration as sinful, refusing to pay taxes, use the law courts, serve as magistrates or soldiers, take oaths of allegiance, or to recognize in any way the uncovenanted state" (Stewart J. Brown "Protestant Dissent" 142). However, even Scottish Presbyterianism had its own branches and sects. For example, in 1733 the Erskine brothers and others seceded from the Church of Scotland because they thought, despite being committed to Presbyterian tenets, "the established Presbyterian Church had become corrupted by worldly interests" (Stewart J. Brown "Protestant Dissent" 145). By 1829, Scotland was much more "religiously diverse," and nearly a third of Scotland chose to

practice faith “outside the Established Church,” and although “most Dissenters were Presbyterian,” they had “a growing choice of Dissenting Presbyterian denominations” (Stewart J. Brown “Protestant Dissent” 158). Presbyterianism was important to Hogg, who held “moderate theological views,” revering “the popular Presbyterianism of his countryside” (Duncan xxix).<sup>39</sup> Mack suggests Hogg’s political views were rooted “in the working-class Presbyterian religious tradition of Lowland Scotland” (64). Karen M. McConnell places Hogg in the tradition of Scottish writers exploring “radical examples of Scottish Presbyterianism” by “portraying these ‘fanatics’ as a useful foil by which they might then compare their own era” (22). Gothic tropes feature a dangerous past that continues to erupt into the present, including in religion.

A variety of critical approaches, especially psychoanalytic and historicist ones, have been used interpreting *Confessions*. Herbert suggests the anger and rage of the novel’s Calvinist fundamentalists make them “objects of aversion” (109). He compares the novel to Scott’s *Old Mortality*, writing that both blame Calvinists “for taking sound Christian doctrine ‘to a dangerous extremity’” (Herbert 117). Milbank suggests *Confessions*’ use of the double figure represents “a return of the repressed in a religious culture that had muted its Calvinist roots” (151). She sees this trope of “the Gothic double” as stemming from “the Puritan caught between two spiritual possibilities, unable to embrace the good, since only God can save ... yet always looking for signs in him-or herself that God is at work and is effectually calling the soul to mortification and regeneration” (Milbank 156). She reads the novel “as a critique of the establishment moralism of the Enlightened Kirk of [Hogg’s] own day” (163). Hoeveler observes that *Confessions* rests on

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<sup>39</sup> As de Groot observes, Hogg certainly knew about theology: “We know that books of theology were among his earliest reading when he worked for James Laidlaw at Blackhouse farm. ... The fictitious editor who narrates the first part of the novel is clearly what in the course of the eighteenth century became known as a Moderate” (42). Politically, Hogg supported the conservative Tories while maintaining relationships with those holding alternative political positions and “consistently and assertively egalitarian” outlooks (Mack 64).

David Hume's differentiation "between two kinds of superstition: Catholicism, where practitioners prostrate themselves to the authority of priests, and Protestant enthusiasts, who believe themselves saved and set themselves above human laws" (*Gothic Riffs* 28). She believes the novel focuses on this second kind, using satire to discuss antinomian fanatics (28).

Fanaticism has been a lens through which some critics have read *Confessions*. Ian Duncan writes that the novel challenges "the liberal regime of British fiction" ("Fanaticism and Civil Society" 343). Elsewhere, Duncan also suggests Hogg is sympathetic toward the fanatic and paints fanaticism as a distinctly modern phenomenon ("Fanaticism and Enlightenment" 58). Faubert writes that Wringhim's narrative indicates "that enthusiasm divides believers from their community, even if this community may itself be viewed as enthusiastic by broader society" (95). Fanaticism is part of what isolates not only Robert Wringhim, but also his parents from the community in harmful ways. Mack suggests that while the Wringhims "represent deformed and fanatical religion," the "Colwan opponents might be said to represent non-religious, unredeemed natural man, amiable but flawed" ("The Rage" 48). As Duncan observes, multiple fanaticisms clash in the book ("Fanaticism and Enlightenment" 58).<sup>40</sup> Mack suggests the Editor's Tory perspective also clashes with Wringhim's Whig views, which are both "distorted by prejudice" ("The Rage" 46). Thus, the book argues against "all party prejudice" through depictions of extreme fanatics (Mack "The Rage" 49). In addition to supporting tolerance, *Confessions* satirizes specific theologies.

As Crawford Gribben and others emphasize, *Confessions* denounces Antinomianism rather than general Calvinism. Antinomian Predestination is a doctrine that "teaches that the

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, "the pious frenzies of the Wringhim household, the riot outside the Black Bull inn," or "the catalepsy that strikes Bell Calvert and Mrs Logan when they catch sight of Robert Wringhim accompanied by a figure who appears to be his murdered brother" (Duncan "Fanaticism and Enlightenment" 58).

Christian elect, predestined to eternal glory and justified by their faith, are so absolutely and unconditionally predestined that no breach of any law can imperil their final salvation” (Bligh 148-9). From an Antinomian perspective, *all* things are permissible. Hogg draws this out to an extreme in Robert Wringhim, who uses his faith to justify murder. The novel is set, as John Bligh notes, during a period of time in which Antinomianism threatened the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (151-2).<sup>41</sup> Although Antinomianism was less of a concern in 1824, Antinomianism continued to worry many (Bligh 153). Thus, Hogg’s theological argument addressed a prescient anxiety. However, as Gribben points out, Antinomianism was not a “‘popular’ option in the Scottish Reformed tradition,” and Wringhim’s heretical Antinomianism is far from “orthodox Calvinism” (12-13). Bligh argues Hogg works to make readers “hate Antinomianism but ... pity (not hate) its adherents” (148). Gribben reiterates that Hogg describes a caricature of belief rather than a representation of actual history. Gothic fanaticism helps him parody this perspective.

In the description of Wringhim’s origins, Hogg delivers what could be considered the book’s thesis: “But against the cant of the bigot or the hypocrite, no reasoning can aught avail” (8). The editor’s narrative indicates that Wringhim was born out of religious conflict. His mother Lady Dalcastle is described as “the most severe and gloomy of all bigots to the principles of the Reformation,” holding predestinarian beliefs “so rigid, that they became a stumbling-block” (6). She marries Laird Colwan, and on their wedding night, he finds “her engaged with the writings of the Evangelists” (7). She rejects his embrace. He suggests to his new bride that “religious devotion would be somewhat out of place to-night,” despite its status as “ever so beautiful, and ever so beneficial,” because if they were “to ride on the rigging of it at all times, would we not be constantly making a farce of it: It would be like reading the Bible and the jest-book, verse about,

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<sup>41</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Scotland condemned the book *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* in 1720 as some believed it would “propagate Antinomianism” (151-2).

and would render the life of man a medley of absurdity and confusion” (7). Colwan becomes a surprising voice of reason as he delivers a core tenet of *Confessions*: that excessive religion becomes parodic. The Gothic novel’s templates suggest that Colwan, as the person in power, ought to be the novel’s tyrant; however, his tolerant attitude contributes to the realization in readers that the novel’s real tyrant is fanatic religion. Lady Dalcastle’s religiosity and her choice to bring her own minister, Rev. Wringhim, into the marriage contribute heavily to the disintegration of the Colwan union.

Hogg’s description of Robert’s spiritual heritage frontloads readers’ expectations to know that although this is a Gothic story invested in supernatural questions, doppelgangers, madness, and historicity, the core conflict is religious. In a variety of ways, Lady Dalcastle worships Rev. Wringhim, who may be Robert Wringhim’s true father. It is heavily implied the two share a romantic, intimate relationship in addition to a spiritual one. Ironically, although Robert Wringhim is the titular “justified sinner,” Lady Dalcastle and Rev. Wringhim justify their affair on account of being part of the elect. Rev. Wringhim’s beliefs are even more fanatical than hers. Their arguments “receded from nature, utility, and common sense,” and Lady Dalcastle exclaims, “How delightful to think that a justified person can do no wrong! Who would not envy the liberty wherewith we are made free?” (Hogg 13). It is not merely young Wringhim’s murderous ways that criticize antinomianism; it is also his parent’s carelessly adulterous ones. Significantly, Hogg foregrounds this critique of antinomianism in the opening of the book, before Wringhim becomes completely monstrous. This outlook primes readers to think about how religious fanaticism fuels problematic, potentially violent, theological stances. The fanatical crucible of Wringhim’s upbringing impacts his later extreme beliefs and behaviors. Colwan rebukes Rev. Wringhim as “a presumptuous, self-conceited pedagogue, a stirrer up of strife and

commotion in church, in state, in families, and communities,” as one “whose righteousness consists in splitting the doctrines of Calvin into thousands of undistinguishable films, and in setting up a system of justifying-grace against all breaches of all laws, moral or divine” (15). Colwan’s voice of reason reiterates that Rev. Wringhim has distorted Calvinism. Wringhim’s beliefs and doctrines render him a laughing-stock to others in the book. Not only does his adopted son follow him for reasons of fidelity, but he also is raised to believe the world mocks his religious heritage. He feels persecuted, just as Roy suggests those who take pride in holy ignorance tend to feel. This sense of alienation propels him toward violence.

Robert Wringhim inherits his parents’ enthusiasm, which eventually destroys his life. Through no fault of his own, he is ostracized from childhood. While eldest son George is “healthful and happy,” Robert is considered a bastard by the laird, who refuses to baptize him in his own name (17). Robert Wringhim is thus sponsored, baptized, and raised by Rev. Wringhim, whose name he takes. Robert is “early inured to all the sternness and severity of his pastor’s arbitrary and unyielding creed,” and he is permitted to “only to pray for the elect,” encouraged to offer obviously evil prayers against Colwan and his elder brother, asking “that the old hoary sinner might be cut off in the full flush of his iniquity, and be carried quick into hell” (17). He internalizes harmful and malignant faith-motivated practices.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, Gil-Martin’s eventual appearance ties ideas around the demonic to fanatical faith. Bligh suggests Robert’s commitment to Antinomianism is what “draws upon him the special attention of the devil” in the form of Gil-Martin (135).<sup>43</sup> Wringhim becomes dangerous through the perverse religion he is

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<sup>42</sup> H.B. de Groot reads Wringhim as “a Tulip Calvinist” (36). Michelle Faubert points out that in popular imaginations, Calvinism has often been “identified with insanity” and incidences of suicide, both of which apply to Wringhim (79).

<sup>43</sup> Bligh suggests “a natural kinship between the devil and the Antinomian, since both believe that their eternal destiny is already fixed ... The devil knows that Antinomianism is false, but he is glad to propagate it because it makes its adherents amenable to his solicitations” (135). Wringhim’s quick acceptance of his father’s assertion that he is one of the elect is also “true to life” as those who followed the antinomian Dr. Hawker “believed themselves to

taught, exacerbated by his experiences with the supernatural Gil-Martin. Gothic conditions set the stage perfectly for the text's exploration of fanaticism.

Wringhim is a fanatic by his own confession and by the editor's verdict. He serves Rev. Wringhim, who confirms his status as the elect "to destroy and root out all who had moved hand or tongue against the children of the promise" (Hogg 39). Under the influence of his mother and Rev. Wringhim, Robert becomes the authorizer of his own faith.<sup>44</sup> His isolation contributes to his delusions, and murder becomes mission and salvation alike. Wringhim's crimes thrive under the belief that a member of the elect cannot fall from grace, regardless of their actions on earth. Rev. Wringhim's antinomian doctrine itself is painted as fanatical by the editor. Hogg writes,

Wringhim's whole system of popular declamation consisted it seems in this,—to denounce all men and women to destruction, and then hold out hopes to his adherents that they were the chosen few, included in the promises, and who could never fall away. It would appear that this pharisaical doctrine is a very delicious one, and the most grateful of all others to the worst characters. (45)

Hogg criticizes the idea of the elect but centers specifically on the idea that the elect are held to no behavioral standards. Hogg's may, as de Groot suggests, be an extreme representation of antinomianism (38-9). The editor's diagnosis of fanaticism initially seems a less biased, neutral observation; however, as the primary labeller and editor of the story, he holds a prejudiced and powerful position. His narrative demonstrates two of the uses of Gothic fanaticism: to explore religious questions and to discredit religious outsiders.

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be the predestined elect simply and solely because Dr. Hawker told them so and they found it gratifying to believe him" (Bligh 135).

<sup>44</sup> De Groot observes that Hogg uses "major dramatic irony" in describing Wringhim's "ineffectual calling" as this purely "outward" calling shows that Wringhim "is not one of the elect," an irony reinforced by the fact that Wringhim does not have an internal sense of assurance or conviction regarding his status; "he simply takes somebody else's word for it" (38).

Hogg concludes the editor's narrative thus: "We have heard much of the rage of fanaticism in former days, but nothing to this" (71). Wringhim's legacy is obviously far more malevolent than contemporaneous reputations of Enthusiasm or Methodism. Significantly, the editor's note directly labels Wringhim as a fanatic, not a madman, villain, or demon-possessed man. The ambiguity of the Gothic frame allows room for interpretation, but the editor controls and shapes the narrative, leading readers to conclude Wringhim is a fanatic before Wringhim gives his own deeply confusing testimony. Hogg's support of toleration saturates even the structure of his bizarre novel, but his use of the editor underscores the text's unreliability. Critics like Fielding, Mack, and McConnell have observed the editor's biases, suggesting Hogg makes an epistemological statement as well as a religious one. McConnell suggests Hogg's "questionable enlightened objectivity of the Editor" is, like Wringhim's fanaticism, "found wanting" (22). As Mack observes, the Editor's sympathies are "entirely with the Tory Colwan group of characters," whose flaws he overlooks, underlining the role of prejudiced interpretation (Mack "The Rage" 45). The work ends with another note from the editor, who gets the last word. The editor writes, "With regard to the work itself, I dare not venture a judgment, for I do not understand it" (Hogg 188). Despite his confusion, the editor and Hogg alike clearly see Wringhim as a fanatic. Without the quasi-legal editorial arrangements and assertions, the text makes little sense and could be attributed to madness alone. The editor concludes by writing, "In short, we must either conceive [Wringhim] not only the greatest fool, but the greatest wretch, on whom was ever stamped the form of humanity; or, that he was a religious maniac, who wrote and wrote about a deluded creature, till he arrived at that height of madness" (189). The editor appears to have some compassion for Wringhim, especially after his suicide, but his religious beliefs are labelled from the outside.

Wringhim's own garbled, weird testimony suggests he sees himself as a follower of God's will, although, as his writings suggest, he descends into a form of madness. His narrative complicates and confirms the editor's assertions as the story itself is told twice. Wringhim writes, "I will let the wicked of this world know what I have done in the faith of the promises, and justification by grace, that they may read and tremble, and bless their gods of silver and of gold, that the minister of heaven was removed from their sphere before their blood was mingled with their sacrifices" (75). He believes his murderous actions and leaving his testimony to inspire fear in the wicked are holy, sanctioned by faith. Wringhim reveals deep concerns with the state of his own salvation and worries he may not be one of the elect. He is not morally careless or indifferent; his murders and crimes are committed for religious, "justified" purposes. Wringhim feels "great indignation against all the wicked of this world, and often wished for the means of ridding it of such a noxious burden" (77). He believes he alone is right, chosen, and free of judgment for his own crimes. He is concerned more with the "multitude than the magnitude of his transgressions," as he believes his more "heinous" crimes "had generally some good effects in the way of punishing wicked men, froward boys, and deceitful women," leading him to rejoice "at being used as a scourge in the hand of the Lord" (83). Not only is he called a fanatic – he meets the criteria for one, exemplifying a lack of epistemological humility, intolerance for any other kinds of religious belief or practice, and a glee in violent behaviors in the name of religion. Wringhim believes Catholics and those who preach good works constitute "the worst and most heinous of all transgressors" (83). Wringhim is also cruel, sharing, "I can hardly describe the joy that it gave my heart to see a wicked creature suffering ... I did it as a duty, and what a man or boy does for the right, will never be put into the sum of his transgressions" (84). He believes his crimes are right and blessed by God, confirmed by Gil-Martin.

Whether Gil-Martin is a Gothic double and doppelganger or the devil incarnate, his influence leads Wringhim even further down the fanatic's path. Notably, at this point the revelation that an evil character is a devil incarnate was a solidified Gothic trope. As a partner, Gil-Martin believes exactly what Wringhim believes, eliminating any sort of diversity from the discourse around him. This combination of isolation, disenfranchisement, and a lack of cultural rootedness and self-critique lead Wringhim to violently fanatic behavior that in turn gives him a twisted sense of identity and purpose. Wringhim has little self-awareness, viewing himself "as an eagle among the children of men, soaring on high, and looking down with pity and contempt on the grovelling creatures below" (88). As a fanatic, he cannot apply self-critique. Further, fanatics cannot abide disagreement. When he meets Gil-Martin, the double assures him of his "belief of the same truths" and "in the same mode of redemption" (89). Before accepting Gil-Martin, Wringhim ensures they share a complete unity of doctrinal belief. The single-minded Wringhim holds exclusive and dangerous dogmas that Gil-Martin supports. Wringhim must confirm that they hold the same beliefs because he is intolerant; he will not associate with or live in community with religious difference. He cannot accurately diagnose (or even observe) the problems with Gil-Martin. Wringhim's classification as fanatic comes not purely from his Antinomian perspectives; rather, his fanaticism grows out of his harmful actions.<sup>45</sup> He firmly believes "that a justified person could do nothing wrong" and has no scruples with "rooting out the weeds from the garden of the Church" (123).

*Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* provides an excellent case study for beginning to read nineteenth-century Gothic fanaticism as it represents Protestantisms. Madness and fanaticism intertwine as Robert Wringhim spirals to his self-inflicted doom.

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<sup>45</sup> Milbank writes that "the narratives judge him by the covenant of works in the editor's moralizing narrative, and that of grace, in his own words. He fails by both criteria" (163).

Wringhim is clearly a fanatic, as are his parents. Notably, Robert Wringhim is rejected by Lord Colwan, ostracizing him in a way that leads him to find stability in fanaticism rather than family structures. This rejection and the possibility of his illegitimate birth leave him an underdog who needs fanaticism to survive, although it eventually kills him, too. Fanaticism also seems to have empowered his spiritual father, Rev. Wringhim, against the manifold judgments aimed in his direction. The vice of self-authorization continually appears within Gothic fiction, whether it shows up in *Wuthering Heights*' Catherine, the Count in *Dracula*, or in Robert Wringhim, who believes he is "a justified person, adopted among the number of God's children—my name written in the Lamb's book of life, and that no bypast transgression, nor any future act of my own, or of other men, could be instrumental in altering the degree" (88). *Confessions* engages fanaticism as a discourse (the multi-layered text with a variety of testimonies about the fanatic, including the fanatic's own words) and as a phenomenon (Wringhim's behaviors as well as those of his parents). In both, fanaticism fuels a form of power. The discourse of Gothic fanaticism enables the Editor to discredit Wringhim. Thus, antinomianism – and, for some readers, Calvinism – are subsequently discredited through this extreme representation. Here, Gothic fanaticism monitors appropriate and inappropriate religious practice. Additionally, fanaticism itself becomes a means for Wringhim to feel he has power in a world where his father has forsaken him and he has little social standing. Although he eventually descends into madness, whether or not Gil-Martin is demonic or a figment of his imagination, it is thus perhaps possible to find a small amount of sympathy for the fanatic, as feelings of social disenfranchisement lead him to find solace not in community or work but in extreme, violent religion. Gothic topoi like the doppelganger, the use of historicity in depicting religion, madness, and depictions of murder and violence all heighten

Hogg's exploration of issues of religious fanaticism. They raise the stakes, making Wringham's religion not merely harmful but actively monstrous.

## **Chapter Overview**

In chapter one, I discuss the ways excessive romantic love becomes idolatrous and analogous to religious fanaticism in Gothic romance, specifically focusing on *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Christianity itself serves as a subject for critique in each book, although Hardy's vision of religion is pessimistic while Charlotte Brontë ultimately casts a vision for a hopeful faith and Emily Brontë seems ambivalent. All three directly condemn representations of religious fanatics (Mr. Brocklehurst, Eliza, Joseph, the painter, and Alec). These condemnations extend to cautions against idolatrous and fanatical romantic love, as the faults of religious and romantic fanatics are similar in their blind devotion and lack of self-critique. Rochester, marked with Catholicism, and Jane, marked with Puritanism, must create their own version of the *via media*, reflecting Brontë's Anglican theology. Like Jane and Rochester, Emily Brontë's Catherine and Heathcliff become enmeshed in fanatical romance. In *Wuthering Heights*, fanaticism becomes a counterfeit vehicle for disenfranchised characters like Joseph and Heathcliff to obtain degrees of power that sustain them, despite having ultimately limited results. The chapter concludes with a reading of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, in which idolatrous romance is as dangerous as religious fanaticism. Hardy's use of these discourses underlines his call for an agnostic approach to knowing, which provides a possible antidote for fanaticism. These novels use Gothic fanaticism to suggest religious and romantic devotion require limits. The two are discussed together to emphasize that fanaticism is not about the object of worship but about one's immoderate orientation or devotion and one's

ability to use that devotion to harm others. Additionally, fanaticism in these works yields disenfranchised characters temporary – and problematic – forms of power.

In chapter two, I look at the way fanaticism becomes a useful method of discrediting foreign American forms of Protestantism, much as earlier Gothic used fanatic tropes to delegitimize European Catholicism. I pair what appear to be similar approaches taken by Arthur Conan Doyle in *A Study in Scarlet* and Elizabeth Gaskell in *Lois the Witch* to depicting American forms of Protestant Christianity, namely, Mormonism and American Puritanism, as monstrous. Doyle's Mormons are little more than caricatures of fanatic belief; however, I argue that through the lens of the juridical parable, Gaskell's story asks English readers to first critique a foreign religion before turning the mirror upon themselves and realizing that the Puritans' fanatic tendencies share English origins.<sup>46</sup> She defines fanaticism through groupthink and violence, using foreign examples to draw attention to readers' own potentially fanatical qualities.

In chapter three, I explore the way the quintessential Gothic monster, the vampire, can become a metaphor that suggests religious fanaticism figuratively sucks the life out of a society. In readings of three 1890s novels, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, George MacDonald's *Lilith*, and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*, I contend that vampirism becomes a metaphor for fanaticism. In *Dracula*, the vampire's religion can grow precisely because it capitalizes on fanatical tendencies in followers like Lucy and Renfield. In *Lilith*, the titular vampire similarly employs strategies from the fanatic cult leader's toolkit to maintain control over Bulika. Fanatical power structures enable vampires to maintain control. Additionally, I suggest that gender anxiety contributes to depictions of fanatical female vampires who possess traits that

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<sup>46</sup> A juridical parable is a parable that leads the audience to condemn a character's action before realizing that they are guilty of the very action they have now condemned. For an example, see the parable Nathan tells King David in 2 Samuel 12.

align them with the New Woman. Finally, in Marryat's novel, I argue that Harriet, a psychic vampire, is a product of two major kinds of fanatics: the mad scientist and a biracial Voodoo priestess. Because she is the product of fanaticism, Harriet herself unintentionally sucks away energy from all those she encounters, and the novel, despite not being anti-colonial, considers the weight of systemic responsibility for unintentional continued harm. This novel features all three arenas of Gothicized fanaticism this project engages with: excessive romantic love, nationalism, and vampirism. It offers no easy answers, but it demonstrates that at the end of the century, the shapes of Gothic fanaticism remained pertinent.

Each chapter of this study concludes with a brief coda tracing contemporary residues of nineteenth-century Gothic fanaticism in twenty-first century works. The Gothic continues to explore ideas about fanaticism, particularly religious fanaticism, in contemporary literature and film, despite shifting its stance somewhat. It can still be used to discredit outsiders, but many creators have worked toward a greater degree of empathy for the other. Often, as in the works of Guillermo del Toro, the true monster is revealed to be human.<sup>47</sup> Modern iterations of the Gothic that tackle religion usually do so in order to critique religious practice, often extreme religious practice. For example, Robert Eggers' 2015 film *The Witch* uses the Gothic to explore the consequences of legalistic religious extremism in a seventeenth-century Puritan family. Sylvia Moreno-Garcia's 2020 *Mexican Gothic* riffs on the Gothic romance template to demonstrate the harmful and fanatical aspects of colonialism. Mike Flanagan's 2021 Netflix series *Midnight Mass* uses a version of the vampire narrative to explore the way misinterpretation, desperation, and isolation drive people to deadly forms of fanaticism. The Gothic mode still helps authors critique religious practices and audiences understand what may be problematic in their own

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<sup>47</sup> This thesis, which draws on Mary Shelley's in *Frankenstein*, is explored in many of his major Gothic films: *Shape of Water* (2017), *Crimson Peak* (2015), and *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006).

belief systems and behaviors. Through these distanced critiques, people can begin to see what is dangerous about extreme religion as it manifests beyond the pages of fiction. The Gothic continues to provide audiences and creators alike with useful interpretive tools. These nineteenth-century residues haunt modern Gothic, troubling the ways we think about religion, often in productive ways.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### Fanaticism, Idolatry, Love, and Power in Gothic Romance

Early anti-Catholic Gothic novels often depicted Catholics as idolatrous, sexually deviant, superstitious, and sometimes demonic, fanatics (Hoeveler, O'Malley). The discourse of Gothic fanaticism empowered authors to criticize Catholicism (rightly or wrongly) for tyrannous, harmful power structures, typically from the outside. Although early Gothic focused on fanatical caricatures of Catholicism, later writers applied this criticism of fanaticism to Protestants as well, often to critique excessively emotional forms of religion. Within the Gothic mode, the language of idolatry tends to constellate around Catholicism, whereas fanaticism tends to do so around Evangelicalism. While Catholicism becomes monolithic for many authors, Protestantism has a wide spectrum of denominations and sects, and typically authors focus on criticizing a specific sect or set of beliefs they perceive as holding problematic power structures, beliefs, or behaviors. For instance, Hogg's portrait of Calvinism, as discussed, employs the Gothic to critique ideas about predestination and antinomianism.

Mid- and late-century Gothic continues an investment in ideas about fanaticism, often rendering fanatic versions of romantic love as imbricated in fanatic religion. Love, too, becomes the subject of Gothic critique, often through the language of idolatry. The discourse of idolatry, as Timothy Carens points out, was broadly used in Victorian literature to reflect "Protestant anxiety about the tendency of love to monopolize the human heart" (6). In *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, excessive romantic love becomes idolatrous and fanatical. Each book critiques Christianity itself, although Thomas Hardy's pessimistic vision of religion contrasts sharply with Charlotte Brontë's hopeful Anglicanism and Emily Brontë's ambivalent distrust of formal religious structures. Notably, however, against the backdrop of denouncing fanatic religious characters, all three use the Gothic to simultaneously condemn idolatrous

romantic love as fanatical. Despite these condemnations, Emily and Charlotte Brontë's novels suggest that healthy, non-fanatic religion has the capacity to cultivate a merciful, selfless kind of love, whereas Hardy's novel offers no clear solution.

This chapter investigates how authors employ the Gothic mode to decide when romantic love becomes excessive, as the discourses of romance and religion become useful in regulating fanatical approaches to either. The moral demands of separate gendered spheres, shifting narratives about companionate marriages, and the debatable position of women help pinpoint why questions about religious and romantic excess might be linked. Further, the discourse of Gothic fanaticism originally spoke to an audience with great concerns about devotional imbalances. Maria Lamonaca and Timothy Carens both describe the tension in nineteenth-century novels and stories between marriage and Christian worship. Lamonaca writes that “*both* romantic love and Catholicism were troped as idolatry in Victorian culture” (*Masked Atheism* 38), and Carens demonstrates that a wide range of Victorian reading material and sermons set up “an ideological conflict between faith and love” (3).<sup>48</sup> Kathleen Vejvoda suggests that the Oxford Movement and Catholic Emancipation contributed to rising “anxiety” about Catholicism that she argues manifests in “an obsession with idolatry” (241). Love and religion were seen as imbricated, especially in the Gothic, where romantic fanaticism, like religious fanaticism, often features unchecked zeal, places too much credence on emotion alone, lacks self-critique, and refuses to acknowledge being in the wrong. “Fanaticism” houses concepts like obsession and single-mindedness, and isolation can intensify these tendencies. Romantic and religious brands of fanaticism are condemned in these works, as Gothic topoi identify and interrogate tyrannical power structures, which often come to be located in both religion and romantic love. Gothicized

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<sup>48</sup> Carens observes that at the time of publication, Jane's reading of her relationship with Rochester as idolatrous “would have resonated in a way that it rarely does today” (5).

fanaticism as a discourse assists authors in discrediting forms of faith (and romance) they find suspect. In these novels, the phenomenon of fanaticism also becomes an ersatz form of empowerment, allowing characters who are marginalized in some way to temporarily rise above their circumstances.

Shifting ideas about gender and power help explain nineteenth-century Gothic's focus on love's excess. Love itself is by no means an exclusively Christian experience; however, its forms and practices in England were shaped by Christianity and the legacy of Christianized courtly love as well as the novel.<sup>49</sup> Wagoner argues romantic love was "tutored by Christianity" itself (58). The link between religion and marriage was intensifying as the companionate marriage ideal continued to develop, eventually becoming the primary building block of the family (Davidoff and Hall 321). The companionate conception of marital love showed Christian influence, since "marriage had to be voluntary," and the idea that "God is love" gave "divine sanction to powerful feelings of desire" (Wagoner 53). Further, many directives in the Christian New Testament admonish husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands, setting up a religious connection between love and marriage.<sup>50</sup> The companionate marriage, still a relatively new invention, was based on love as well as "mutual loyalty, duty, and protection" (Phegley 6). Earlier, a "political and economic contract" united parties who had little say, versus the new model, which freed a person to marry based on their affections (Wagoner 52-3). As marriage was increasingly built upon romance, monitoring the appropriate degree of amorous zeal became important. This manifested in fiction, and the eighteenth-century novel (including Gothic fiction) codified many of the practices of courtly love as ideal and romantic. Marriages

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<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the discourse of romantic love influenced nineteenth-century Christianity in arenas such as eschatology and cuddlier depictions of Christ.

<sup>50</sup> See Ephesians 5:22-33 or Colossians 3:19 for examples.

began to be centered around romance, although in the typical middle-class home, Victorian courtship was still sharply influenced by socioeconomic class and nineteenth-century gender norms (Phegley 13-14).

Romantic love, at least in theory, had become foundational to marriage. Although marriage still operated within clearly delineated social structures with respect to gender roles and class power, within that frame love became a priority, which could account for mid-century authors' explorations of the boundaries of healthy romantic love using the language of idolatry and shapes of fanaticism. While Protestants often accused Catholics of idolizing the sacraments and liturgy, they themselves could be charged with treating their own emotional experiences and selves idolatrously. The Gothic's ability to explore both religion and romance meant it could function as a space to usefully juxtapose fanatical excesses in both arenas. The discourses of religion, as explored by theorists such as Marx, Foucault, or Althusser, have always held the power to control individuals. As religion and love continued to shift, finding (and resisting) new discourses of control became important. The companionate marriage gave rise to a need for a new exploration of love in light of social changes. Separate spheres ideology perhaps envisions marriage and love as serving a purpose similar to religion in its moral guidelines and structures.

Anxieties surrounding the rise of a new kind of marriage could deftly be explored through the Gothic mode's ability to dramatize power and excess. Charlotte and Emily Brontë and Thomas Hardy suggest that both religion and love require limits; Gothic generic conventions provide a structure in which they can explore these boundaries. Fiction itself was uniquely equipped to define versions of healthy and unhealthy love. As Robert Kiely writes, romantic protagonists tend toward "[l]ust, curiosity, intellectual pride, envy, and fanaticism," qualities he thinks are not moral but instead manifestations of the character's attempts "to bypass the

boundaries of the flesh” (255). Gothic spaces often highlight negative features of romantic love as readers, and sometimes protagonists, learn about its boundaries. Love, of course, like religion, is not a singular experience or discourse. Idolatrous love is different from abusive love, masochistic love, adulterous love, or fanatic love. Alec d’Urberville’s fanatic love for Tess (or religion) differs from Tess’s idolatrous treatment of Angel Clare. These experiences are different from Jane Eyre’s love for Rochester and Heathcliff’s love for Catherine. As Lynne Pearce writes, “romantic love is a discourse that *proclaims* itself universal and inescapable, yet is anything but” (x). Notably, however, when excessive love is described in the language of Catholic idolatry or of Protestant enthusiasm, it often features similar elements from my definition of fanaticism. The discourse of Gothic fanaticism frequently shades depictions of toxic romantic relationships. Pearce suggests Gothic novels are “texts not so much about love as about love’s fearful legacy” (87). Gothic romance shows love to be haunting and tyrannical, especially when its boundaries are not respected.

Gothic Romance, sometimes considered a subgenre of the Gothic, contains many of the same topoi as the Gothic writ large. Deborah Russell notes that early Gothic Romance blended the realistic novel with the traditional romance form, incorporating adventure, heroism, love, and imagined history (61). “Romance” used thus refers not to a love plot, but instead to a fabulous story removed in some ways from ordinary life. Early anti-Catholic Gothic novels feature events and characters removed not only spatially from English readers but also temporally, as in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), set in sixteenth-century Italy. Early Gothic also features romantic love plots, but these differ in clear ways from later Gothic romance, which leans toward

dark or complicated romantic experiences and depicts love itself as a source of danger.<sup>51</sup> In *The Castle of Otranto*, Manfred's villainous lust for Isabella bears little resemblance to romantic love, and the story's love plot takes a back seat to the succession drama. Similarly, Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1792) depicts (among other things) a young woman rescued by a heroic young man as she escapes her tyrannous uncle. In these novels, older men and the nobility are the primary loci for tyranny rather than, as in *The Monk*, the Catholic church. In these examples, heroines grow through trials towards marriage, but love itself is not usually a source of darkness. They freely choose love, often escaping lecherous older men, and genuinely chivalrous love aids protagonists working to overcome obstacles and attain self-actualization. Love, in early Gothic, has the potential to rescue girls, but in later Gothic Romance, love itself begins to imprison and tyrannize heroines as a source of internalized danger.

Gothic Romance usually contains a set of motifs invested in the dark side of romantic love, which develops the potential to become a kind of powerful tyranny akin to the religious or political tyranny described in Radcliffe or Walpole. Holly Hirst observes that the subgenre is typically defined through "a discernible and rigid formula" that, while having serious limitations, is largely grounded in the topoi set by *Jane Eyre* (358). By mid-century, Gothic Romance incorporates the Byronic hero and employs less spatially distant settings like English Gothic manors or Hardy's fictionalized rural Wessex, all presumably attainable and familiar locations for readers. Gothic Romance no longer focuses on Romance as a form but on romance as an experience that, for heroines in love, is fraught at best and dangerous at worst. Early examples differ greatly from *Jane Eyre*'s complex relationship with Rochester, Catherine and Heathcliff's

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<sup>51</sup> There are, of course, exceptions, such as Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*, where the heroine grows ever more evil, or the Emily sections in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, wherein the Gothic villain marries someone who actually wants to marry him. Both of these also feature idolatrous or fanatical love.

destructive romance, or Tess's abusive experiences with Angel Clare and Alex d'Urberville. Love is no longer a means toward self-actualization but a potential stumbling block for heroines whose romantic inclinations may lead them astray, especially from their religious devotion. As Fred Botting notes, Gothic romantic love has a dark underside as sex and death are entangled: in the Gothic, "[r]omance requires darkness" (23). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick includes paranoia as a central trait, which she notes in the Gothic "is a form of love" itself, the form that "is the most ascetic, *the love that demands least from its objects*" (xi). Although Sedgwick considers paranoia primarily in the context of homosocial relationships and homophobia, paranoia features in religious fanaticism as well as the romantic cores of these novels, where religious and romantic paranoia coexist. Religious paranoia appears in the obsession certain characters have over the state of eternal souls; romantic paranoia appears in the mistrust of the beloved. The lover's paranoia has the power to inhibit all other impulses, including religious ones. Nowhere is this more evident than in Heathcliff's obsession with Catherine; she – or love for her – tyrannizes him. Whereas love is depicted as mostly compatible with early Gothic heroines' religious inclinations, excessive romantic love grows tyrannous in a way that prevents not only healthy relationships but also healthy religious practice. Love itself becomes fanatical.

The Gothic Romance mode specifically enables religious and social critique through its primary topoi, its legacy of engagement with both religion and romantic love, and the distance from realism that sharpens critique. A Gothic world tends to be more dualistic and less morally complex, at least on the surface, than many Romantic or Victorian realist novels. Thus, these novels which incorporate both realist and Gothic conventions can articulate visions of the boundaries of a fanatic, black and white view of the world. Fanatic views tend to come with moral absolutism, whether directed at religion or romance (or, in some cases, revenge), and this

absolutism opens the door for Gothic conditions. The Gothic itself becomes linked to fanaticism, and it is a powerful force these texts suggest may need to be controlled. Additionally, since the Gothic is uncanny and often supernatural, readers might approach it without seeing themselves in it, at first. This allows them to critique negative behaviors in an other before seeing the same behavior in themselves. Narrative distance thus becomes an effective tool for criticism, and Gothic fanaticism's language can be used for moral education or to discredit others.

Gothic critiques often coalesce around power structures, the appropriate boundaries of gendered and religious power, and the tempting but dangerous potential of religious fanaticism to briefly empower individuals. For many individuals in Gothic novels, fanaticism becomes a counterfeit vehicle for power. It does not always give them real social power (although it can, as in Alec's power in the church), but fanaticism provides characters the illusion or feeling of having power in a world that has denied them social power on the basis of class, gender, religion, or race. As demonstrated, actual fanaticism often serves a social function. Fanatical behavior internally and externally empowers many of these characters whose actions then become problematic or dangerous to society or "proper" religious practice. The Gothic is an appropriate mode for showcasing the difficulty in establishing boundaries of a belief and its practices. Religion itself can be alluring and dangerous, and the Gothic highlights the uncanny's potential to morph from something beneficial and controllable to something tyrannical.

### ***Jane Eyre***

Charlotte Brontë's 1847 *Jane Eyre* exemplifies Gothic Romance for the mid-Victorian era. The novel builds on Ann Radcliffe's early Gothic templates, featuring the explained supernatural, a faith-driven heroine, and unknown relatives who come to the rescue, but it also features topoi such as entrapped women, obsessive love, and isolation. Brontë in some ways

crystallizes a distinct Gothic Romance form to make proto-feminist arguments, especially about faith and love, hence its status as, perhaps, the quintessential canonical Gothic Romance. Jane descends from Radcliffe's heroines, but she experiences a darker, obsessive romance with Rochester. Rather than completing their bond, excessive love competes with Jane's ability to practice healthy religion. In the novel, Charlotte Brontë compares religious fanatics with romantic fanatics, articulating a vision of a romantic and religious *via media* in which moderation is key. Religious fanaticism prevents adequate love; reciprocally, romantic fanaticism, which she codes in the language of idolatry, thwarts proper Protestant devotion.

Brontë's protagonist values her faith deeply, but intelligently and non-dogmatically. Jane is deeply religious but refuses to conform to the Evangelical model of faith she experiences as a child. Sara Pearson argues that Charlotte Brontë should be read specifically through the lens of Anglicanism as in her novels she "vigorously criticized and sought the reform of an institution she loved" (16). According to Mark Knight and Emma Mason, Brontë's critiques focus on individual practice and "attack localized expressions of religion rather than religion per se," especially those aimed at religious treatment of women (128). As Marianne Thormählen points out, Charlotte Brontë's works often reference other denominations with hostility "directed against an element which is itself the greatest foe to liberality: fanaticism," and she tended to depict "movements outside the main stream of the Church of England with frantic zeal" (*Brontë's* 40). Elsewhere and in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë demonstrates a deep commitment to the Anglican church. As Carens points out, she also engages idolatrous love in *Shirley* and *Villette*, showing persistent concern with the dueling forces of romance and religion (48). As Maria Lamonaca argues, Jane's deeply religious "convictions are presented as the primary force behind her resistance to conventional female subject-positions, whether as Rochester's mistress or St. John's

spiritual helpmate” (“Jane’s Crown” 246). Love, femininity, and faith are interwoven in *Jane Eyre*, presenting a heroine whose faith goes beyond ritual and enables her the power of choice, not just in suitor, but in rejecting anything she does not choose herself and in resisting both love that is not enough (her friendship with St. John) and love that is too much (her initial romance with Rochester). The novel’s ultimate successful relationship requires a romantic model that mirrors the Anglican doctrine of the *via media*, which posited a “middle way” between Protestantism and Catholicism that could avoid both idolatry and fanaticism. This doctrine applies to the novel’s religious and romantic trajectories as Jane learns and shares lessons about applying moderation to both. Faith is a central topic of the book, not merely for Jane but also for various other characters.

*Jane Eyre* depicts obvious religious fanatics that narrator Jane mocks and critiques, primarily Mr. Brocklehurst and her cousin Eliza. Jane despises fanaticism as well as Christianity she perceives as impure or hypocritical.<sup>52</sup> This hypocrisy is nowhere clearer than in Brocklehurst, often remembered as one of the primary examples of nineteenth-century literary depictions of Evangelicals.<sup>53</sup> Brocklehurst is “harsh and prim,” telling Jane on meeting her that since children die she should therefore fear hell (Brontë 32). Jane resists him by assuring him she *does* pray and read her Bible. As Jonathan Greenaway points out, Jane’s scriptural preferences “detail both liberation and eschatology,” reflecting “her own feelings of injustice” and revealing her “hope for a radical transformation of the world” (98). Yet, Brocklehurst disapproves of her preferences for the Old Testament and Revelation and insults her, declaring Jane has “a wicked heart” and must ask God “to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (33).

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<sup>52</sup> Ironically, love renders her a fanatic herself until her feelings are properly channeled.

<sup>53</sup> As Knight points out, Brocklehurst and other sketches of Evangelicals are “memorable for their cruelty, hypocrisy, or stupidity,” but they tend to be “more complex than our memories often recollect” (11).

Here, his Protestantism shows in his appeal to emotional experience as the essence of Christianity. Although he quotes the Bible, Jane takes his rebuke literally and wants to respond impertinently to his guilt-ridden emotional appeal. Even at age ten, she condemns his Evangelical fanaticism as well as his hypocrisy.<sup>54</sup>

Brocklehurst talks at length about humility as a cornerstone of Lowood's philosophy, but it is clear his own family does not live such an ascetic life. He forces girls at Lowood to adopt stern measures, including "plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits," while his own children wear silk to visit the orphanage (34). Jane notices Brocklehurst's hypocrisy as his family visits, remarking, "[t]hey ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress, for they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs" (64). Above all, Jane hates this Pharisaic hypocrisy, which stands out alongside his strictness, particularly in his response to Miss Temple's choice to replace the girls' ruined meal:

You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying. Should any little accidental disappointment of the appetite occur ... the incident ought not to be neutralized by replacing with something more delicate the comfort lost ... it ought to be improved to the spiritual edification of the pupils, by encouraging them to evince fortitude under the temporary privation. (62-3)

Eating burned porridge should, in his view, remind these orphans of "the sufferings of primitive Christians" (63). Brocklehurst is self-deceptive, blind to his own hypocrisy and harshness. He is nonetheless in earnest, warning Temple that feeding the children "bread and cheese" could "starve their immortal souls!" (63). He is "overcome by his feelings" in this speech, suggesting

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<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Brontë, who did not believe in hell, satirizes his views on the existence of hell.

sincerity but an overzealous degree of enthusiasm (63). He lacks self-critique and does not regulate his emotions in regard to these girls. He is so overly concerned for their eternal souls (genuinely, if problematically) that he cannot see their ailing physical bodies. Jane's dual criticisms of his hypocrisy and his excessive subjectivity render him the very picture of a religious fanatic. Despite her distaste for Brocklehurst's fanatical tendencies, even as a child, Jane idolizes love she feels she cannot have. She worries about how Brocklehurst and others at the orphanage will perceive her. Helen chastises her for thinking "too much of the love of human beings" (69). Helen's observation is accurate; this strain persists throughout the book until Jane learns to temper love while still valuing it through encounters with romance as well as different religious perspectives, like those held by Brocklehurst and her cousin Eliza.

With Eliza, Jane takes a somewhat anti-Catholic stance, criticizing both the Oxford Movement and Catholicism. As an adult, Eliza's asceticism is visible in her dress: "the extreme plainness of a strait-skirted, black, stuff dress, a starched linen collar, hair combed away from the temples, and the nun-like ornament of a string of ebony beads and a crucifix" (228). Eliza looks "puritanical," which is a strange observation coming from someone who describes herself as Quakerish (228). Jane perceives Eliza as a fanatic, describing her in terms of Evangelical, Tractarian, *and* Catholic stereotypes. These stereotypes reveal Jane's own prejudices while also underlining the novel's suggestion for a deep need for a moderate approach, like that of the *via media*. Jane writes that she "never saw a busier person than [Eliza] seemed to be; yet it was difficult to say what she did: or rather, to discover any result of her diligence. ... Three times a day she studied a little book, which I found, on inspection, was a Common Prayer Book" (234). She also makes an elaborate altar cloth for a new church, working on it three hours a day using gold thread (235). Jane sees Eliza as a fanatic because her impractical religious habits are

excessively fine and fail to improve her as a person. As a narrator, she uses the shapes of the discourse of fanaticism to discredit and critique her cousin.

Eliza combines the worst of what critics saw in the Oxford Movement, Catholicism, and Evangelicalism. Jane condenses stereotypes about all three into Eliza. Pearson notes that while Brontë supported Catholic emancipation, her novels express a “mixture of tolerance and suspicion, attraction and repulsion, to Roman Catholicism” (18). Like John Henry Newman,<sup>55</sup> Eliza eventually converts to Catholicism, leaving after her mother’s funeral for continental Europe where she plans to “take up my abode in a religious house, near Lisle—a nunnery you would call it,” and examine “Roman Catholic dogmas” and study “the workings of their system” (241). She has tentative plans to “embrace the tenets of Rome and probably take the veil” (242). Jane, unsurprised, thinks this “vocation will fit you to a hair” and sends Eliza on her way, critical of Catholicism and indifferent toward Eliza’s well-being. Jane is clearly unimpressed by Catholic belief and liturgical structures. She suggests that Catholicism can be, like Eliza, obsessed with ritualism to the diminishment of helping people, that it is too fine and ornate, and that it is neither sensible nor practical. Rather than fairly evaluating Catholicism, Jane criticizes it from the perspective of an outsider, suggesting it is idolatrous. Through painting Catholicism in this fanatic light, Jane reinforces her own anti-Catholic beliefs.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, she learns from this condemnation of hypocrisy to avoid it in her own life, especially in her romantic choices.

Like Brocklehurst and Eliza, St. John Rivers could be accused of fanaticism. Jane notes he is “[z]ealous in his ministerial labours” and “blameless in his life and habits” without exhibiting “that mental serenity, that inward content, which should be the reward of every sincere Christian and practical philanthropist” (351). His sermon brims with zeal and

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<sup>55</sup> *Jane Eyre* was published just two years after Newman’s own conversion.

<sup>56</sup> Charlotte Brontë shared many of these perspectives (Thormählen *Brontës* 25).

a strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness: stern allusions to Calvinistic doctrines – election, predestination, reprobation – were frequent; and each reference to these points sounded like a sentence pronounced for doom. When he had done, instead of feeling better, calmer, more enlightened by his discourse, I experienced an inexpressible sadness; for it seemed to me ... the eloquence to which I had been listening had sprung from a depth where lay turbid dregs of disappointment ... I was sure St. John Rivers—pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was—had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding: he had no more found it, I thought, than had I; with my concealed and racking regrets for my broken idol and lost elysium – regrets to which I have latterly avoided referring; but which possessed me and tyrannized over me ruthlessly. (352)

In analyzing St. John's sermon, Jane literally refers to her disappointed love for Rochester as a "broken idol" that "tyrannized" her, directly comparing the failures of St. John's religious excesses to her own romantic fanaticism (352). Like Brocklehurst, St. John's religious focus lies in eternity, rather than in the present. He refuses to relinquish his idea of being a missionary as he sees this work as his "foundation laid on earth for a mansion in heaven" (374). Ambition is his idol: "he lived only to aspire," and his religion lacks both love and joy, the first two fruits of the spirit Paul lists in Galatians 5 (392). His rational approach aligns him with certain dissenting groups, but his ambition is Evangelical in its missionary impulses and eternal telos. Like Rochester, he is possessive of Jane, claiming she is "formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my sovereign's service" (402). By contrast to Jane's relationship with Rochester, their friendship has a deficit of love. Both men are possessive because they lack a proper amount of

love for God and Jane; they are fanatics worshiping ambition and pleasure, respectively. Ironically, Jane tells St. John if she is “not formed for love, it follows that I am not formed for marriage” (416). Jane knows marrying St. John would be a “monstrous” sacrifice and “martyrdom,” showing her belief that sacrificing marital love entirely is just as morally wrong as being Rochester’s mistress would be (405).

Jane truly considers St. John’s proposal, but she knows excess and deficit mirror each other in their error. When she almost consents, her experiences resemble an emotional conversion: “I had felt what it was to be loved; but, like him, I had now put love out of the question, and thought only of duty” (419). She compares her feelings for the two when she is tempted to accept St. John in a moment of his sublimity, noting, “I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been once before, in a different way, by another. I was a fool both times. To have yielded then would have been an error of principle; to have yielded now would have been an error of judgment” (418). St. John has sacrificed his love for Rosamond to his ambition, and Jane seriously considers accepting his offer. St. John acts as a foil for Jane in showing that love must be present, but tempered by religion, with no emotional excess. St. John is, in some ways, an ideal Christian nineteenth-century man: smart, handsome, reserved, religious (351). Further, for someone in Jane’s situation, his offer is better than many could hope for, especially given her devout faith and desire to help people. He is perhaps the opposite of the idol Jane constructed in her worship of Rochester, so her rejection is significant. Pearson points out that Jane is willing to serve as a missionary; she resists St. John with the argument “that they would be in an immoral relationship if they were married but not in love” (23). *Jane Eyre* shows how romantic love can and should eclipse friendship and socioeconomic aspects of marriage; however, it also demonstrates how romantic love can become idolatrous. This novel highlights a significant shift

in marital paradigms while granting Jane the agency to be the master of her own spiritual self. Emily Griesinger reads her rejections of both men as uniquely concerned with faith as they ensure she – and not a man – is the one who maintains control over her own spiritual life. Jane’s responses are “radically feminist, Protestant, and biblical” (Griesinger 51). Carens writes that although “Idolatry discourse frequently reaffirms patriarchal power,” *Jane Eyre* is equally concerned with the heroine’s “spiritual integrity as it is about her social and political status” (5-6). In the reunification of Jane with her beloved and the tempering of their emotional connection with religious faith and devotion, Brontë suggests that an ideal romance should be more than duty but less than fanatic idolatry. Jane and Rochester must walk through trials separately, bringing them into a deeper Christian faith that overcomes their fanatical worship of each other.

In a way, Jane and St. John are both fanatics, although they worship different idols. While St. John’s life is centered around his ambition, cloaked in religious language, Jane’s idol is romantic worship of Rochester. Jane stays emotionally devoted to a relationship where love has grown to excess. Rochester became

my whole world; and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol.

(274)

Love, for Jane, becomes explicitly idolatrous and fanatical, and it directly interferes with her religious devotion.<sup>57</sup> Even before they have declared love for each other, when Jane begins to realize her affections she berates herself as Rochester “cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and

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<sup>57</sup> *Jane Eyre* is not the first literary example to envision romantic love as an idol. One obvious example is that Juliet calls Romeo “the god of my idolatry” (*Romeo and Juliet* II.ii.113).

unknown, must devour the life that feeds it” (161). Jane compares feelings of love to madness; her devotion has vampiric, consumptive qualities that render this love Gothically tyrannous.<sup>58</sup> She recalls that formerly, “Every good, true, vigorous feeling I have, gathers impulsively round him” (175). Even Rochester sees he has replaced religious devotion for Jane. At her confession of love, he remarks at the “earnest, religious energy” of her speech and the way her “upward gaze at [him] now is the very sublime of faith, truth, and devotion” (282). The discourse used to describe their romance constantly relies on religious language. Looking back, Jane can see her misalignment of love as a problem, albeit a smaller one than Rochester’s attempted bigamy. For Jane truly to love Rochester in a marital setting, their fanatical approach to love must be tamed by time and Rochester’s own religious reawakening. Bertha Mason must also disappear.

In various ways, Bertha Mason is the novel’s most tragic figure. Often read through the lenses of feminism, postcolonialism, or disability, she is also the novel’s monster who stands directly in the way of what narrator Jane wants. As Lamonaca points out, she is also Catholic, “with her Spanish Creole ancestry, her crucifix, and her images of saints” (*Masked Atheism* 20). While Jane is coded with low-church symbols, the assertion that Bertha Mason is Catholic further highlights their opposition. As a good Christian heroine, Jane cannot engage in bigamy or adultery. Rochester’s attempts to save Bertha, who dies jumping from the burning house after she has committed violence, gives him a redemptive moment of heroism while conveniently ridding the novel of the largest romantic obstacle. Bertha’s life story is deeply tragic, and in some ways, she acts as a Gothic double and figure that seems to lack an interior life. Bertha is denied the choices Jane has to be independent or form a healthy family; she is not even permitted to speak. Whether this is a product of Jane’s first-person narration or an indication of Brontë’s

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<sup>58</sup> The metaphor of the vampire used here is interesting given Bertha’s affliction and the way Rochester views her as vampiric and consuming.

own limitations, Bertha becomes the scapegoat whose necessary and troubling sacrifice paves the way for Jane and Rochester's reunion and redemption. Modern readers see the tragedy in this, but Jane seems not to. Her first-person narration can account somewhat for this, as the heroine would not likely have positive feelings toward a romantic rival who tried to kill her. However, Bertha becomes a character difficult to reconcile with the novel's Christian paradigm. Her sacrifice is far from Christlike. Brontë seems to use her as a tool or ingredient rather than a human being with dignity. Perhaps the best that can be said is that Bertha's death releases her from cruel imprisonment. Her removal ensures Jane and Rochester can both get what they want, as equals. Bertha Mason's mental illness and ancestry ensure she cannot exist on the same playing field.

The novel's final marriage becomes a site of choice, agency, and equality. Gilbert and Gubar contend that equality serves as the foundation of the relationship between Jane and Rochester. However, this equality exists only in name until Rochester's "secrets of inequality" come to light, including Rochester's "specific and 'guilty' sexual knowledge which makes him in some sense her 'superior,'" his imposed superiority after he obtains her consent to marry him, and his own marital past with Bertha, which notably "suggest[s] the master's inferiority rather than his superiority" (Gilbert and Gubar 354-5). In this feminist reading, Rochester must be brought down through physical punishment and Jane must be brought up through her newfound independence: Rochester "and Jane are now, in reality, equals, is the thesis of the Ferndean section" (Gilbert and Gubar 368). Their point is made in explicitly feminist terms; however, I contend that Jane and Rochester must become spiritual, religious equals as well. Only once both have reoriented themselves spiritually can their relationship flourish. Critiquing love as religious idolatry simultaneously becomes both a proto-feminist and religious concern.

For a marriage to truly work, the novel suggests it must be built on deep, moderate love that avoids the excesses of emotion. Initially, Jane accepts Rochester's proposal as she loves him deeply. However, with the revelation of Bertha Mason's existence, their relationship falls apart, not because Jane is afraid Rochester will treat her the same or because he has fallen in her eyes but because she realizes Rochester has supplanted her faith. Notably, Rochester himself made the very mistake that Jane later wishes not to make: as a young man, he married not for love but for money. This was obviously the wrong choice, as he and Bertha Mason are both miserable (although she bears the brunt of this misery). Marriage for money leads to punishment, including Jane's rejection. He says, "It would not be wicked to love me," but she knows "it would to obey you" (316). Jane knows how idolatrous, obsessive, and fanatical their relationship has become. Rochester asks Jane where he can find hope and a companion, and her advice is to "trust in God and yourself. Believe in heaven. Hope to meet again there," and "to live sinless" and "die tranquil" (316). Faith gives Jane an eternal, if not worldly, hope she wishes to share, and in refusing him, she chooses faith over love, rejecting its excesses and moving towards reserve. As Griesinger suggests, the novel features a protagonist developing a "growing awareness of the importance of faith and Christian belief in strengthening and empowering her as a woman" as well as an "ability to discern possible dangers, abuses, and misappropriations of Christian teachings and doctrines" (47). This focus in the novel is even more evident through Brontë's preface, where Brontë directly tells readers the novel is invested in critiquing Pharisees of all sorts (including the fanatical). She writes, "Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion" (3). Brontë reminds readers the two are "diametrically opposed," warning them against conflating them because "narrow human doctrines, that only tend to elate and magnify a few, should not be substituted for the world-redeeming creed of Christ" (3-4). By shaping

readers' expectations in the paratext, Brontë highlights the moral she wants readers to learn: this story is about improper religion, which she explores not only in characters like Brocklehurst and Eliza, but also in the way romantic love eclipses religious devotion for Jane, rendering her and Rochester's romance fanatic and improper *until* it is filtered through religion.

Jane is not the only one who idolizes her beloved. Rochester also takes a fanatical approach to Jane, whom he possessively sees as a "cure" for his misery (219). He sees reciprocal romantic love as potentially restorative, but he, like Jane, feels that unchecked love becomes painful (255). He attempts bigamy as love for Jane eclipses his knowledge that marrying her is both illegal and sinful, working to rationalize loving Jane as some sort of penance for his former crimes committed against Bertha, church laws, and God. He justifies himself by taking the place of God, which is fanatical as well as a common critique in the Gothic made toward those who self-authorize to claim they know and are God's will.<sup>59</sup> Loving Jane, for Rochester, is akin to fanaticism. It is also sexually driven, though narrator Jane seems to be naive to this. She nonetheless realizes she is his idol. She shares, "Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped: and I must renounce love and idol" (315). Excessive romantic love leads Rochester to justify bigamy, which he admits may have been thwarted due to divine intervention. He acknowledges, "I am little better than a devil at this moment; and, as my pastor there, would tell me, deserve no doubt the sternest judgments of God, – even to the quenchless fire and deathless worm" (291). Similarly, idolatrous love causes Jane to lose track of her own moral judgment and religious devotion. For both, excessive love becomes a tyrant to be overthrown. This love can, however, be moderated. The novel does not give Rochester the punishment he thinks he deserves. Instead, he receives

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<sup>59</sup> This is found in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and even Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.

grace tempered through a fall from pride, a time of separation, and a channeling of his romantic devotion into faith first, then Jane. Fanatic love can transform into something healthy, but it must be modulated by faith, for the both of them.

In addition to deepening their individual faiths, Jane and Rochester must negotiate between their own different religious orientations. Although he is not a Catholic, Catholicism inflects Rochester's discourse and outlook. Maria Lamonaca thinks Jane commits "'Catholic' idolatry in her sexual passion for Rochester," and while I agree that the rhetoric of Catholicism is certainly present in her descriptions of Rochester, Jane's final solution involves a mediation between Protestantism and Catholicism (*Masked Atheism* 18). Idolatry was connected to Catholicism; in this novel, then, as Jane's idol, Rochester engages and embodies Catholic imagery. This is evident first in his sense of humor. He compares Jane's former life to that of a "nun" and suggests the girls at Lowood "worshipped [Brocklehurst], as a convent full of religieuses would worship their director," and when Jane resists, he is surprised: "What! a novice not worship her priest! That sounds blasphemous" (123). His sarcastic teasing incorporates the language of Catholicism, and, to an extent he seems to view Evangelicalism and Catholicism as two brands of fanaticism in his suggestion that Catholic practices foster improper degrees of love and religious devotion. Catholic or not, Rochester is certainly far from devout. However, despite his anti-Catholic jokes, he exemplifies certain aspects of Brontë's version of Catholicism. For instance, he seems to adhere to a caricature of the Catholic model of penance, despite his irreverence. He tells Jane he raises Adèle on "the Roman Catholic principle of expiating numerous sins, great or small, by one good work" (140). This is perhaps said tongue-in-cheek; however, he does act as if he can do whatever he wants (keep a wife locked in an attic, play mean-spirited tricks on others, ask Jane to be his mistress, etc.) because he has done one good

thing. He thinks by raising Celine Varens' daughter he can be forgiven for his various sins, including his affair with Adèle's mother. This guardianship also contributes to atoning for his sin with Bertha, although the novel shows this method of managing former sins to be inadequate. Additionally, he seems to believe loving Jane has the potential to be another good work that atones for his previous marriage. Rochester's failure to succeed and be absolved through this channel could be a critique of Catholic absolution as Brontë understood it. This twisted form of Catholic-ish thinking could allow Rochester to self-justify his various harmful behaviors. In the narrative, Rochester must develop a personal relationship with God before he can be truly absolved and at peace, and although he does not attend masses or spend time in sacraments, he approaches some common Gothic anti-Catholic stereotypes.<sup>60</sup> As Thormählen notes, in Charlotte Brontë's work "Protestant Nonconformity as well as Roman Catholicism is attacked for its unhealthy enthusiasm, which runs counter to those rational forces that prevent unbridled emotion from luring unfortunate souls towards perdition" (*Brontës* 41). Rational religion is important to Jane and to Brontë, but Catholic tendencies are not the only ones linked to enthusiastic impulses.

Jane is critical of Catholicism, and she herself has some dissenting inclinations, especially with her diatribes against the concept of hell. Additionally, she describes herself as a "plain, Quakerish governess" (259). She is committed to excessive asceticism in her dress, work ethic, and approach to life. When she sees that Rochester has become an idol for her, she resists his sinful suggestion to become his mistress, viewing her flight from Thornfield as an action that violently excises sin from her life, declaring, "[Y]ou shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim; and you, the priest, to transfix it"

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<sup>60</sup> This could also be a criticism of antinomianism, which is a common culprit in Gothic discourse critiquing versions of Christian practice.

(297).<sup>61</sup> She handles their separation ascetically, likely due to her strict, plain upbringing as well as her own self-denying spiritual convictions. Her wandering in the wilderness is Christlike in some ways, like the Israelites in others, and fanatical in still others. Her harrowing journey shows Jane is unafraid of extreme circumstances, like many Dissenters, and her violence toward herself becomes a form of fanatical behavior. She eschews finery, unlike Rochester but like Quakers. Additionally, nineteenth-century Quakers tended to hold a “hostility to formulated creeds” (Tucker 168). Jane lacks formal hostility towards the church; however, she persistently defines herself and her relationships without formal creeds. Jane’s faith and approach to life are thus accented by Quakerism, perhaps as a reaction against both Brocklehurst’s Evangelicalism and Eliza’s Catholicism. She must eventually relinquish these tendencies, however, as they are isolating and austere. As Pearson points out, Charlotte Brontë had views that aligned with her Anglican clergyman father’s, and, like her siblings, “enjoyed mocking Dissenters” and the Oxford Movement (17). Thus, it seems unlikely that Jane is actually a Quaker or that Brontë is advocating for Quakerism or a low-style Protestant faith. However, if Jane’s faith and approach to life is too ascetic and Puritanical, and Rochester’s is too Catholic and lavish, their ultimate marriage could in some ways represent the ideal *via media*, not in a church but in a romantic relationship. Their relationship, mediated by time and a less fanatical approach to romance, could also represent a form of mediation between Puritanism and Catholicism.<sup>62</sup> The Anglican idea of the *via media* is woven into their relationship, and even in the structure of their romance, the pair must grow toward moderation.

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<sup>61</sup> She quotes Christ’s admonition in Matthew 5:29.

<sup>62</sup> Milbank argues that Brontë “seeks to discern modes of mediation through nature, whereby God speaks to us through the real, but not even in an immanent way” (268).

While apart, Jane and Rochester experience spiritual maturation. They must undergo transformations to be cleansed from fanatic love before they can reunite. Jane must learn to seek help from trustworthy religious individuals, overcoming her negative past experiences with Brocklehurst, Lowood, and Eliza. She must also sacrifice that which she holds most dear (her relationships with Adèle and Rochester). She must trust in God and God alone as she escapes Thornfield. Rochester, too, must be transformed as he moves from fanatical, selfish romance to selfless love. Rescuing people from the burning Thornfield maims and blinds him, as he puts others first. This trial leads him towards selfless love, which is not excessive, and in convalescence, he experiences a religious reawakening, learning to put faith in God, not in himself and his own strength. Upon Jane's return, he reveals he is no longer an "irreligious dog" but instead expresses penitent thankfulness to

the beneficent God of this earth just now. He sees not as man sees, but far clearer: judges not as man judges, but far more wisely. I did wrong: I would have sullied my innocent flower – breathed guilt on its purity: the Omnipotent snatched it from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation: instead of bending to the decree, I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me: I was forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. *His* chastisements are mighty; and one smote me which has humbled me for ever. ... Of late, Jane—only of late—I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom. I began to experience remorse, repentance; the wish for reconciliation to my Maker. I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere. (446)

Rochester's spiritual transformation makes him an acceptable, worthy partner for Jane. Later, when he begins to regain sight in one eye, "he again, with a full heart, acknowledged that God

had tempered judgment with mercy” (451). His conversion from Brontë’s depiction of a quasi-Catholic faith, structured with indulgences and atoning through penance, grows to a faith not Quakerish like Jane’s but complex, personal, and deep. Rochester has learned self-critique, humility, and to build a personal relationship with the Divine; he has repented of his selfishness. His journey has taught him to weave faith into his romance and to attribute the blessing of his relationship with Jane to God. Similarly, Jane must learn to be content in independence and resist the lives offered to her structured by fanatic devotion, whether that is to Evangelicalism in her youth, idolatrous love with Rochester, or dutiful missionary impulses with St. John.

Only after both walk through these journeys to rid themselves of idolatrous love does Brontë permit them to truly exist together in a marital heterosexual dyad. Their love, refracted through faith (rather than faith combating with love) is purified, and they become spiritual equals in a romantic *via media*. Jane’s love plays a significant role in converting Rochester, showing that although Brontë saw romance and faith both as components of an ideal marriage, faith and friendship alone do not suffice. Saying no is a locus of empowerment for Jane, who enters everything, including marriage and faith, on her own terms. The novel praises romantic love, provided it is second to true religious faith defined by Brontë as not Evangelical, not Catholic, but something else entirely. This true faith is neither ascetic nor fanatical; it is a genuine middle way. Jane’s repeated rejections of fanatical behavior, even in herself, enable her to overcome the various obstacles in her path, setting her apart from other Gothic heroines. Jane’s experiences rebelling against religious fanaticism throughout her life prepare her to identify romantic idolatry and reject its power through her faith.

## *Wuthering Heights*

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* similarly highlights the disastrous consequences of excessive love. As in *Jane Eyre*, idolatrous love and fanatic religion feature centrally; however, Emily's novel works not to reify proper religion but to caution against the fanatic yet tempting pursuit of revenge as its ephemeral empowerment quells an ability to practice Christian virtues. Joseph is easily identifiable as a religious fanatic. Heathcliff and Catherine also feature fanatical tendencies in their approach to romance. As in *Jane Eyre*, minor characters who are easily labeled as religious fanatics help us categorize major characters who also demonstrate fanatical tendencies in their approach to romantic love rather than religious faith.

Emily Brontë's own religious stance is somewhat difficult to define, despite her clear engagement with religion and Christianity in her work. Unlike her sister, she does not seem to take Anglicanism as a norm, nor do her criticisms seem directed at reforming Christian institutional practice. Her engagement with pantheism and nature in *Wuthering Heights* further complicates certainty surrounding her religious perspective. Her narrators do not become mouthpieces for her religious beliefs; their unreliability adds an additional layer to the puzzle. Some readers view the book as completely irreligious; however, Thormählen suggests that all books written by the Brontë sisters "confirm fundamental Christian tenets" even though Emily resisted organized religion (*Brontës* 6). Simon Marsden resists readings of *Wuthering Heights* with what he calls a "caricatured view of Emily as 'mystic of the moors'" and places her theology instead alongside English and German Romanticism, using Schleiermacher to argue Emily found "a theology of feeling that privileged the individual consciousness above doctrinal or biblical theology" ("Vain" 237, 241-2). Both mainstream Romanticism and *Wuthering Heights*, as Marsden points out, highlight "the personal, intuitive relationship with the divine"

(“Vain” 248). Reading Emily Brontë as a Protestant influenced by Romanticism helps explain the novel’s resistance to a clear institutional answer to its problems.

Even the novel’s setting is noteworthy as many of the events in *Wuthering Heights* occur during a specific moment in the changing landscape of religious history: the breach between Methodism and Anglicanism. In Yorkshire around the turn of the century, Methodism grew significantly while the Anglican Church was “unable to maintain its monopoly position as provider of religious services to the community” (Royle 138). Although the Methodist church was initially intended to supplement the Church of England’s worship and sacramental practices, it split off from Anglicanism in 1795 (Rack 189). Henry Rack writes that Methodism often reached “those neglected, alienated or uninspired by conventional religion,” providing “faith, fellowship and scope for their frustrated talents such as few other religious groups of the time provided” (193). Methodism’s strength, its emphasis on emotion and the individual, became a low-level threat to the Church of England’s hegemony (Royle 140). Methodism had the ability to “appeal across a wide spectrum of communities” and especially to rural, marginalized, or poorer individuals (Royle 147). Though not a Methodist, Emily and Charlotte’s father Patrick Brontë followed William Grimshaw, a prominent early Methodist with a reputation for “aggressive evangelism,” and he worked “in a town that had been at the heart of the eighteenth-century Evangelical revival in which Grimshaw played a crucial role” (Marsden “Vain” 239). Brontë’s style of ministry was starkly different from Grimshaw’s, but both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* were written by women who grew up immersed in rich religious history.

Emily’s choice to set *Wuthering Heights* around the time Methodism split from the Church of England lodges its theological concerns within contemporary caricatures of Methodists as fanatics or “enthusiasts.” Knight and Mason argue Emily used Enthusiasm as “a

model for the fervent feeling” in *Wuthering Heights*, which was natural given that the Brontës grew up “surrounded by Methodist history” (35). Emma Mason notes that Emily Brontë’s poetry, in addition to *Wuthering Heights*, demonstrates “religious enthusiasm, a wild and burning form of poetic and religious feeling excited by a personal and heightened interaction with God” (263). Enthusiasm, often linked with Methodism (especially at the time period of *Wuthering Heights*), undergirds the book and the way Emily depicts both romantic and religious forms of fanaticism. Although she criticizes aspects of Methodism, she does so, as Simon Marsden writes, “based on detailed knowledge of Wesley’s writings,” demonstrating “affinities with as well as ambivalence towards Wesleyan Methodism” (*Emily* 15). Ideas about subversive Methodism and fanaticism thus pervade Emily’s novel.

Emily was not herself a Methodist, and she generally resisted organized religion. Brontë was familiar with other timely religious concerns and debates as well, including those surrounding Calvinism. Thormählen believes she uses Joseph to satirize Calvinism (*Brontës* 82), and O’Malley suggests that *Wuthering Heights*, like other Gothic concerned with Protestant threats, uses Catholic Gothic tropes to portray Calvinism as threatening (25). Generally, Brontë values Christian theology but bristles at orthodox ecclesiology. Thormählen contends that “Emily Brontë never appears to have acknowledged, or even contemplated, the existence of any spiritual authority outside her own consciousness” (*Brontës* 73). Marsden advocates for reading Emily Brontë’s faith through the lens of heresy, rather than apostasy, as her work is radical and different but does not leave the Christian paradigm altogether (*Emily* 20). As he writes, “even the most benign versions of institutional Christianity represented in Brontë’s works are associated with a failure of the imaginative vision and with the withdrawal from nature and from beauty” (Marsden *Emily* 57). Self-definition was critical to her belief, which is perhaps why she

ultimately rejects Methodism despite sympathies with enthusiasm and pantheist tendencies in her novel's characters. This theme of self-definition features not only in her novel but also in her poetry, particularly "No Coward Soul is Mine." Therein, the speaker refers to a "God within my breast" and compares her version of faith to the cowardly adherence to the "thousand creeds / That move men's hearts" in vain. Marsden believes this poem, composed the year before *Wuthering Heights* was published, "finds the solution to sectarian division not in a reconciliation of the denominations but in religious experience located outside the institution of church" ("Vain" 239-40). It seems institutional religion becomes dangerous for Brontë because it does not allow room for the individual, supporting groupthink and conformity instead.

Emily Brontë tends to take differing stances on institutionalized religious practice, personal faith, and Christian virtue. To be sure, none of her characters "can be read as a mouthpiece for Emily Brontë's own theology or philosophy" (O'Neill 368). While many critics read *Wuthering Heights* as lacking a moral point, Thormählen argues it ultimately upholds the Christian virtues of loving-kindness and forgiveness ("Christian Ethics" 645). Charlotte Brontë wrote that Emily believed "mercy and forgiveness are the divinest attributes of the Great Being who made both man and woman" (qtd. in Thormählen *Brontës* 142). This conviction is consistent with a variety of religious stances, potentially including a pantheism that sees God manifesting in all individuals. For Emily Brontë, Anglicanism seems a repressive form of organized religion, but generally accepted tenets of Christianity like selfless love and forgiveness are worthy pursuits.<sup>63</sup> As in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* shows that religious and romantic forms of fanaticism become problematic. While Charlotte seems to think romantic idolatry

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<sup>63</sup> In an 1842 essay called "Filial Love," Emily Brontë writes that parental love is completely natural; love for one's parents is also natural but is abominable and punishable when not acted upon. Love, then, is both a product of feeling *and* action.

interferes with proper religion, Emily seems to think romantic fanaticism is harmful because it leads to revenge and selfish forms of love. In addition to religion, of course, this novel centers around romantic love, revenge, and what happens when socioeconomic matters are prioritized over human beings. Fanaticism itself becomes a strange means of power that, though ultimately destructive, temporarily enables Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella, and Joseph to overcome hegemonic power structures. Fanaticism alluringly and briefly empowers outsiders, but it inevitably fails. Continually, those who engage in fanaticism cannot properly or selflessly love or forgive others. Emily Brontë's novel thus provides fertile ground for an exploration of the boundaries romance – and religion – require. Brontë both flirts with and is appalled by fanaticism's power, which she seems to think can be kept in check through the practice of Christian virtues exemplified in the novel's second generation.

As in *Jane Eyre*, where explicitly religious fanatics are directly condemned, Emily Brontë's narrators Lockwood and Nelly overtly denounce Joseph as a judgmental, brash religious fanatic. Graeme Tytler writes that he is “a hard-line Dissenter given to prayer and Bible-reading, to invoking the Deity, even while rebuking someone for their untoward talk or behaviour, and to a puritanical repudiation of all forms of secular recreation” (190). Judith Stuchiner reads Joseph as a Methodist, rendering the service Lockwood attends in his dream a Methodist one (66-67). Joseph appears in Lockwood's nightmare about a fanatic preacher with a 490-part sermon about “odd transgressions that I never imagined previously” (Brontë 23). In his dream, Lockwood calls the congregation to make him stop; instead, the preacher Jabez directs the congregation to “execute upon [Lockwood] the judgment written” and attack him (24). His fanatic assailants include Joseph, who is persistently condemned in the novel for his hypocrisy.

Various critics have also identified “anti-Methodist satire” in Lockwood’s dream as it parodies what a Methodist service might look like to an outsider (Thormählen *Brontës* 17).

As a Gothicized fanatic, Joseph reveals both the use of the discourse of fanaticism to discredit outsiders and the potential of the phenomenon to be a problematic sustaining and empowering force. He lacks formal education and comes from a different social class than the novel’s main characters (although he is from a situation similar to Nelly, who controls much of the narrative about him). He sees Catherine the elder as wicked, and her joking suggestion that she has learned dark arts sincerely scares him (Brontë 15). Joseph complains to Hindley that Cathy rips off the back of “The Helmet of Salvation” and that Heathcliff kicked “The Broad Way to Destruction,” desecrating religious pamphlets he values (21). Nelly says Joseph “was, and is yet, most likely, the wearisomest, self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself, and fling the curses on his neighbours” (42). He thus uses fanatic religion as a form of control over others by centering himself as righteous and powerful and others as sinful and beneath him. Joseph’s social status leaves him less powerful, but fanatical religion becomes a means for him to wield power, not only over the children upon whom he imposes his creeds but also over Mr. Earnshaw. Joseph shares a fanatic obsession with the afterlife with the likes of Brocklehurst and St. John Rivers, and he encourages Mr. Earnshaw to be ever more concerned about his eternal soul. As Mr. Earnshaw grows sicker, “the more influence [Joseph] gained,” and the discourse of religion gives Joseph power even over the man he works for (42). Joseph inspires part of Mr. Earnshaw’s later strictness and triggers further rebellion in Heathcliff and Catherine. Although Tytler argues that Joseph is more than the cantankerous fanatic readers often remember him as, he is nonetheless deeply hypocritical. During the thunderstorm, Joseph overreacts, praying God will “spare the righteous, though he smote the ungodly,” and Nelly feels

this is “a judgment on us also” (85). Since Lockwood and Nelly’s descriptions of Joseph’s fanaticism are suspect, it is possible, Tytler suggests, to see worthy qualities in Joseph. Yet Nelly’s judgment seems to be shared by other characters in the novel. They all employ the discourse of fanaticism to describe – and discredit – Joseph. As a narrator who also disapproves of the excessive romantic love in the story, Nelly reminds us that moderation is indispensable in religious practice as well as romantic devotion. Further, the discourse of fanaticism gives Nelly power in front of Lockwood to control the narrative. She condemns Joseph for his fanaticism just as she condemns Heathcliff and Catherine for their romantic obsessions.

Catherine Earnshaw cannot learn to distinguish between healthy degrees of love and excess. She lacks Jane’s religious devotion and chooses to marry based on power. Whereas Jane sought equal power structures in her marriage, Catherine seeks economic as well as romantic power over others.<sup>64</sup> Like Rochester, who married for money, she (and everyone else in the novel) is punished for her choice to marry Edgar Linton for social and economic reasons (and a modicum of love) instead of Heathcliff, with whom she shares an idolatrous, obsessive, and Gothic romance. She openly states that she has “no more business to marry Edgar Linton than ... to be in heaven” (81). As an option, for all intents and purposes he is the better choice: he offers her a title, money, a name, a good family. Further, Edgar is not a romantic fanatic, and his love is not obsessive. Even after Catherine’s death, he reacts with faith; Nelly observes in mourning he “displayed the true courage of a loyal and faithful soul: he trusted God; and God comforted him” (185). Catherine convinces herself she loves Edgar Linton, but she is fully aware her “love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods,” changeable and impermanent (82). Carol Davison suggests the novel highlights the “tremendous personal costs of a marital marketplace where

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<sup>64</sup> Gilbert and Gubar complicate her choice, arguing that “morality only becomes a relevant term where there are meaningful choices,” and “Catherine has no meaningful choices” (277).

economics trump matters of the heart” (131). As Gilbert and Gubar point out, Catherine has been conditioned to believe she must marry Edgar as Heathcliff’s social status would be degrading (277). Further, Catherine enjoys wielding power over both men, erroneously thinking she can have both and eventually learning this form of power is fleeting. Consequently, she abuses those around her and is herself tortured by the outcomes of her marriage, both during her life and as a ghost in her afterlife. The novel is laced with the theme of apostasy: misordered love leads characters to forsake God and religion for revenge and romance. Love thus becomes tyrannous and Gothic again. Emily Brontë shows that a non-love match is not just less than ideal: marriage itself becomes a trap without a foundation in love. Paradoxically, excessive romantic love, fulfilled or not, can also become idolatrous, torturous, and anything but good.

The relationship Catherine and Heathcliff share is certainly Gothic in its ghastly afterlife and in its toxic power structures; I contend it is also fanatical. Brontë employs Gothic fanaticism to describe their relationship, both before and after Catherine’s death, as the use of its discourses help explore the potential, limitations, and boundaries of religion and romantic love. The novel’s central romance is problematic in a different vein from Jane and Rochester’s. Whereas their idolatrous love could be overcome, the love between Catherine and Heathcliff is obsessive, fanatical in pursuit of the other and of revenge, and imbued with concerns about power, both within and outside of their relationship. Catherine, who makes the choice that condemns them all, embodies few stereotypical Gothic heroine traits: she, like Heathcliff, is incredibly selfish, rebellious, moody, and power-hungry, perhaps better conceptualized as a female Byronic hero. She openly admits she would be “extremely miserable” in heaven and eschews religious virtues (80). She shares a spiritual connection with Heathcliff as well as a romantic one that goes beyond anything she shares with Edgar. Catherine takes a fanatical approach to life (and death). She

hates organized religion, writing as a child over the pages of a religious book, supplanting words of faith with her own story about rebellion and friendship with Heathcliff. Her diary complains that Joseph forced her and Heathcliff to attend a church service he led in the attic, which “lasted precisely three hours” (21). Religion is used as punishment for the pair, and it does nothing to regulate or tame their naughty behavior (48-9). As an adult, she continues to have a “passionate temper, verging, when kindled, on frenzy” (117). Notably, this is similar to discursive descriptions of early Methodists as enthusiasts, which would have been timely given the novel’s late eighteenth-century setting (Mee 14-16). At the time, “enthusiasm” referred to “false or pretended divine inspiration,” “excessive religious emotion or fervour, mystical, fanatical, or radical religious delusion,” or even “a state of frenzy attributed to divine inspiration or demonic possession” (“Enthusiasm, n.”). These definitions fit Catherine and Heathcliff alike, if one replaces the religious source of passion with their romantic affair. Mason argues that Emily Brontë employed “enthusiasm as a device through which she could validate her rendering of passion in a literary society that deemed the power of her work masculine, unnatural, and strange,” suggesting Brontë critiques “Christianity through such enthusiasm by ultimately painting its fervor in her poetry as a crushing and dangerous force by which she herself seems at times overwhelmed” (264). In her novel, she also shows the dangers of excessive enthusiasm, whether it is aimed at religion, as with Joseph, or at the beloved, as with Catherine and Heathcliff. Enthusiasm is powerful and thus tempting, but it is also dangerous. Catherine internalizes Joseph’s fanatic approach, adapting it toward an object other than religion. She idolizes Heathcliff, her own will, and her own pride.

Catherine’s obsession with Heathcliff begins in childhood, when Nelly points out that “[t]he greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him: yet, she

got chided more than any of us on his account” (42). Being scolded and defying others delight her. Nelly notes that even as a child Catherine’s “pretended insolence ... had more power over Heathcliff than [her father’s] kindness ... the boy would do *her* bidding in anything, and *his* only when it suited his own inclination” (43). Heathcliff responds to Catherine’s impudence and selfishness, even as a child. Perhaps this contributes to Catherine’s development into a self-centered woman willing to harm herself to hurt others, shifting her from Gothic heroine to Gothic tyrant. To punish Edgar for banishing Heathcliff, she makes herself ill, and the doctor cautions those present from correcting her, noting that from her perspective, “it was nothing less than murder ... for any one to presume to stand up and contradict her” (89). This inability to be contradicted or challenged in any way is a fundamental trait of fanaticism (Calhoun). At the challenges of her husband and Heathcliff, Catherine decides to “try to break their hearts by breaking [her] own,” as she feels “pushed to extremity” (116). Extreme emotions lead her to extreme and vengeful fanatic action. Her willingness to resort to physical and emotional violence against herself and others for the cause renders her fanatical.

Interestingly, Catherine claims to feel restored to some sort of faith after seeing Heathcliff again, showing how idolatrous love can be imbricated with religion. She feels Heathcliff’s return “has reconciled me to God, and humanity!” (100). This reconciliation, of course, does not remain peaceful; however, Catherine’s expressions demonstrate her religious orientation towards her beloved. She blurs God and Heathcliff because she worships only herself and Heathcliff with an unhealthy, fanatic passion. This modicum of reconciliation does not slow her “starvation-induced suicide” that Pearce suggests is a direct result of her narcissism being attacked: “With Heathcliff lost a second time, Catherine’s ego is rocked to its core, and all her disappointment is turned self-destructively upon herself” (101). Pearce reads Catherine as a

“narcissist who - threatened with the loss of power – projects her fear of perceived hostility onto others” (95). Catherine accuses Heathcliff and Edgar together of breaking her heart. It may be the loss of the power she has wielded over these men that truly prompts her demise rather than actual heartache, as she sees love as passion and control. Her unending selfishness leads Heathcliff to think she must be possessed. She promises not to “be at peace,” wishing them “never to be parted” and implying she will return as a ghost (161). Nelly tries to part their embrace; Heathcliff responds “like a mad dog,” a nonhuman creature (162). All the while, he blames Catherine and speaks the language of love to her with a passionate fervor: “[N]othing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart – *you* have broken it – and in breaking it, you have broken mine” (162-3). He hates her for killing herself, and he notes she is the only one who has the power to truly punish him. Gothic romantic love can be tyrannous, but Catherine herself also becomes a cruel tyrant who finds subversive, though ultimately damaging, power through fanaticism.

Heathcliff’s religion is by no means orthodox. His obsessive nature fuels not a conventional approach to faith but a fixation upon Catherine, whom he views as “immeasurably superior to [the Lintons] – to everybody on earth” (51). As a child, he marks the days Catherine chooses to spend time with him against the Lintons (70). As an adult, he also becomes obsessed with revenge, another idol for him (61). He does not agree with Nelly that vengeance belongs to God. Like Catherine, Heathcliff is painted monstrously, regularly described in the language of the demonic. Nelly sees him as satanic, “an evil beast prowl[ing] between it and the fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy” (107). His presence, according to Linton, is “a moral poison that would contaminate the most virtuous” (114). Isabella wonders if she has married “a devil” whom she calls a “lying fiend, a monster, and not a human being” (136, 150-1). His own actions do not

rebut these accusations: he violently banishes a curate from *Wuthering Heights*, skips church, and teaches Hareton swear words and to call him “Devil daddy” (109-110). He positions himself as a religious antagonist in choosing this appellation. Although he is spiritual, he is clearly not Christian and certainly not Anglican; Alison Milbank suggests he and Catherine “believe in a religion of nature, finding their heaven in the physical world and in each other” (251). Their quasi-pantheist faith is a product of their upbringing: the village believes Mr. Earnshaw raised his children “in absolute heathenism” (Brontë 50). They grow to see deity in themselves, nature, and little else. Their belief leaves them “in limbo,” and Milbank writes, “[w]ere the pantheist vision of natural supernaturalism effectual, they should be one with nature, not in some sort of liminal state,” and the novel’s close “renders problematic any positive naturalizing interpretation” (253). As a moral alternative, pantheism also fails Catherine and Heathcliff as locating God in each other, themselves, and nature leaves them little care for other human beings. It is possible this is because Catherine and Heathcliff simply are not very good pantheists, and it is unclear whether or not Emily Brontë views pantheism as a viable religious alternative to Christianity. Perhaps Marsden’s suggestion of reading Emily as a Christian within the Romanticist tradition is again useful. In *Wuthering Heights* pantheism may not deter romantic love, but neither does it facilitate moral love for anyone.

Fanaticism fuels Heathcliff since he has little outside support. Throughout his life, fanatic pursuits of revenge enable him to rise above his inferior social status, racial difference, and low class. Reginald Watson observes that his difference from the other characters becomes “the impetus for his evil persona and behavior” (454). His lack of parentage and social status contribute to his outsider status; additionally, he could be a child of dark-skinned gypsies, and it

is possible to read him as biracial or black.<sup>65</sup> He is, as Elsie Michie points out, “described as a heathen, a lascar, a gypsy and an Indian or Chinese prince” (129). Watson reads Heathcliff as fitting into the tradition of the tragic mulatto. Regardless of his actual race, Heathcliff does not belong in Yorkshire, where only Catherine accepts him. As an outsider, his fanatic attitude bolsters him against childhood abuses from Hindley and Joseph; it eventually helps him take revenge upon Hindley as well as Linton and enables him to keep going after Catherine dies. He was fanatical in his approach to love; he is more fanatical in his obsessive approach to revenge. His pursuit of vengeance punishes all who remain, even to future generations. Catherine reminds him that it is “for God to punish wicked people,” and he responds by telling her that “God won’t have the satisfaction that I shall” (51). Heathcliff places himself above deity, yet the language describing him is oddly religious. In response to Catherine’s death, he begins to pray “like a Methodist; only the deity he implored is senseless dust and ashes; and God, when addressed, was curiously confounded with his own black father” (175). Knight and Mason suggest Brontë’s employment of the rhetoric used to describe Methodist conversion experiences might be part of her “attack on Methodism, which for her was the same as all forms of organized religion: stultifying and repressive” (35). Brontë finds the discourse of enthusiasm a useful vehicle to describe Heathcliff’s excessive passion, which, unchecked, comes to destroy individuals. Before he dies, he shows no fear; his last rites are not confessions meant to atone (325). He dies as he lived: fanatically. Catherine wins, as life after her death effectively punishes Heathcliff and Edgar. The ultimate Gothic tyrant, excessive love, consumes them all. Heathcliff sells his soul to the pursuit of wealth and revenge to compete with Linton and punish Hindley. His fanatical

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<sup>65</sup> Andrea Arnold’s 2011 film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* stars black actor James Howson as Heathcliff.

approach to vengeance empowers him to rise above his social status and lack of family.

Fanaticism becomes a means of power for those characters whose social power is limited.

Despite Catherine's selfish cruelty, Heathcliff places her on a pedestal. He believes that "for every thought [Catherine] spends on Linton, she spends a thousand on me!" (148). Knowing she returns his sentiment motivates his intense, excessive quest for vengeance. He predicts, and later feels, that "existence, after losing her, would be hell" (148). Heathcliff describes his love as all-consuming, undying, and superior. He claims Edgar "couldn't love as much in eighty years, as I could in a day ... It is not in him to be loved like me" (148). Heathcliff's fanatical romantic devotion and convoluted pantheist tendencies fail him as they lead to a lack of mercy. Without love, Heathcliff is cruel and abusive. No one experiences this more than Isabella, upon whom he takes out his aggression towards Edgar Linton as the siblings are similar in appearance. His vicarious abuse is only part of his fanatic quest for vengeance. Catherine's control over Heathcliff persists even after her death. Nelly contrasts Edgar's faith with Heathcliff's response, which is to cease all church attendance and pray that Catherine's soul will haunt him. Nelly observes, "Well might Catherine deem that Heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless, with her mortal body, she cast away her mortal character also" (160). Heathcliff wonders if in death Catherine is "possessed with a devil" (161). Their relationship is unfulfilled, torturous, and peaceless; it comes to embody the Gothic in its dark, tyrannous form, enhanced by potentially supernatural elements. Unlike Radcliffe and Walpole's heroines, this English heroine freely chooses a toxic, dangerous love. Even in death, Catherine refuses to "be at peace" because of a refusal to part from Heathcliff (161). Both Catherine and their relationship are irreligious, and their romantic fanaticism morphs into something worse. The brief power fanaticism can give a person can quickly mutate into a draining pursuit of vengeance.

Isabella can also be interpreted through the lens of fanaticism, as she, too, experiences idolatrous love and its consequences. She does not seem particularly inclined towards religious faith, but she initially expresses kindness, a Christian virtue. However, despite her brother's threats and clear evidence Heathcliff does not love her, her unrequited excessive affection for him leads Isabella to make a horrible marital decision, like Catherine. Her obsession with Heathcliff blinds her, and Heathcliff's lust for revenge compels him to use her to harm both Catherine and Edgar. Their union leads to abuse, misery, a sickly child, and her own premature death. Isabella's love for Heathcliff can best be described as stupid or immature infatuation rather than fanaticism; however, once the scales fall from her eyes, she, like Catherine and Heathcliff, becomes truly fanatical in a lust for vengeance that clouds all mercy, forgiveness, and Christian impulse. After Catherine's death, she expresses to Nelly a satisfaction in Heathcliff's misery, feeling "gratified: and ignoble as it seems to insult a fallen enemy, I couldn't miss this chance of sticking in a dart; his weakness was the only time when I could taste the delight of paying wrong for wrong" (181). Isabella has transformed into a vindictive woman like Catherine, wishing Heathcliff could suffer "*less*, if I might cause his sufferings, and he might know that I was the cause ... On only one condition can I hope to forgive him. It is, if I may take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, for every wrench of agony, return a wrench, reduce him to my level" (181). Gothic, fanatical love becomes obsessive and vengeful for all of the characters who experience it. Disappointed romantic fanaticism tyrannizes Isabella into an obsession with revenge. Fanaticism provides a fuel that, for a time, can sustain her in an abusive marriage. Excessive emotion and the potential for vengeance allows her to feel powerful against a relationship that has humiliated and harmed her. Fanaticism then provides her a weak form of internal power. Initially it seems that her son, Linton, as well as Hareton and young Cathy, will

follow in their parents' footsteps, choosing revenge and the fanatical pursuit of power over healthy relationships and growth.

The second generation learns moderation and forgiveness, which suggests a belief that Christian virtues are more important than any specific religious creed. These virtues can be seen as truly empowering in that they cultivate healthy, non-fanatic relationships. Young Cathy has her mother's "capacity for intense attachments," but "her anger was never furious; her love never fierce; it was deep and tender" (189). She expresses fanatical tendencies in her initial love for Linton, despite his "bad nature," as she has a "better" one that can "forgive" (288). She sees that love has the potential to be healing rather than destructive, and it becomes clear that it is possible for the second generation to grow, although they must develop those abilities to forgive, which are not innate. The episodes that end in her entrapment make her miserable, and fanatic love's consequences yet again harm all parties involved. She hates Heathcliff and delights in his misery, telling him "*Nobody* loves you - *nobody* will cry for you, when you die!", as she is tempted to "draw pleasure from the griefs of her enemies" (288). At first it seems Cathy, Linton, and Hareton will simply repeat the cycle of vengeance. However, by the end of the narrative, the second generation appears to learn from the sins of the parents. Their ability to forgive leads to healing and healthy love. As Thormählen writes, in the novel "any kind of happiness is predicated on the ability to forgive" ("Christian Ethics" 645). Linton passes away, and Cathy and Hareton reconcile and begin to atone for their parents' sins. Cathy apologizes and thanks him, asking for his forgiveness. She teaches him to read, and they eventually fall into a healthy, non-fanatic love.<sup>66</sup> Joseph disapproves as he clearly has not learned his lesson (315). But the children

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<sup>66</sup> Even their mutual reading reinforces the idea that forgiving community heals. Mark Knight suggests in his reading of Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* that "community discovers truth together" through the practice of communal reading, shaped by the same Evangelical forces the novel criticizes (135). Similarly, through reading together, Cathy and Hareton can come to truth as well as healing in a more equitable, forgiving space.

have, entering into a relationship that centers not on revenge, obsession, or socioeconomic advancement. After hearing the whole story, Lockwood may learn from the saga as well. They have discovered that healthy love empowers them in a way that sustains them, and by relinquishing fanaticism and revenge, they find a measure of peace.

*Wuthering Heights* features two kinds of fanaticism: romantic obsession, epitomized in the various romantic entanglements, and religious fanaticism. The two mirror each other and are equally condemned as they feed selfishness and the pursuit of vengeance. Whereas *Jane Eyre*'s heroine meets reward after her trials, Emily Brontë's story shows characters who bring trials upon themselves, resulting in death, loss, and grief. These trials, however, remain the result of excessive love. While Jane rejects excesses (and deficits) of romantic love, Catherine and Heathcliff's fanatical obsession that borders on incest becomes a masochistic indulgence and the source of misery, the tyrant they cannot overthrow. Romantic idolatry is also interwoven with power. The individuals with true hegemonic social power, Edgar Linton and Lockwood, are not depicted as fanatics, while the novel's primary fanatics are marked with a degree of gendered or class-based difference. Through fanaticism, Catherine can attempt to overcome her limited choices in life through power over two men. Heathcliff's excessive enthusiasm, poured into love as well as revenge, helps him gain power in society and overcome his low social status and potential racial difference. Fanatic obsession for revenge enables Isabella to survive in a toxic marriage for a time. For Joseph, fanaticism becomes a counterfeit currency that empowers him over the entire household, including Mr. Earnshaw. In enthusiasm characters find a tempting illusion that, when pursued, has the potential to harm them and others; those who choose it find that it is ultimately destructive despite its temporary pleasures. Fanaticism, in *Wuthering Heights*, can be read as an attempt at power by those who have no other vehicles for power. The

discourse of Gothic fanaticism in this novel underlines the potential for the nonreligious to become dangerously religious, as romantic partners and vengeance become objects of worship eventually revealed to be harmful, self-centered idols.

### ***Tess of the d'Urbervilles***

Thomas Hardy also repeatedly explores the dangers of excessive religion. Despite holding very different faith convictions than the Brontë sisters and writing decades after them, his similar use of Gothic fanaticism heightens his criticism of negative societal structures. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), like earlier Gothic romance, condemns religious fanaticism alongside a depiction of the consequences of romantic idolatry. Although the novel is not as obviously Gothic as the others, it uses Gothicized shapes in its rendering of religion and of romance. Timothy Hands writes that, prior to Hardy's well-known loss of faith, he was attracted to both Evangelicalism and High Church Anglicanism (28). Jan Jędrzejewski suggests Hardy's church attendance could have been "a matter of spiritual need or rather of long-established habit," as music and taste seemed to have played large roles in his church attendance (13). Notably, Hardy published novels only after parting with faith in 1865, complicating his use of religion in fiction. Like many Victorians, Hardy responded to Higher Criticism and *On the Origin of Species* by turning away from traditional belief (Hands 32). Hardy could, according to Hands, be best described as a true agnostic, as "where there were no limits to his possible beliefs, there were equally no limits to his doubts" (36). By 1885, Jędrzejewski writes, Hardy's "response to the Christian religion was that of constant uncertainty, doubt, and questioning" (26). Like George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, Hardy believed religion could be morally and socially useful, whether it was based in metaphysical reality or not (Hands 85, Jędrzejewski 28). However, his novels often sharply criticize Christianity for its failures. Hardy condemns fanatic religion in

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, defending Tess and rationalizing a need for agnosticism in a world where fanatic devotion, whether to deity, creed, or romantic partner, inevitably grows harmful.

Hardy's work shows significant influence from and interest in Christianity and the purpose of religion. As various critics have observed, Hardy incisively critiques Christianity in *Tess*. Hardy's subtitle, "A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented," defends Tess, in contrast to the novel's fanatics who judge, neglect and abuse her. The book indicts sexist, classist structures that coalesce in religion and victimize women like Tess. She has no one to save her from Alec's fanatic abuse, her own blind devotion to Angel Clare, or societal adherence to strict sexual codes that use the language of religious belief to control women. Hardy asks how much less barbaric Victorians are than pagans, as they, despite professing ostensibly Christian values, overlook rape, forgive seducers but not the seduced, and refuse even to baptize and bury an infant. Jędrzejewski believes that *Tess* highlights "the failure, on the part of the Church and its priests, to understand that the essence of the Christian religion lies in its spirit of compassion and forgiveness rather than in the literal, rigid interpretation of its moral precepts" (203). This is similar to *Wuthering Heights* in that Hardy shows the consequences of lacking these virtues; however, while Brontë seems to see some good in Christian faith (if not in institutionalized religious practice), Hardy criticizes all kinds of religious beliefs and practices, suggesting that agnosticism, which resists moral clarity, may enable individuals to see and diagnose problems with organized religion as agnosticism has no institution, no dogma, and no creeds. Thus, it is free in a way fanatics are not. For Hardy, agnosticism could serve as a potential, albeit weak, antidote to fanaticism.

The novel's Christianity consists of rules rather than virtues. God and all the gods appear to have forsaken Tess. Knight and Mason write, "Hardy depicts Tess as a tragic heroine, prone to sin and incapable of resisting the dark hand of providence" (143). Not only is Hardy critical of

religious institutions, but he also questions the idea of a benevolent God, even a pantheistic one, as neither church nor deity truly protects Tess. Perkin reads the novel as “something of a heretic gospel, a negative version of a biblical narrative that represents the failure of Christian charity and ends with Tess waiting for her death on a stone altar, like a pagan sacrificial victim” (181). Undoubtedly, the novel interweaves ideas contrasting organic pagan religion with Christianity’s artifice and constructedness. Hands writes that “Tess gives Christian expression to what are essentially pre-Christian concepts” (68). Yet, pantheism also seems a limited alternative because Nature also fails Tess. Alec rapes her beneath “primeval yews and oaks” that, like the nearby “gentle roosting birds” and “hopping rabbits and hares,” do not intervene (57). Nature has little power to protect humans, and although it does not exclude Tess like hypocritical Christians, it provides no safe refuge. Neither Nature, God, nor Angel Clare will protect Tess, and throughout, “Hardy represents orthodox Christianity ... as at best irrelevant and at worst a malevolent force” (Perkin 177). Tess is fated to tragedy in this world where fanatic devotion impedes critical thinking, empowers the wrong people, and hinders Christian virtues like forgiveness and charity.

Like the Brontës, Hardy openly condemns religious fanaticism in characters such as Alec d’Urberville, Mr. Clare, and the painter. He depicts fanaticism as an obstacle to true critical thinking, one that victimizes women like Tess. These fanatics’ hypocrisy supports his case for doubt. Agnosticism, by its core definition, is perhaps safe from the dangers of fanaticism, and for Hardy, this may be as good an answer as any as it is virtually impossible to become a militant or fanatic agnostic. This does not necessarily mean free will exists, especially in the novel where Hardy’s determinism seems to ensure Tess’s fated demise. This unnamed power of fate dooms her. Hardy’s determinism contrasts with his naturalism, which suggests that fate is both unchangeable and indifferent. The two come to play an almost tyrannous role, similar to that

played by religious institutions. Therein, Hardy's work begins to incorporate Gothic elements into the realist tradition, including the aforementioned tyranny of religion (and individuals like Alec), isolation, and dark romantic love. As a Gothic heroine, the naïve Tess is trapped and at the mercy of men who continually sin against her. Whereas Jane Eyre plays the role of heroine in a bildungsroman, Tess is tragically cast as the heroine of an anti-bildungsroman, as the novel chronicles her destruction. Her Gothic romantic affections for Angel become idolatrous and fanatical. Once again, the discourses of romance and religion overlap, heightening a focus on and critique of fanaticisms of many kinds.

The first true religious fanatic readers encounter in *Tess* is a fence painter who spends his Sabbath days not in Biblically prescribed rest but in graffitiding ominous, judgmental passages for the world to see. He seems like an Evangelical, coded with hypocrisy and a focus on glory and eternal damnation. As Tess encounters him on the road home, directly after Alec rapes her, his red message, "Thy, Damnation, Slumbereth, Not," affects her deeply; these words "entered Tess with accusatory horror," "as if this man had known her recent history" despite being "a total stranger" (62). Hardy's narrator judges this fanatic painter, but Tess lacks a framework, either experiential or theological, to reject his way of thinking. She believes these writings on the walls "are horrible!" as well as "Crushing" and "killing," and he responds that that is "what they are meant to be" (62). He inscribes the beginning to "Thou shalt not commit adultery" specifically for Tess and "dangerous young females like yerself to heed" (62). In addition to stigmatizing sex, he implicitly blames Tess and other young women in his acts of threatening spiritual violence. His fanaticism directly links to policing institutionalized Christian sexual mores. The fanatic recommends Tess listen to Mr. Clare's sermon, as Clare is "a good man," who will "expound as well as any parson I know. 'Twas he began the work in me" (63). It seems Mr.

Clare creates fanatics by advocating for action based on belief without considering its impacts on others. This painter is one of his early disciples; Alec is a later one. Although Mr. Clare may not himself be as enthusiastic or fanatical as the painter, he sows the seeds of fanaticism in others.

Mr. Clare is a lingering Anglican Evangelical, “the last of the old Low-Church sort” in an area where most conform to High Church practice (89). Hardy does not depict Evangelicalism in a flattering light; it repeatedly increases Tess’s suffering. Perkin sees Mr. Clare as Hardy’s “fullest portrait of an Evangelical clergyman,” noting that although he is charitable, his sons do not inherit this virtue (178). Knight and Mason suggest that it is “the inability of Reverend Clare’s Evangelical faith to answer the critical questions posed by his son” that leads to “Angel Clare’s subsequent failure to forgive Tess the ‘sin’ she confesses” (43). Mr. Clare is “a man not merely religious, but devout; a firm believer—not as the phrase is now elusively construed ... but in the old and ardent sense of the Evangelical school” (Hardy 90). Angel and Hardy’s narrator both consider Mr. Clare a fanatic, a relic of earlier Evangelicals who “made up his mind once for all on the deeper questions of existence, and admitted no further reasoning on them thenceforward” and whose extreme “creed of determinism was such that it almost amounted to a vice” (123). The extent of his determinism is ironic given the novel’s own fatalistic tone, and this description seems directly oppositional to agnosticism. Mr. Clare may not be presented as the fanatic most actively harmful to Tess; nor is he suggested to be the primary villain, but his creeds prove harmful. Hardy critiques Mr. Clare’s beliefs, but the narrative also confirms the power of fate, working through social and religious institutions, to play a role in harming Tess. Mr. Clare is the opposite of an agnostic, doubting little, and Hardy suggests that never doubting one’s faith or convictions may be the deepest problem with religion as too much rigidity in belief obstructs mercy. Nonetheless, Mr. Clare’s fanatic, contagious preaching results in Tess’s roadside

condemnation, Alec's return to her life, and his own son's rejection of Tess after learning about her past. Thus, his fatalism becomes a vaguely self-fulfilling prophecy.

Angel Clare lacks his father's Evangelicalism. He views the church warmly but has no belief in the supernatural. By contrast, his clergyman brothers are "non-Evangelical, well-educated, hall-marked young men" (Hardy 124). Angel links their conforming to stylish beliefs and religious behaviors to "their growing mental limitations" (125). Angel is intellectual and rational, marked by Higher Criticism. Perkin suggests Hardy uses Angel Clare to "attac[k] liberal Christianity" (180). His rationalism protects him from fanaticism, and he loves Tess without concern towards her own confused religious beliefs and doubts. Despite this, however, he refuses to stay with Tess after learning about her sexual past even though he himself engaged in a meaningless sexual affair with a stranger. Perkin writes, "Angel's own erotic feelings are entangled with a liberal Christianity that, while claiming to be liberated from dogma, retains aspects of the moral teaching of orthodox Christianity without its compassion and ability to forgive" (181). Despite his "attempted independence of judgment," Angel remains "slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings. ... In considering what Tess was not he overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defective can be more than the entire" (Hardy 208). His return to these moral codes punishes Tess, especially once Alec d'Urberville comes back into her life, at first as a fiery preacher.

Like the painter, Alec d'Urberville becomes a fanatic largely due to Mr. Clare's preaching. Mr. Clare reports that after hearing about Alec's "most culpable passions," he felt called "to speak to the delinquent on his spiritual state"; Alec resents his injunctions at first and does "not scruple publicly to insult Mr Clare" (131). Despite this rough encounter, Clare's words stick with Alec and transform his passions into those for purportedly spiritual things. Knight and

Mason suggest Clare's preaching "inadvertently provides a vocabulary that Alec uses to justify his selfish ongoing desire for Tess" (143). His transformation makes no difference in his treatment of others. The converted Alec is known as "a ranter" and "an excellent fiery Christian man" (Hardy 237). The sermon Tess hears is of "the extremest antinomian type; on justification by faith, as expounded in the theology of St Paul," "delivered with animated enthusiasm, in a manner entirely declamatory" (237).<sup>67</sup> Tess is intrigued because this

preacher's doctrine was a vehement form of the views of Angel's father, and her interest intensified when the speaker began to detail his own spiritual experiences of how he had come by these views. He had, he said, been the greatest of sinners. He had scoffed; he had wantonly associated with the reckless and the lewd. But a day of awakening had come; and, in a human sense, it had been brought about mainly by the influence of a certain clergyman, whom he had at first grossly insulted; but whose parting words had sunk into his heart, and had remained there, till by the grace of Heaven they had worked this change in him, and made him what they saw him. (238)

Not only does Tess choose to listen because of their relational history, but also because he was converted by her beloved husband's father. Thus, Alec is a spiritual son of Mr. Clare, a literally and spiritually negligent father. He perceives himself as Clare's spiritual apostle, ironically believing he is "the humble means of saving more souls in this country than any other man you can name" (242). But the focal point of Alec's devotion is inconstant.

Alec's passion for self-pleasure transforms into religious fervor. Despite his conversion, Tess is rightly uneasy and afraid when she sees him. Alec's change "was less a reform than a transformation. The former curves of sensuousness were now modulated to lines of devotional

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<sup>67</sup> Antinomianism is a frequently Gothic problem in fiction, seen here as well as in Hogg's *Confessions* and Gaskell's *Lois the Witch*.

passion. ... the glow on the cheek that yesterday could be translated as riotousness was evangelized to-day into the splendour of pious rhetoric; animalism had become fanaticism” (239). Alec d’Urberville’s pure elemental passion has not changed; he has simply transferred the object of his obsessions and fanaticism to religion instead of the pursuit of pleasure. His brief period of religious enthusiasm is not a product of Reason: “his whimsical conversion” is “perhaps the mere freak of a careless man in search of a new sensation, and temporarily impressed by his mother’s death” (254). Hands writes that Alec’s conversion can be specifically linked to Hardy’s perception of “emotionalism’s intrinsic shortcomings” as Evangelicalism “is essentially of the heart, and therefore incapable of offering any effectively reasoned reply to intellectual attack;” Evangelicalism cannot “compete with the rival attractions of a personal relationship” (72). Romantic and religious devotion provide oppositional tension, particularly due to Evangelicalism’s heightened focus on the emotional and relational components of religion. Alec’s intrinsic fanatic qualities, evident from his initial violent and forceful pursuit of Tess, now apply primarily to religion, where they are just as dangerous. Love and reason-free emotional attachment become Gothic tyrants that, sadly, in this novel, cannot be overthrown.

Tess is skeptical of Alec’s conversion, telling him, “Such flashes as you feel, Alec, I fear don’t last” (243). And in Alec’s case, they do not. He apostatizes and returns to pursuing Tess, ignoring her resistance and coldness with the fanatic’s mindset. After this change, her friends Marian and Izz barely recognize him (257). Alec is still prone to acting based on excessive credence to emotion, and he never seems to doubt himself. He tells Tess he has fallen from faith after hearing about their dead child, confessing “it is just as if my feelings, which have been flowing in a strong puritanical stream, had suddenly found a way open in the direction of you and had all at once gushed through. The religious channel is left dry forthwith; and it is you who

have done it!” (258). He says Tess had found him “a Christian enthusiast,” and he blames her for his return as he tries to coax her into marriage (259). Alec declares, his “religious mania, or whatever it was, is over” (264). His mania is far from over, however. After his apostasy, he returns to a worship of pleasure and lustful pursuit of Tess. When they see the same painter from earlier, he asks Alec “if he had deserted the brethren” (281). Alec remains indifferent to another fanatic’s condemnation and tells the painter to “go to the devil!” (281). He channels all his energy into Tess, despite still believing religion is, from an objective standpoint, better for him than romance. His romantic passion defeats his religious passion, as love and faith are set oppositionally for Alec. He is similar to Horace Walpole’s original Gothic tyrant, Manfred, and he is also somewhat like St. John Rivers. Hardy, like the Brontës, shows that feeling can be a faulty, dangerous master. Both romantic and religious enthusiasm have the potential to lead a person astray, particularly in Gothic Romance. Hardy, like the Brontës, uses Gothic elements to foreground the dangers of allowing emotion, particularly romantic emotion, to become the ruler.

While Alec worships faith or love, Tess worships Angel. Like Alec, Tess is called “a vessel of emotions rather than reasons” (260). Despite not being a religious fanatic like Alec or the painter, she comes to worship love in the form of Angel Clare, whose name is telling. Before their wedding, Tess “tried to pray to God, but it was her husband who really had her supplication. Her idolatry of this man was such that she herself almost feared it to be ill-omened” (168). As with *Jane Eyre*, the beloved eclipses religious devotion. The discourse of idolatry specifically and intentionally describes love and reveals its malignant side. Tess treats Angel not like a partner but like a deity or angel she can worship. Her self-immolating regard for him leads her to find joy in “think[ing] he was regarding her as his absolute possession, to dispose of as he should choose” (194). Perkin writes that her “love for Angel leads her to deify him” (181). Angel

perceives her faith as “confused beliefs” that are, “if anything, Tractarian as to phraseology and pantheistic as to essence” (Hardy 135). His perception misses out on the true object of her worship, however: Angel himself. When Tess tells Alec she thinks his belief is wrong, he retorts, “Your mind is enslaved to [Angel’s],” and he is not off base (252). She says Angel “knew everything” with “a triumphant simplicity of faith ... that the most perfect man could hardly have deserved, much less her husband” (252). For Tess, Angel is “all that goodness could be” (151). Love renders her perception of him as her tyrant. In her desperate letter after Alec returns, she writes, “Angel, I live entirely for you. ... It has been so much my religion ever since we were married, to be faithful to you in every thought and look that even when a man speaks a compliment to me before I am aware, it seems wronging you” (265).<sup>68</sup> This idolatrous love, for Tess, leads to murder. As Haynal et al. point out, generally, fanatics believe it is acceptable – and required – to kill for the greater good (40). Tess becomes willing to kill for romantic love (and revenge). As a fanatic, Tess kills Alec largely for Angel, whom she deifies:

I owed it to you, and to myself, Angel. I feared long ago ... that I might do it some day for the trap he set for me in my simple youth, and his wrong to you through me. He has come between us and ruined us, and now he can never do it any more. I never loved him at all, Angel, as I loved you. ... Angel, will you forgive me my sin against you, now I have killed him? (303)

Tess is more disturbed by Alec’s harm to Angel, her idol, than for the various ways he has victimized her. Excessive emotion prevents reason, and it clouds individuals’ abilities to practice the socially beneficial aspects of Christian faith and love, leaving hollow and harmful institutions to wreak havoc on those without social power.

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<sup>68</sup> Hardy could be reacting against separate spheres gender ideology by suggesting that a woman living entirely for her husband is problematic and dangerous.

As in *Wuthering Heights*, fanaticism becomes a temporary but fragile vehicle for gaining brief power. For Hardy, it seems like fanaticism in *Tess* grows from the pursuit of ultimate moral clarity, which he may see as seductive but ultimately dangerous. This attitude is similar to that expressed in his poem “Hap,” wherein Hardy expresses the idea that if a higher power, even a vengeful one, were causing pain and suffering in the world, he could “bear it.” Instead, “Crass Casualty” lies behind pain and suffering. Mere chance, rather than a deity or human-crafted religion, has ultimate power in the world. Accepting this is hard but necessary work, as working to show that life is more than a series of random chance events requires a suspension of disbelief. Conversely, agnosticism offers no clarity and leaves little room for rigid rule-following. Clarity and dogma are tempting and powerful, but a fanatic, dualistic perspective on the world leads to harm. Fanatic religion increases Alec’s problematic power in the story, and it is fanatic devotion to Angel that fortifies Tess to kill Alec.

Hardy lambasts a church of hypocrisy throughout *Tess*, in which she becomes a sort of pagan priestess and sacrifice. This pagan religion is equally cruel to Tess, and Hardy criticizes current Christian practice by placing it alongside a similarly cold paganism, encouraging readers to ask if modern Protestant Christianity is really any better. Hardy depicts religion as inhumane, which is perhaps partly a result of its adherents’ inclinations to allow excessive emotion full reign over their actions. In *Tess*, Hardy incorporates elements of Gothic Romance to help critique religious institutions. His criticisms build on early Gothic anti-Catholicism, but he goes beyond criticizing beliefs he finds foreign and indicts religion entirely on the basis of its hypocrisy and cruelty. The novel’s Gothic relationships and fanatic characters reiterate the idea that fanatic approaches to religion and romance alike impede proper reason and ethical treatment of others. The novel’s agnosticism puts on trial the inherent goodness of various types of religion, whether

practitioners are fanatics or not. Agnosticism may not be a solution to the problems of fanaticism; however, it may provide a useful lens through which to identify fanatical behavior.

## **Conclusion**

In each of these novels, romantic love itself has the tendency to assume Gothic qualities: passion, the unspeakable, the uncanny, and, significantly, tyranny. In excess, fanatic love becomes monstrous and an ultimate Gothic tyrant. Gothic love tends to tyrannize the powerless, especially when they are alone, as idolatrous love thrives in isolation. Significantly, these novels use the discourse of Gothic fanaticism to entangle love and religion with various forms of power. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane and Rochester must overcome forms of gender inequality, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, but they must also become spiritual equals who are free not only from social norms but also from their own fanatic approach to love. Fanatic religion and fanatic love reciprocally interfere with each other, and Charlotte Brontë critiques fanaticism's power for its hypocrisy and ability to harm others. She envisions a non-fanatic Anglican church that embodies the *via media* as an ideal mirrored in the novel's final love match. In *Wuthering Heights*, those with marginal amounts of social power are particularly susceptible to becoming fanatics, and their own desires, be they for love or religion, become revenge-centered and destructive. For Emily Brontë, organized religion can become fanatical, but thirst for revenge or individual power particularly fuels fanatic approaches to relationships and faith. Fanaticism allows characters to briefly rise above their circumstances, but this empowerment is brief, unsustainable, and ultimately unfulfilling. Organized religion is not the answer, for Emily, but she suggests Christian virtues have the potential to produce healing relationships. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, love, religion, and fanatics harm Tess more than any other character, as her gender and class leave her with virtually no social power or protection. Hardy offers agnosticism as a weak antidote to the ample

problems caused by fanatic religion. Love is no solution, for Hardy. At the core of Gothic texts lie concerns about forms of power, including not only those related to gender and social class but also those about sexuality.

Underlying (and sometimes overt) sexual desire features regularly in Gothic Romance. In *Jane Eyre*, it plays a part in Rochester's past and present as well as in Jane's awakening sexuality. In *Wuthering Heights*, erotic desire is even more powerful, particularly in Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, lust propels Alec into an emotional frenzy over Tess. Haynal et al. ask what role sexual frustration could play in the phenomenon of fanaticism (42). Untamed sexual desire as a form of emotion could be perceived as receiving too much credence by critics. Historically, too, John Mee writes that "the confusion of the bodily and the spiritual was liable to be identified with an improperly regulated enthusiasm" (14). In these novels, romantic love is often interwoven with this threat of enthusiasm. With the right amount of devotion, as in Jane and Rochester's ultimate relationship (which we know is sexually productive because of their son's existence), sexual love, like religious devotion, is depicted as healthy and good. However, excessive sexual desire is just as dangerous as unchanneled and immoderate religious devotion. Additionally, power plays into sexuality. As Foucault suggests, "pleasure and power ... seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another" (48). The power of fanaticism is pleasurable in various ways. This enthusiastic passion has the potential to be destructive, particularly for Gothic heroines, whether they find themselves in early Gothic situations where they must escape lascivious tyrants or whether they, like later characters, must find ways to temper their passion or else suffer the consequences.

In Gothic Romance, the discourse of Gothic fanaticism artfully explores the limitations of romantic love alongside the boundaries of religious devotion. In these texts, the erotic and the

spiritual overlap and diverge in complex and fascinating ways. Love is essential to a good marriage; however, excessive love renders marriage impossible in *Jane Eyre* because idolatrous love leaves no space for healthy religion. In *Wuthering Heights*, excessive love and faith thwart forgiveness and mercy. Thomas Hardy suggests fanaticism quashes reason in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, offering agnosticism as a safeguard against a cruel slate of religious options. Gothicized fanaticism provides tools for these explorations. The genre's legacy of investment in religious criticism, romance, and tyranny render it a useful arena in which to depict the dangers of excessive emotion and romance. Instead of setting romance and faith oppositionally, Charlotte and Emily Brontë demonstrate how, ideally, the two could coexist productively. However, the caveat always exists: in excess, romantic love becomes dangerous. Religion and romance, these authors suggest, require appropriate boundaries as their excesses can motivate harmful actions. Love, like religion, can become fanatical. When it does, lovers must beware.

#### **Coda: *Crimson Peak* and *Mexican Gothic***

Obsessive love continues to play a major role in contemporary Gothic literature, film, and television, whether this is the destructive romance played out in Gillian Flynn's domestically Gothic *Gone Girl* or the problematic yet romanticized stalking in Caroline Kepnes' *You*. Young adult Gothic Romance often glamorizes obsessive and unhealthy depictions of teenage love, as in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*. Broadly, however, contemporary Gothic Romance seems not to offer religious faith as a solution to fanatic love; instead, it presents obsession as attractive, desirable, and sexy (if fraught). As Spooner observes, contemporary Gothic works increasingly "hybridize Gothic with comedy or romance" and could often "be described as comic, romantic, celebratory, gleeful, whimsical or even joyous" (3). This includes Gothic Romance, although I focus here on darker artifacts than Spooners', which tend to be lighter in tone. In general, few

contemporary Gothic works that address romantic love do so as a foil for faith. Guillermo del Toro's 2015 film *Crimson Peak* treats love itself as a monster, and nowhere are ideas about religion invoked in the movie. When religious faith is addressed in modern Gothic Romance, it is typically fanatical and dangerous, as in Sylvia Moreno-Garcia's 2020 *Mexican Gothic*. Modern Gothic Romance maintains continual interest in both the arenas of religion and romance, especially in the way gendered and religious power function in both; however, these examples suggest the discourses have become disentangled.

Guillermo del Toro self-consciously shaped his 2015 film *Crimson Peak* into a representative Gothic Romance. In the movie, heroine Edith Cushing is caught in a love triangle between longtime friend Alan and mysterious conman Englishman Thomas Sharpe, whom she marries after the death of her father. Love endangers Edith, landing her in a life-threatening situation. For Thomas' sister Lucille, incestuous love motivates her various murders. Human monstrosity is a central focus of the film, in which gory and terrifying ghosts are, surprisingly, not the real monsters. Instead, Lucille, Thomas' sister and lover, killed their own mother and several women whom Thomas married to steal their inheritance. Lucille tells Edith that all of this "horror was for love," that the "things we do for love like this are ugly, mad, full of sweat and regret. This love burns you and maims you, twists you inside out. It is a monstrous love, and it makes monsters of us all" (01:38:22-1:38:51). Lucille's monstrosity stems from her twisted conception of affection. Every evil action she chooses is motivated by love for her brother, which is idolatrous, excessive, and directly descended from some of these nineteenth-century Gothic stories. She is Bertha Mason, Heathcliff, Alec d'Urberville, Catherine, all in one. For Lucille, romance becomes idolatrous; not only is it inappropriately placed upon her brother, but it is also excessive, blinding, and utterly monstrous.

Notably, the love men hold for women in the film seems less perilous. Love motivates Alan to protect and support Edith. Love for Edith (rather than his own sister) changes Thomas from a man with few moral scruples to one who pursues self-improvement and becomes willing to sacrifice himself to save another. Although these nineteenth-century Gothic examples do not seem to discriminate between genders when it comes to who is and is not susceptible to romantic fanaticism, this film does. In *Crimson Peak*, love is dangerous for women but morally fruitful for men. Although *Crimson Peak* reflects upon romantic love, obsession, and monstrous love as central themes, it never really addresses faith. Religious relics, motifs, and questions common in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* are largely absent from the film. In other contemporary Gothic romance, this juxtaposition of insufficient love of God with excessive love of a romantic partner is similarly absent. Even adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* tend to elide religious elements of the novels. Nonetheless, the Gothic discourses of fanatic religion and idolatrous love persist.

Another contemporary work, Sylvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020), demonstrates the continual interest Gothic maintains in both religion and romance. The discourses, however, remain separate in this novel that uses Gothic Romance forms and topoi to critique colonialism. Early Gothic Calvinist determinism shifts into the language of eugenics and racist essentialism in this novel's villains. In the book, conventional Gothic discourses of love and religion are both present in the 1950s Mexico that serves as setting. The heroine Noemí is a nominal Catholic who "learned rebellion while muttering the rosary" (Moreno-Garcia 23). She calls herself a "bad Catholic," and she "had not given much thought to original sin since the days when she was busy learning her catechism in preparation for her first communion" (89). She travels from Mexico City to High Place, an English estate in Mexico, to help her newly married

cousin, Catalina, who has been ill with what turns out not to be tuberculosis but something more sinister in the home of her new husband's family. At High Place, conventional Gothic shapes emerge around the Doyle family, who own the colonizing estate. The patriarch, Howard, believes he is a god. Ruth, a late figure in the house's terrible history, records that Howard is their "lord and master. Our God. . . . Our great legacy, spun in cartilage and blood and roots so very deep. Gods cannot die" (172). Francis, too, calls Howard "a god," one who specifically wants to incorporate Noemí's gene pool into the family line (213). Noemí sees in one of the house's haunted memories that Doyle's immortality originated in a cannibalistic religious ceremony where a fungus provides eternal life. Howard Doyle, in his actual youth, killed the priest of the eternal mushroom and became "holy" as he killed those of the order and began his demented quest to perfect the ceremony through inbreeding, murder, and infant cannibalism (207). Howard, treated and referred to as a god by his family, is "lord and priest and father, and they were all his children and acolytes, blindly obeying him" (248). Those who dissent against Howard's will are punished or killed.

*Mexican Gothic* engages ideas about religious fanaticism far more than *Crimson Peak*, using Gothic fanaticism to highlight the many evils of the colonizing Doyles. The family continually uses perverted versions of religious language and ritual. For instance, the family motto is "Et Verbum caro factum est," Latin for "and the word became flesh." This is a direct quotation from John 1, which declares (in reference to the incarnation of Christ), "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (KJV). The source of light in this book is not holy; instead, it is the immortalizing power of the fungus controlled and wielded by Howard Doyle. Noemí's flashbacks also show her a ritual in which Howard's sister/wife gives birth to a child consumed

by the priests and Doyle, who eat the “Flesh of the gods” as the baby is incestuous and therefore a product of Howard Doyle’s own bloodline (217). This sacrifice again darkly parallels the Biblical son of God’s sacrifice, which is also meant to give life to followers. The discourse of religious fanaticism is part of what makes the Doyle family so Gothic.

Their dark perversions of religious symbols and rites are deeply Gothic descendents of the nineteenth century tradition. The Doyles are religious fanatics who use mushrooms and unholy rituals to attain immortality through violent, exclusive actions. Howard Doyle’s word is final, and the family’s fanaticism echoes earlier Gothic works. Noemí recognizes their religious practice as “A demented cycle. Children devoured as babes, children devoured as adults. Children are but food. Food for a cruel god” (270). This fanatic faith binds the family together through the perverse mushroom Eucharist. Francis tells Noemí that the “Casual cannibalism” is “A communion. Our children are born infected with the fungus, and ingesting their flesh means ingesting the fungus; ingesting the fungus makes us stronger and in turn it binds us more closely to the gloom. Binds us to Howard” (281). Even the forced marriage ceremony between Noemí and Francis parallels a perverse Eucharist and riffs on Bram Stoker’s depraved communions in *Dracula*. The family repeats a ceremony in Latin in “choreographed obeisance to the father,” and instead of partaking of the bread of communion, Noemí and Francis share in “two tiny, dried pieces of yellow mushrooms” (257). Noemí herself recognizes this as “a strange parody of the communion wafer” (257). The ceremony reiterates the fanatical religion the Doyle family practices, in which Howard is god, immortality is the goal, and fungal mushrooms that feed off of a sacrificed maternal figure invert the idea of Christ’s body given as a willing and kenotic sacrifice for all into Agnes’ body stolen and appropriated for Howard. The novel’s Gothic

reinterpretations fit perfectly within the tradition while engaging them to advance a criticism of the monstrosities of colonialism.

*Mexican Gothic* also includes discourses of love and lust. Noemí and Francis develop a (comparably) healthy relationship that contrasts against her lustful attraction to Catalina's husband Virgil. She has enchanted dreams about sex with him, but later in the novel she is forced to marry Francis. Noemí even is forced to kiss Howard at one point as he transfers an evil fungoid substance to her body. Francis declares that High Place "wasn't made for love," that the people there "are incapable of such a thing" (154). Sex and romance are players in *Mexican Gothic*, just as they are in earlier iterations of the genre. What is new, however, is the way Moreno-Garcia's Gothic Romance separates religious and romantic questions. Even the marriage ceremony makes no mention of or gesture toward love or romance. In this novel, the discourses of love and religion are completely disentangled. Both are, frankly, not offered up as viable solutions for life's problems, nor are they considered a reward or path to good things. In many ways, Noemí is a version of Catherine Linton, and Catalina is a version of Jane Eyre. Moreno-Garcia's take gives the heroines more agency and allows them freedom from both love and religion. Ultimately, they are empowered to escape High Place with Francis in tow, having uncovered the estate's dark secret and eliminated its potential as a future threat. *Crimson Peak* and *Mexican Gothic* are merely two examples of modern Gothic Romance. Both simultaneously draw on and reinterpret earlier Gothic texts, reorganizing and shaping stories that continue to show interest in religion, romance, and fanaticism. Gothic fanaticism is never praised, and it always harms someone, whether the object of worship is a deity, a beloved other, or the self. As the next chapter will seek to demonstrate, Gothic fanaticism is also powerful as a discourse, specifically when employed against a religious other.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### **Foreign American Fanatics in *A Study in Scarlet* and *Lois the Witch***

A brief *Daily Morning Chronicle* article published in October 1868 describes a visit to a Mormon gathering. The piece, “The Latter Day Saints: Their Manner of Worship and Religious Belief: Curious Religious Fanaticism,” displays religious prejudice, and although the author acknowledges their singing is similar to that in most Christian churches, the other differences encourage them to label the group “fanatics.” The report declares, after hearing members speak,

It would be impossible to ascertain from their remarks any definite idea of what constituted their religious faith, except that they were all confident that the second advent of Christ was near at hand, and that Joseph is the chosen prophet of the Lord. But the relative position which Christ and Joseph occupied in their minds was not clearly stated. Without intending any sacrilege or ridicule, the proposition naturally suggested itself to the mind of an unbeliever that in case of the advent of Christ a conflict of authority between him and Joseph must ensue, as their respective status was so indefinitely defined and the belief in the divinity of each was so thoroughly settled (“The Latter Day Saints”).

The article concludes, “It is difficult to believe that our Saviour would seek their society if he should revisit the earth” (“The Latter Day Saints”). These real Mormons, described through thick bias, are labeled fanatics. Arthur Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) takes up this common public notion of Mormons as fanatics and heightens them into Gothicized fanatics, emphasizing Gothic religion to condemn fanaticism as criminal and set up his new heroes, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson, as able to prevent foreign American Protestantisms from spreading harm. Mid-nineteenth-century nationalistic tendencies Gothicized problematic Protestantisms to reinforce a sense of English identity. This chapter argues that Elizabeth Gaskell and Arthur Conan Doyle Gothicize fictionalized versions of historical American Protestantisms, employing

versions of historical events as frameworks to envision foreign religion as dangerous and fanatical, certainly to entertain readers with sensational stories, but also to caution readers against foreign religious practices. However, despite nationalistic moments, neither Gaskell nor Conan Doyle seem invested in confirming the Anglican Church's superiority.

The mid nineteenth-century saw the rise of certain Gothic subtypes like sensation fiction, the crime novel, and the detective story.<sup>69</sup> Though seemingly disparate categories, all three draw on earlier Gothic topoi and forms, including in their treatments of religion. Commonly, the locus of mid-century Gothic horror finds itself lodged in the domestic, rather than the foreign, although this chapter's examples focus on Gothic representations of American religion.<sup>70</sup> Early anti-Catholic Gothic featured Protestantism defining British identity against Catholic others, helping readers and writers codify precisely who they were as individuals and as a national entity. Rendering Catholic Europeans as "superstitious, barbarous, irrational, chaotic, rooted in the past," and foreign allowed English readers "conversely to identify ... as Protestant, rational, ordered, stable, and modern" (Jones 9). Mid-century Gothic maintains an interest in the tyrannous power of untamed religion, and it often depicts foreign forms of belief fanatical as a means of discrediting not only other religions, but other cultures and ways of life. Portraying other cultures and religions as deplorable reasserts a sense of superiority for English readers, including when placed against other white Protestants like Conan Doyle's Mormons or, perhaps, against Gaskell's Puritans. Later Imperial Gothic, like H. Rider Haggard's *She*, picks up this mantle and Gothically renders non-Christian global religious practices as monstrous in imperial encounters that further contribute to a perception of English religious superiority. This

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<sup>69</sup> Michelle Miranda links the evolution of criminology, an increasing use of public law enforcement, and forensic science developments to the Gothic's detective turn.

<sup>70</sup> Gothic works like Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) or Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859) reflect anxieties located specifically within the domestic sector.

opposition continually contributes to national identity, as has been suggested by Colley and others. While the utility of Gothic fanaticism certainly plays a role in Imperial Gothic's validation of the belief that colonialism benefited the colonized in need of Christian religion, the discourse could also depict other Christianities as monstrous threats.

Major nineteenth-century Gothic supports nationalistic tendencies through constructing fanatic others. As Jones, Cohen, and others have observed, the use of monstrosity aids in oppositionally defining individual and community identity. Further, Cohen suggests that “[r]epresenting an anterior culture as monstrous justifies its displacement” (7). When religion and state power become entwined, as they do in these two novellas, Christians who practice a benevolent yet generic “true” Protestantism are put at risk, which reinforces the sense that the hegemon is threatened. As discussed, “fanatic” is a label applied from the outside (Toscano, Haynal et al.). In these stories, the Gothic frame aids in labeling a religious norm and distinguishing it from a religious other. Religious monstrosity of the supernatural and metaphorical kind serves to heighten criticism of an outsider or outside group by condemning their nonconformity to practices the othering culture may hold sacred. This increased difference empowers the labeler to feel superiority over the religious “other.” Religious others in the Gothic are often created through the centering of a specific perspective like Charlotte Brontë's Anglicanism in *Jane Eyre*. Gaskell and Conan Doyle lack Brontë's agenda; however, they use Gothic elements to similar ends. Gothic fanaticism becomes a tool of nationalism, as it is a quick and easy method to discount outsiders via a fictionalized version of their religious practices. The discourse can also offer a nuanced and somewhat resistant perspective, as Gaskell demonstrates, that suggests the religious monster may lurk not abroad but at home, even within our very selves.

Nationalism can have a variety of theoretical and practical meanings and can be a conservative or progressive force. Nationalism, often served by both literature and religion, occurs when the idea of nationhood unites individuals against outsiders under a common set of values and interests. Roy defines religious nationalism as what happens “when a religious institution embodies the soul of a people to the exclusion not only of other religions, but also of other peoples” (90).<sup>71</sup> Adrian Hastings observes that in practice, nationalism “can empower large numbers of ordinary people” and is likely to surface when a specific group “feels itself threatened in regard to its own proper character, extent or importance, either by external attack or by the state system of which it has hitherto formed part” (4). Nationalism, like the discourses of fanaticism, rises when a group perceives a threat. Christopher Marsh identifies religion as “the most potent characteristic that can be attached to nationalism” and observes that the two share features like “sacred images and objects” (99). He compares nationalism to “a civil religion, as religious language and symbolism become used to legitimate the state and provide divine sanction to political authority” or can “give legitimacy and authority to nations that do not have a state” (Marsh 99). Hastings observes that in a “contested frontier,” political conflicts often include religious elements “so that national identity becomes fused with religious identity” (190). Religious and national affiliations blend in a variety of ways in the world and in fiction.

Nationalism was one driving force behind the nineteenth-century expansion of the British empire, especially as America’s global power continued to ascend. Increasing global engagement also continued to reveal a broad range of non-Christian practices and a notion that white Protestants had a spiritual mission to spread not merely Christianity but also Englishness. The two, in some cases, became one and the same. As Herb and Badescu suggest, “traditional

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<sup>71</sup> Christopher Marsh defines religious nationalism not as “loyalty to one’s religion or religious group but rather an attachment to the nation proper,” although it can be difficult to “distinguish between them” in some cases (101).

religions could not provide the spiritual support” to meet the challenges of the nineteenth century, so “the nation filled the gap” and provided “solace from the alienation of modern living and a powerful sense of belonging” (xix). From the 1870s onward, Eric Hobsbawm observes, nationalism increased as “a function of both social and political changes” as well as “an international situation that provided plenty of pegs on which to hang manifestos of hostility to foreigners” (109). What was foreign was not necessarily deeply different, however, and community and national ties could come from surprising places. Joshua King suggests that as the Church of England needed to relinquish “many of its exclusive ties to the state” throughout the nineteenth century, it was forced to leave behind some of “its political and social authority” (61). In response, he suggests this compelled “creative authors, journalists, educators, and clergy to treat print as a medium for imagining and participating in a virtual Protestant community spanning the British nation” (King 61-2). In the 1880s and beyond, “a ‘New Imperialism’ was steadily emerging, more forcefully advocating renewed imperial expansion, especially to protect British interests against newly rising colonial powers such as the United States, France and Germany”; as Christine Berberich points out, much of this work was done by artists and authors like Conan Doyle who could “propoun[d] theories of British superiority” (57). The written word, including fiction about religion, thus had the power to become a powerful force in envisioning what it meant to be “properly” English and “properly” religious. Reading and engaging with this fiction, which reinforced and Gothicized stereotypes about foreign religion, created national bonds. Policing the boundaries of community and national identity became an underlying concern, especially in Conan Doyle’s work and possibly in Gaskell’s. In an ever-expanding world with international competitors like America threatening British hegemony, fiction itself contributed to attempts to discern what was properly “English” and what was not.

In Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Lois the Witch*, Gothicized fanaticism defines British religious identity against fictionalized forms of historical American Protestantisms. The incorporation of historicity within these stories (Conan Doyle's use of Mormonism and Gaskell's use of Puritan history) increases their engagement with the Gothic while heightening the sense of a realistic cultural threat. Using specific historical moments and events contributes to each story's inherently Gothic qualities. Both Gaskell and Conan Doyle diverge from the common pattern of depicting Catholics as the primary Gothic religious villain and focus on Protestant concerns. *A Study in Scarlet* and *Lois the Witch* cement and center a surface-level generic English identity through religious representation. The discourse of fanaticism portrays Englishness as rational while the foreign is the fanatic. Both stories demonstrate how accusations of fanaticism can specifically be used to discredit foreign religions and reify the religious status quo. Their strategy of othering, which at first glance seems to justify institutional Anglicanism, becomes complicated upon close readings with Gaskell's Unitarianism and Conan Doyle's Spiritualism in mind. Ultimately, neither author offers Anglicanism as a solution; rather, concepts of rationalism and tolerance (which are, for them, associated with Englishness) can prevent fanaticism and the harm it causes. Conan Doyle's portrait otherizes foreign religion while emphasizing the dangers of isolation and all-powerful entities that interweave religious and state power. Gaskell uses historic religious sects abroad to suggest that modern readers must examine their own practices with the same measure as the threat, which may seem in the past or at a distance, lies within. Gaskell goes beyond demonization and turns the lens upon the readers, asking them to root out their own fanaticisms before accusing others of the same. I contend that *Lois the Witch* can be read as a juridical parable that ultimately asks readers to question their own religious practices and beliefs.

### *A Study in Scarlet*

Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story highlights a rendering of American, foreign religion as dangerous, cult-like, and fanatical, confirming attitudes of British religious superiority. His monstrous depiction of Mormonism in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) criticizes the fanatical tendencies of the Mormons' cultish faith, including their violence for the cause, insularity, and intolerance. In the first half of the novella, readers meet John Watson and Sherlock Holmes, become introduced to the consulting detective's methods and idiosyncrasies, and watch as he works to solve murders that initially look politically motivated. The second half reveals the murderer's backstory and motivation, which we learn was the vengeance Jefferson Hope seeks against two former Mormons: Enoch Drebber and Joseph Strangerson, who are to blame for the death of his beloved years ago. The two, along with the rest of the Mormons, do not fit into conceptions of English Protestant Christianity. After Holmes arrests Hope, he confesses, and his backstory and rationale paint the avenger in a sympathetic and even righteous light. Conversely, Conan Doyle uses Mormonism to craft the story's true villains as foreign religious others, a dangerous evil cult. They and their religion become monstrous abominations that result in international murders only Holmes can solve.

*A Study in Scarlet* at first may not seem to fit into the same genre as *The Castle of Otranto*, *Jane Eyre*, or *Wuthering Heights*.<sup>72</sup> The story does not endorse the supernatural, and critics tend to read the novella as less Gothic than some of Conan Doyle's other works. Mid-century Gothic began to focus on mystery, empire, realism, and quasi-legal procedures over the supernatural; although, as Milbank suggests, late-century Gothic tends to be more conservative

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<sup>72</sup> The novella, which was rejected by three publishers before it was published by Ward, Lock and Co., was not initially popular, and Sherlock Holmes did not truly become a hit until Conan Doyle proposed and wrote a series of related but self-contained Holmes stories published serially in the *Strand* (Clarke 34-5).

and reincorporates the real supernatural. Sensation fiction like Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859) had incorporated detective procedures as hallmarks of the Gothic, not only for fictional detectives like *The Moonstone's* Sergeant Cuff but also for readers themselves working to uncover the plot's secrets. Jasmine Yong Hall observes that Conan Doyle often incorporates Gothic topoi such as concern with female inheritance, "physical terror" with "strongly sexual overtones," and specific types of villains (298). Miranda agrees that despite Holmes' easy categorization within detective literature, stories like *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot*, *The Adventure of the Creeping Man*, and *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* (all written after 1900) retain "elements of classic Gothic fiction" (9). Philip A. Shreffler suggests a number of the Holmes stories go "out of their way to embrace the gruesome, the grisly, or the gothic," classifying one third of all Holmes stories "in some sense as horror stories" (7). Dan Andriacco points out that in addition to Conan Doyle's Gothic settings, language, and weather, his stories' repeated engagement with the grotesque specifically Gothicizes them (14). It is easy to classify the more supernatural Holmes stories as Gothic, but few connect *A Study in Scarlet* to the genre since it lacks these overt elements and settings. Nonetheless, both halves of *A Study in Scarlet* engage – and use – the Gothic.

Despite lacking some of the external trappings, the novella is deeply Gothic in its concerns with historicity and tyranny, mistrust of institutions, handling of the damsel in distress, and depiction of religious fanaticism. The bipartite nature of *A Study in Scarlet*, used again later in *The Valley of Fear*, is somewhat unique in a Holmes story, and it could serve to heighten the differences between modern England and pioneer Utah, to demonstrate the power of British minds against fanaticism and evil, or to suggest the past can dangerously linger on. Caroline

Reitz calls *A Study in Scarlet* “formally messy,” noting that it and *The Sign of Four* work to “establish concerns about England’s place in a borderless world” (128). Merrick Burrow links this structure to Gaboriau’s novels, which also divide “the narrative of the detective’s enquiry” from the “back story” (21). The detection plotline as well as the backstory participate in evolving nineteenth-century Gothic conventions.

The first half is somewhat less obviously Gothic than the second. *A Study in Scarlet* participates in an emerging sub-genre of the Gothic that focuses on legal procedure, the science of crime, the power of the police, and the city as a Gothic danger. Injecting crime into traditionally safe or English spaces increases the sense of uncanniness and invasion. Berberich writes that in so doing, Conan Doyle transforms “homely spaces his readers would have instantly recognized and associated with traditional Englishness” to “*unheimlich* (uncanny) spaces that threaten to destabilize a normative national identity,” opening the need for the quintessentially “*English* detective” whose crime solving “reinstates a supreme Englishness in a space almost or briefly contaminated by the foreign Other” (57). As Michael Arntfield categorizes it, the story fits into the “forensic Gothic,” which he uses to classify “any text that uses the Victorian fascination with crime to revisit or revamp those same literary tropes used in other Gothic traditions” (7). Sherlock Holmes as an urban Gothic detective is a mythic, modern character who solves mysteries of the past. Notably, that past is evoked in the depiction of Mormons, and the second half set in historic Utah fits with other significant Gothic patterns.

The Mormon section of the novella, where Gothic fanaticism reveals itself, maintains its Gothic interest in mystery and legal procedure while introducing other Gothic topoi like a focus on historicity and a condemnation of tyranny. As Robert Mighall argues, the Gothic maintains a concern with “the imputation of historicity,” and the “Gothic dwells in the historical past, or

identifies ‘pastness’ in the present, to reinforce a distance between the enlightened now and the repressive or misguided then” (xviii). Although Conan Doyle’s narrative concerning historic Mormons is fictional, the setting is historically realistic, and the true horrors of the novella take place forty years before the detective solves the case. The pastness of this sequence of events emerges dangerously in the present, in London rather than in Utah, but its origins and the true crimes are historical and mythic, rendering them Gothic. Additionally, Lucy Ferrier resembles a Radcliffean heroine without the agency or happy endings they receive. She is docile and sweet, if fairly two-dimensional, but she becomes the damsel in distress and entrapped heroine whose rescuer arrives too late. The two halves of the book participate in different Gothic topoi, but the concern with historic dangers lurking in the present bind the two together as Gothic.

Although the narrative of *A Study in Scarlet* is highly fictionalized, Conan Doyle relied on historical sources (many of which were sensationalized) that described the events of the Mormon exodus forty years earlier. Conan Doyle’s references could have included Joaquin Miller’s *The Danites* or Eliza Young, Mary Ettie Smith, John Hyde, or Fanny Stenhouse’s “tell all” stories about ex-Mormons that painted them as “licentious and greedy” (Dearinger 56).<sup>73</sup> Mormons were frequently cast as the nineteenth-century villain in fiction and on the stage; polygamy and the introduction of a new sacred text were especially met with suspicion and revulsion. Michael Homer points out that most of Conan Doyle’s potential sources, including encyclopedias, would have had an “anti-Mormon slant” (294).<sup>74</sup> Sebastian Lecourt suggests Mormons specifically “fascinated British observers in part because they seemed to foreground

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<sup>73</sup> Rebecca Josephy even suggests the Biblical account of Belshazzar’s Feast could even have played a role in inspiring *A Study in Scarlet*.

<sup>74</sup> Jack Tracy writes that getting to the historical truths of early Mormonism is complicated as “Mormon histories themselves view the Saints only as victims of undeserved Gentile prejudice – a charge valid enough in many cases, but not by any means exclusively so. Most nineteenth-century accounts are violently anti-Mormon, and most of them were written by sensationalists who had not been within a thousand miles of Salt Lake City” (15).

this question of what kind of social form religion was and what role it needed to play in the modern world”; for most of these critics, “Mormons had gotten religion’s modern role fundamentally wrong” by focusing too much “upon outward forms,” a complaint oddly similar to the Protestant qualms with Catholic sacraments (89). Conan Doyle’s unflattering depiction of early Latter Day Saints has often led schools to ban the book on the basis of its anti-Mormonism, for instance, in 2011 at a Virginia Middle school. The book is not a critique of actual Mormonism; rather, Gothic fanaticism becomes a powerful discourse through which Conan Doyle argues for the superiority of generic English religion over American fanaticism.

The Mormons are threatening, dangerous, and single-minded, from the moment readers – and the Ferriers – encounter them. John Ferrier and orphaned Lucy await death in the desert but are stumbled upon by Mormon pilgrims who declare they travel to Utah “to seek a refuge from the violent man and from the godless” (Conan Doyle 85). The pioneering Mormons, laced with irony, describe themselves as the chosen “persecuted children of God” in a caricatured depiction of a cult (85). They offer to rescue Ferrier and Lucy, but only if they promise to immediately and unconditionally convert to Mormonism. Their leader, a fictionalized version of Brigham Young, warns them, “We shall have no wolves in our fold” (85). The Mormons insist their new proselytes not only follow their moral code but also subscribe to the same internal beliefs. Many critics agree that fanaticism exists and becomes harmful primarily when religious excess emerges in practices that affect others (Marimaa, Roy, Calhoun). However, this novella demonstrates that when it comes to fanaticism, belief and practice can overlap. Throughout his time with the Mormons, Ferrier’s internal beliefs do not seem to change. He retains a generic Protestant Christianity, holding a different set of interior convictions. The Mormons insist he and Lucy adhere to their religious practices, but they cannot control internal belief. However, belief

impacts and motivates practice, and Ferrier's eventual unwillingness to conform to their marital standard endangers him and Lucy. Although his different internal beliefs are permitted for years, the Mormons desire dominion over minds as well because through controlling a believer's mind, one can also control their body. Fanaticism exists primarily in practice, but belief becomes action. The Mormons use belief as a mechanism of control, accepting outsiders only if they cede religious sovereignty. In the beginning, Ferrier agrees to go with the Mormons "on any terms" as his only other option is to die with Lucy, his now adopted daughter, in the desert (86).

Mormon fanaticism only gets worse as the story goes on. Strangerson, the elder assigned to chaperone them and father of one of Hope's future victims, declares, "now and for ever you are of our religion. Brigham Young has said it, and he has spoken with the voice of Joseph Smith, which is the voice of God" (86). Conversion is eternal, extreme, and external as Ferrier has undergone no change of heart. This monstrous extremity and equation of the words of Young with the words of Smith with the words of God suggests Mormons are Gothic fanatics. These Mormons worship and obey men, rather than a deity, casting them also as blasphemous. In a sense, one could argue that many Protestants, especially dissenters, have a similar ecclesiastical structure. For instance, the Methodists followed Wesley, and dissenting congregations might speak "the word" and follow the authority of individual ministers. How are the Mormons different? A lack of historical heritage plays some part in this depiction, as Mormonism was a brand new religion at the time of the novella's setting. In a sense, Conan Doyle's Mormons do fit some of the problematic descriptions from the Blacksmith pamphlet.<sup>75</sup> The difference is that whereas many dissenting groups made space for divergence and the individual in belief and in

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<sup>75</sup> As discussed in the introduction, this pamphlet describes Methodists as having a "positive and dogmatic way of writing" and a "strict, absolute or indubitable certainty in matters of faith," accusing them of being "Usurpers" and of "anti-Christian tyranny" (Blacksmith 5, 20). Blacksmith's criticisms highlight the concern that this new religion was self-authorized and over-reliant on personal experience and emotion.

practice (women and working-class people had a degree of power in Methodism), these Mormons leave no room for individuals beyond the Elders to have any say in religious or community matters. This, in relief against Conan Doyle's continual praise of individuality, suggests his main problem with Mormonism: its fanaticism, power structures, and imposed conformity prevent individuals from believing and acting on their own the way Sherlock Holmes can. Hope gets his revenge because he, too, can think and act as an individual. These Mormons, however, speak and act as one powerful, dangerous group.

In depicting Mormonism monstrously, Conan Doyle shows their religion, legal system, and culture to be repugnant. His Mormons blend religious and legal practice without separating church and state. The expression and performance of faith, for the Mormons, becomes a part of civic duty. Additionally, these Mormons do not think or speak for themselves; they are collapsed into one uniform body of fanatic believers that speaks "with one voice" (Conan Doyle 85). The Mormon church and state blur into one, and Lydia Alix Fillingham suggests this refusal to separate public and private spheres is the crux of *A Study in Scarlet* (673). She observes that his "Mormon church state completely denies any separation of public and private, a consequence of uniting religion and politics when neither participates in the Liberal ideology" (677). Conan Doyle has little good to say about a faith that does not allow for private belief or critique from its practitioners.<sup>76</sup> Conan Doyle himself renounced Catholicism and came to hold "unwavering faith in spiritualism" (Joseph 84). Late in life, among his many journeys to promote Spiritualism, he actually spoke in Salt Lake City, an event which caused him to admit his earlier portrayal of

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<sup>76</sup> Fillingham suggests Conan Doyle's true repulsion lies in "the church's inability to allow for the individual ... it is intolerable that a hierarchical elite ... should dictate beliefs that must be accepted in their totality by all. In *A Study in Scarlet*, the power-saturated Mormon Church can display its force within the furthest reaches of the privacy of the home. ... The church is revealed as no more than a means of forcing unanimity and submission on its members" (Fillingham 678). She thus reads Conan Doyle's Mormons as analogues for the Catholic Church.

Mormons was “sensational and overcoloured” (qtd. in Lecourt 85).<sup>77</sup> Notably, Spiritualism and Mormonism share birthplaces in upstate New York, began around the same time, “taught that mortals could speak and communicate with spirits,” and “claimed to be most like primitive Christianity” (Homer 296). Conan Doyle himself eventually saw many of these comparisons after speaking at the Salt Lake City Mormon Tabernacle in 1923 (Bergem 40). *A Study in Scarlet* predates these realizations, however, and in the novella, Mormons are clearly fanatics.

Once the Mormons settle in Utah, nonconformity becomes incredibly dangerous as they become “persecutors on their own account, and persecutors of the most terrible description” (Conan Doyle 97). In addition to harming individuals like John and Lucy, Mormonism harms the land it conquers, as Dearing points out: Mormonism “is a toxin that infiltrates the space unseen and slowly poisons the land” (61). Conan Doyle’s caricature of Mormonism creates unsympathetic murder victims and paints America and its home-bred religions as dangerous, violent, and uncivilized against the first half’s backdrop of rational England, which ultimately will win out (in his construction) because of English science, English detectives, and English law. Within the boundaries of the United States, despite the foundation of purported religious freedom, Mormons cannot practice faith as they see fit, propelling these Americans to move west to Utah, which would not become a state until 1896. Separation of church and state does not extend to the Mormons who choose to relinquish this right as they specifically move somewhere they can fuse religious and legal institutions. Conjoining them affords the Elders and Council total control. Conan Doyle harshly criticizes this, whether Mormonism is meant to stand in for

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<sup>77</sup> In 1930, he had come to realize that “both polygamy and the Danites were part of the history of Mormonism and not the present,” referred to Joseph Smith as a medium, and “spoke of the similarities between Mormonism and Spiritualism and admired its belief that man could be inspired by and speak with spirits” (Homer 306). He never apologized for his portrayal of Mormons in *A Study in Scarlet*, calling it “historical,” but his mindset on Mormonism did eventually shift somewhat beyond the prejudice that saturates “The Country of the Saints.”

Catholicism or for any society without room for individual belief and practice. Notably, he seems to think America is particularly fertile ground for this religious failure. Ironically, the Church of England as a formally established church with monarch at head did interweave faith and government. However, during the nineteenth century, as denominations continued to proliferate and Anglicanism changed, a wider variety of religious choices were available, and “civilized” individuals were not usually punished for dissent. Not so with the Mormons.

Polygamy is a site of horror for characters in the book as Conan Doyle portrays it as the most offensive Mormon doctrine. Conan Doyle’s constructions incorporate former Mormon Mrs. T.B.H. Stenhouse’s memoir, which “freely mixed moral indignation and hints of titillating secrets,” especially surrounding polygamy, which she attacks “as contributing to patriarchal power and oppression” (Fillingham 675-6). Ferrier’s sole rebellious act against the Mormons is his rejection of polygamous marriage. Notably, this celibacy leads to implicit blessings in the text: Ferrier has a loving, healthy, beautiful adopted daughter in addition to economic and agricultural success, as if God praises him for his refusal to conform to the polygamous pattern of the Mormons. Ferrier believes their forms of marriage are “no marriage at all, but ... a shame and a disgrace” (96). However, Ferrier says nothing about these beliefs because “to express an unorthodox opinion was a dangerous matter in those days in the Land of the Saints” (96). Conan Doyle depicts dissent as dangerous, heightening the Mormons’ fanaticism. The centering of this dissent around marriage Gothically taints the Mormons, as well, as the Gothic tradition often features a threat of forced or inappropriate marriages. Unfortunately, Ferrier’s refusal to conform prompts Brigham Young to visit to reprimand Ferrier’s choice not to marry and to threaten him into offering Lucy for marriage. Ferrier had decided long ago “that nothing would ever induce him to allow his daughter to wed a Mormon” (96). This conflict leads to the eventual deaths of

Lucy, Ferrier, Drebber, Strangerson, and even Hope. In this whole chain of death, Mormons are to blame, as they refuse to permit dissent or allow practices beyond their own norms.

Conan Doyle's Mormons treat women particularly monstrously. There are few female characters to begin with in the text, and the Mormon wives never speak; instead, they are shown as "women who pined and wept, and bore upon their faces the traces of an unextinguishable horror" (97). The younger Strangerson and Drebber bicker over who will get to marry Lucy, greedily and selfishly treating her and other women as livestock. Young tells Ferrier, "We Elders have many heifers, but our children must also be provided" (99). Brigham Young's reference to the Elders' wives as "heifers," an agricultural term describing female cows who have not given birth, dehumanizes women and depicts Mormons as uncivilized. These Mormons view women as breeding cows they can mistreat through kidnapping and secretive violence. Fillingham notes Lucy is viewed not as a recipient of love but as an economic opportunity, which highlights "the evils of Mormon marriage in a way that hardly limits them to Mormons or to Utah" (676). For Conan Doyle, Mormon polygamous sexual deviance abuses women, whose perspective we never see. Lucy falls in love with a stranger (whom the Mormons call a "Gentile"), and Ferrier approves as "he's a Christian, which is more than these folk here, in spite o' all their praying and preaching" (100). Polygamous marriage, to Ferrier, renders Mormons less than Christian, despite their claims to primitive Christianity and their technical Protestant status. Ferrier refuses to force Lucy to marry one of the elder's sons, even when Brigham Young gets involved. This leads to the receipt of threatening messages for defying "the Prophet and the Council of the Four" (105). Hope rescues them, and they flee, but eventually, the Mormons catch them, kill John, and force Lucy to marry Drebber, breaking her heart and killing her as well (prompting the first half's revenge killings Hope attributes not to his own hand but to God's). The text says Drebber's

primary desire in marrying her was to inherit “Ferrier’s property,” so he does not even mourn Lucy’s death (120). Even individual Mormons are depicted as power-hungry, greedy, and evil. As Homer writes, in the first Sherlock Holmes story “the real villain is Mormonism itself,” in part because to Conan Doyle Mormonism is “a counterfeit form of spiritualism” (299). Dearinger and Fillingham both suggest Conan Doyle’s Mormons go beyond mere caricatures; however, these renderings are clearly anti-Mormon. Whatever Conan Doyle’s motives for this portrayal of Mormons as Gothic fanatics, the Mormon’s malignant nature justifies Hope’s revenge.

Conan Doyle’s brand of Mormons, a dangerous, violent cult that abuses women, is completely unsympathetic. Even in their external bodies, Hope’s Mormon victims are physically repulsive. Watson describes Drebber’s body as having a “baboon-like countenance” that tells of “vice of the most malignant type,” making him feel a strange “gratitude for him who had removed its owner from the world” (44). In death, Drebber wears “an expression of horror” and “hatred, such as I have never seen upon human features. This malignant and terrible contortion, combined with the low forehead, blunt nose, and prognathous jaw gave the dead man a singularly simious and ape-like appearance” (27). Watson’s description dehumanizes Drebber, suggesting an animal nature about his corpse.<sup>78</sup> Witnesses recall his equally monstrous personality. The landlady where Drebber had been staying describes him as a drunk who harasses young girls, including her daughter. He is “coarse in his habits and brutish in his ways,” rarely sober, and sexually deviant and perverse (60). Strangerson is no better than Drebber. As Ronald R. Thomas notes, fiction as well as criminology from this period often connects “questions of *personal* identity and physiology with questions of *national* identity and security in ways that redefine the relation of an individual’s body with the body politic” (655). As

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<sup>78</sup> His animalistic body also reflects contemporary ideas about crime, Darwinian regression, and Cesare Lombroso’s criminal typology.

criminality came to be linked with “the identifiable foreignness of the suspect’s body” and concerns around “national security” rose, “criminal identity became inextricably linked with physiology and nationality” (Thomas 659). In fiction and racist criminology, foreign bodies were often conflated with criminal bodies, and identity markers of an outsider rendered one suspicious. Conan Doyle’s physical descriptions depict the Mormons as undeniable villains whose status as criminals overlaps with their status as religious *and* national foreigners. Gothic fanaticism helps support this portrayal.

Additionally, Conan Doyle depicts Mormon leader Brigham Young as cruel and dominating, forcing his will on others. Historian John G. Turner writes that the historical Young was “blunt spoken, pugnacious, and sometimes profane” but also marked by “his dedication, energy, and tenacity” (2). Young sparked various controversies and dealt with external accusations of “ecclesiastical tyranny, licentiousness, and even murder” (Turner 4). However, Jack Tracy resists Conan Doyle’s portrait of the leader, contending that “Brigham Young’s heartless fanaticism as portrayed in ‘The Country of the Saints’ slanders a great and compassionate man” (24). Conan Doyle incorporates some of his better qualities; however, his version of Young is one-dimensional and clearly villainous. As a leader he further causes readers to perceive Mormonism, at least Conan Doyle’s brand, as monstrous and categorically non-English. This otherness is particularly evident during his threatening visit to Ferrier, in which he works to intimidate him into forcing Lucy to marry one of the Elders’ sons. He is called “the Mormon chief” rather than any other title (98). Conan Doyle uses tribal language (that Watson may associate with Native Americans or other groups he believes are inferior) to describe Young’s leadership role, further painting him as uncivilized, primitive, and the antithesis of British leadership. During the visit, Young becomes even more threatening, accusing Ferrier of

failing to “embrace the true faith, and conform in every way to its usages” (98). Worse, Young has heard a rumor that Lucy is engaged to an outsider. He reminds Ferrier of “the thirteenth rule in the code of the sainted Joseph Smith[:] ‘Let every maiden of the true faith marry one of the elect; for if she wed a Gentile, she commits a grievous sin.’” (99). Conan Doyle uses Young and this entirely fictional religious tenet to Gothically heighten Mormon insularity and intolerance. The Mormons are totally communal, completely isolated, and willing to resort to violence: a perfect recipe for dangerous fanaticism. Young’s final violent threat to Ferrier inspires fear and underlines Mormon tyranny: “It were better for you ... that you and [Lucy] were now lying blanched skeletons upon the Sierra Blanco, than that you should put your weak wills against the orders of the Holy Four!” (99). This fictive and dangerous Mormon organization has a particularly ominous reputation.<sup>79</sup> The Danites not only punish those who desert Mormonism, but they also take part in kidnapping and bringing back wives for the Elders.<sup>80</sup> Lucy is concerned because “something terrible always happens to” resisters (101). Unfortunately, Lucy and Ferrier do become their next victims. Their defiance prompts Mormon leaders to play God and enact violent punishment. Their delusions of deity further mark them as fanatics.

By contrast to the Mormons, Jefferson Hope is described as ultimately good and just, if a little rugged. Despite being the murderer, he is not the story’s villain. Watson almost admires the captured, agreeable Hope, noting that he “had seldom seen a more powerfully built man; and his dark sunburned face bore an expression of determination and energy which was as formidable as

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<sup>79</sup> It is, according to Tracy, “solely the product of Doyle’s imagination,” as are Drebber, Strangerson, and the organizational structure of the novella’s Mormon church (28).

<sup>80</sup> This is pseudo-historical. Jack Tracy writes of an actual “secretly-sworn society of Mormon extremists in 1838 ... calling itself the ‘Sons of Dan’” that “vowed vengeance on the enemies of Mormonism, on apostates, and on whomever might reveal the group’s secrets. When Joseph Smith discovered the existence of the Danites, he had the band broken up” (42). Once dissolved, Tracy contends the group never reorganized or even “existed in Utah,” despite their status as “favourite device of anti-Mormon writers” for the next half century (43). That said, Tracy admits “organized acts of violence were committed in Utah” (43).

his personal strength” (124). Hope has a clear moral compass and does not “want to be remembered as a common cut-throat,” as he views his actions sanctioned by justice (126). He willingly confesses and reveals the details of the story (minus his shapeshifting accomplice’s identity). Ultimately, his revenge is defined not as murder per se but as an instrument of true justice. Hope killed Drebber and Strangerson as he believes they were “guilty of the death of two human beings – a father and a daughter – and that they had, therefore, forfeited their own lives” (126). Even in forcing poison upon his victims, Hope allows for divine intervention, forcing them to choose between a poisoned pill and a placebo, saying: “Let the high God judge between us. Choose and eat. There is death in one and life in the other. I shall take what you leave. Let us see if there is justice upon the earth, or if we are ruled by chance” (132). Hope leaves the ultimate choice of who will die to God, and since Drebber selects the poison, it is clear that justice in the narrative does exist, for these evil Mormons as well as for Hope.

The boundary between Hope’s pursuit of vengeance and fanaticism is somewhat unclear. In a sense, he is like Heathcliff in his lifelong quest for revenge; however, Hope’s vengeance is taken on behalf of another and is thus a nobler and unselfish action. He is undoubtedly willing to resort to violence for his cause, a pursuit that does consume his life. His success seems like a reward for his fanatical pursuit of revenge, but this violence is importantly completed by an American, not by one of the British characters. The text views Hope as somewhat heroic, but he is not fully endorsed or praised. As earlier, when Ferrier’s labor is blessed for his refusal to conform to Mormon marriage, Hope is blessed not only in achieving justice but also in completing the goal he sacrifices his life for. He dies at peace, of a heart condition, “knowing that my work in this world is done, and well done. ... There is nothing left for me to hope for, or

to desire” (127).<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, Hope is a sympathetic character we are meant to support. The narrative rewards him, suggesting that he is in the right, a “proper” Protestant because he thinks for himself, and a “true” Christian, as Ferrier believes. He can hence be supported and understood by English readers, even though he must ultimately die for his crimes. Hope is no religious fanatic, but his obsessive revenge quest pursues justice against Gothicized fanatics whose insularity protects them from other arbiters of accountability. His fanaticism destroys his life, as it prevents him from moving on from Lucy’s death or building strong communities, but he willingly trades these things to avenge her in a version of justice beyond English norms.

It is worth asking whether or not Sherlock Holmes himself could be considered a fanatic, not in the religious sense, but in a broader understanding of the term. After all, he does in some ways fit the archetype of the mad scientist, studying not alchemy but crime. He is even called “an enthusiast in some branches of science” (Conan Doyle 3). Despite the difference in late-century use of the term “enthusiasm,” the word harkens back to earlier religious connotations of fanaticism and obsession. Holmes shares various attributes with fanatics, particularly his single-mindedness and solitude, although he lacks the overindulgence in emotion common to fanatics like Catherine, Heathcliff, or Wringhim. Dearing argues that Sherlock Holmes “operates within a system of his own creation wherein he is the ultimate authority” (64). This self-authorization, too, can be a fanatical trait. Fanatic or not, Sherlock Holmes is patently an individual, and scholars agree he is an individualist that operates outside of institutions. As a consulting detective, he is not part of the police, and he resembles criminals in a sense due to his status as an outsider. Berberich calls him, despite this, the “quintessential detective” and “quintessential Englishman, the seemingly perfect representative of a stable and permanent Englishness” (55).

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<sup>81</sup> Technically, Lucy also died of a broken heart.

This is interesting, given his idiosyncrasies and insistence upon working outside English institutions like the police. Holmes is anti-authoritarian, more invested in solving crime than stopping it altogether. This blurs where Conan Doyle seems to suggest authority should actually belong: not in church, police, or state, but in the individual.

Individualism seems to have been important to Conan Doyle as well as his most famous character. Stephen Knight argues that through Holmes Conan Doyle both “popularise[d] and naturalise[d] rational individualism” (68). He also points out that Holmes’ heroism is defined as “the individual understanding and resolving contemporary problems” (Stephen Knight 73).<sup>82</sup> Individuality, for Knight and others, is key to understanding what is special about Sherlock Holmes, who emerged in a culture that resisted an increasingly collectivized world. Jim Barloon suggests Holmes repeatedly affirms not only his own individuality but the “uniqueness of every man and woman,” significantly “at a time when the legitimacy and viability of this sort of individualism were under attack on several fronts” (34). As an individualist, Holmes tends to prefer operating outside of social norms and institutions. Functioning outside the system benefits him, but it also endangers him. He has serious knowledge gaps and can be highly difficult to work (and live) with. While he cooperates with others like Scotland Yard and engages with other outsiders like the street urchins, he prefers to float among groups rather than to lodge his sense of self and identity within one group. His sense of superiority enables him to do this.

The difference between Holmes’ idiosyncrasies and the Mormons’ fanaticism seems to lie in an ability to exist alongside those who think and believe differently. Holmes is in some ways rescued from the ultimate dangers of fanaticism through community. Although he is in

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<sup>82</sup> “The dispassionate isolation arising from Holmes’s scientific powers meshes with his aloof, sometimes arrogant personal qualities. . . . His moody reveries, strangely atonal violin-playing, arrogant, dismissive tone to Watson are all other parts of the model of a superior being, a superman whose world differs from that of limited and often baffled people like Watson” (Stephen Knight 79).

some ways an outsider and operates beyond the scope of the police, he does cooperate with them and has a close friendship with John Watson. Holmes is not intolerant. Watson plays a significant role in the development of the character and moderates Holmes for readers, serving as narrator, interpreter, and apologist for the consulting detective. Having a close friend with a more diverse (if Anglo-centric) worldview helps prevent Holmes from the isolation that leads to fanaticism, as does his willingness to engage with others. Holmes has community and is not completely isolated; the Mormons refuse diverse community and actively choose group isolation.

Although relationship with Watson helps Holmes resist fanaticism, both of these characters use the discourses of fanaticism and xenophobia to strengthen their sense of what it means to be British, to reinforce their concepts of heroism, and to uphold notions of hegemonic empire. In his description of his time at war, Watson depicts foreigners as dangerous enemies, praising the British army. He recalls the 1880 battle of Maiwand in which British forces suffered nearly 1000 casualties and were forced to retreat (Robson). Watson was wounded, but thankfully his (presumably British) orderly Murray was there to rescue him from the “murderous Ghazis” (2).<sup>83</sup> It is clear from the start that to John, religious others are dangerous. He is predisposed to reading Mormons, like Muslims, through the lens of religious prejudice. These biases saturate his narrative. Watson is generally “the representative of family solidity and bourgeois morality”; he “personifies the virtues of middle-class manhood” (Stephen Knight 84). His skepticism and stability stem in part from his professional middle-class ethos and his international experiences. The fact that he was wounded, despite being a doctor, suggests being abroad poses dangers for British citizens. In a sense, his experiences confirm the risks of interacting in a global world, a motif that persists in most Holmes stories. Conan Doyle himself had an “ideological commitment

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<sup>83</sup> “Ghazi” refers to a Muslim fighter battling non-Muslims, and its use here seems pejorative.

to imperialism” that, despite overlapping with his investment in “debates around science and spiritualism,” influences the novella’s consistent confirmation of perceived English superiority (Burrow 313). Berberich observes that Conan Doyle “consciously created, celebrated and upheld an Englishness that further popularised political attitudes towards national identity at the time” (56). Whether this cementing of identity happens primarily through positive creation of English figures like Holmes and Watson or through negative and violent images of foreigners, *A Study in Scarlet* works to structure what it means to be properly British, and part of that includes being a proper (if loosely defined) Protestant.

The role of institutions in *A Study in Scarlet* is fraught. On the one hand, certain institutions like the established Anglican church hold room for a degree of difference of opinion, leading to an ecumenicism that can quell fanaticism. However, other institutions like Mormonism clearly seem to cause fanaticism. Conan Doyle could have seen Anglicanism as useful, but given Holmes’ staunch individualism, the author’s own Spiritualism, and the continued focus on British superiority throughout the canon, Anglicanism itself seems no balm. As James McGrory points out, nearly equal evidence exists for Sherlock Holmes being a believer, agnostic, or atheist, although his religion is an infrequent concern of the stories (33).<sup>84</sup> However, Anglicanism construed broadly builds in an ecumenical attitude as it is a state church meant to accommodate a range (albeit a limited one) of Protestant beliefs and practice; this feature that allows for diversity within unity could be what Conan Doyle sees as an actual solution to the problem of fanaticism. Writing about earlier Gothic, Mark Canuel specifically identifies the genre as “an attempt to identify and manage the adherents of diverse, incompatible

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<sup>84</sup> McGrory concludes, based on his impression of Holmes’ attraction to a “larger, broader type of religious organization” and his willingness to imitate clergymen, but not Anglican clergymen, that Sherlock Holmes *could* be “a devout Anglican believer” (37).

beliefs” (7). Anglicanism, he says, splits the state from belief and oversees a variety of beliefs, allowing for individual interpretations. He believes early Gothic depicts Catholicism as dangerous because “monastic institutions” feature unstable and exclusive power structures that the genre’s heroes work to change (Canuel 7). *A Study in Scarlet* similarly depicts an isolated and exclusive religious system through American Mormonism. Like early Gothic renderings of Catholicism, it is a private, self-enclosed, and isolated ecclesiastical (and legal) authority that fuses the public and private, endangering nonconformists. Conan Doyle reiterates that the individuality English Protestantism seems to inherently value can prevent fanaticism. Instead of reconfirming Anglicanism, *A Study in Scarlet* centers the idea of permitting individualistic approaches to religion, which cannot be found with the Mormons. Conan Doyle critiques Mormonism for its inability to accept outsiders and dissent, and he depicts America as a place where outsiders who group together become dangerous as they lose their individuality.

*A Study in Scarlet* is invested in protecting England from foreign murderous threats, whether they appear in John’s military service in Afghanistan, the German political crimes newspapers fear, or Mormon Americans.<sup>85</sup> Significantly, Hope attempts to mislead the police by leaving “evidence” that points to German Socialists. Newspapers like the *Daily Telegraph* pick up on this red herring, spotlighting “political refugees and revolutionists” as potential suspects since “Socialists had many branches in America, and the deceased had, no doubt, infringed their unwritten laws, and been tracked down by them” (53). Political societies rather than religious ones are the first potential culprit linked to the murder. As Fillingham points out, at the time the story was written, “Socialism represented as full an intervention into private life as the Mormon Church possibly could” (682). Socialism, emerging from German thinkers like Marx and Engels,

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<sup>85</sup> Who, Poul Arenfalk argues, could be Mormon missionaries, which would render the solving of the case not only just but also protective of English religion from foreign invasion (130).

seemed to similarly threaten individuality as a foreign method of political organization. Hobsbawm locates socialism at the opposite end of a spectrum from nationalism, “and the advance of one as equivalent to the retreat of the other” (123). Socialism, an economic system, had the potential to become international since Marx thought nation-states would fall away. However, in this story, the *idea* of socialism threatens British hegemony, which must be reaffirmed through the solving of the case. Rather than engaging with Marxist ideas, the novella’s use of socialism casts it, like the Mormons, as a foreign and suspicious threat. Hope knows its potential to mislead others, and, like Mormonism, the text’s socialism becomes not an authentic portrait but its own monster that does not allow people to act or think for themselves.

The threat is undeniably and inescapably foreign. Watson reports that the *Telegraph* “article concluded by admonishing the Government and advocating a closer watch over foreigners in England” (53). It is unclear whether Watson endorses the *Telegraph*’s perspective; however, his own narration of the story and perspectives on identity and national affiliation suggest that he, too, shares concerns about foreigners. After the case is solved and Hope dies, the *Echo* attributes the success to Lestrade and Gregson. It says the murders were

the result of an old standing and romantic feud, in which both love and Mormonism bore a part. It seems that both the victims belonged, in their younger days, to the Latter Day Saints, and Hope, the deceased prisoner, hails also from Salt Lake City. If the case has had no other effect, it, at least, brings out in the most striking manner the efficiency of our detective police force, and will serve as a lesson to all foreigners that they will do wisely to settle their feuds at home, and not to carry them on to British soil. (143)

This warning reiterates the sense of British superiority in the novel and in the Holmes canon, which is broadly imperialistic. Holmes receives no public credit for the case, but normalcy is

reinstated for those in England as British detectives police the nation's borders and reinforce British hegemony.

Notably, Conan Doyle depicts Mormons unfavorably specifically in a Gothic detective novel where Gothicized religion makes the villains more villainous and the foreigners more foreign. Gothic tropes heighten their religious otherness, and Gothic fanaticism becomes a literary tool useful for asserting cultural hegemony. Additionally, as a detective novel, *A Study in Scarlet* invites readers to do some of their own inspecting. Holmes investigates the murders while readers can put the Mormons on trial, interrogating the limits of religion and working to figure out where exactly these Mormons went wrong. The answers readers could come to include their blind faith, self-enforced isolation, violence, or intolerance for diverse community. Without proper British institutions, foreign religions, even Protestant ones, become fanatical and dangerous in *A Study in Scarlet*, which serves to preserve and praise English religious and national identity. Conan Doyle does not specifically articulate what *does* constitute "proper" English middle-class religion; however, American Mormonism is presented as a clear aberration. Conan Doyle revises Gothic topoi and frames to sell novels but also partly to criticize blind religion that leaves no space for individuality. Although it would seem English religion might be praised in such a blatantly Anglophile novella, Conan Doyle does not seem to believe institutions themselves necessarily prevent harmful beliefs and practice. Nowhere does the novella commend the established Church of England, and positive religious identities take on a generic Protestant flavor. Given that the novel's hero, Holmes, is such an individualist, it seems that working outside or alongside any sort of establishment is more worthwhile, for Conan Doyle, than inside of one. Anglicanism itself may not prevent religion from turning fanatical; however, the

generally tolerant stance it takes towards outsiders remains useful not only in preventing poor religious belief and practice but also, it seems, in preventing crime.

### *Lois the Witch*

At first glance, Elizabeth Gaskell's earlier novella *Lois the Witch* operates in a similar vein as *A Study in Scarlet*. The story, originally serialized in *All the Year Round* in October 1859, chronicles the dangers of the New World for the heroine, young orphaned English Lois, who is accused of witchcraft and executed by Puritans. Whereas Conan Doyle's Mormons stand in for a specifically American Protestantism, Gaskell's historically based, Gothicized account focuses on the Puritans and the Salem witch trials. Matters of national identity are at stake in the novella, for Lois and for readers. Clare Pettitt suggests "Lois the Witch" is a thoroughly transatlantic story that "seems to enact the risks of distance and the inevitability of misunderstanding between foreigners irreconcilably remote from one another" (599). She notes that throughout the entire story, "messages are distorted" (Pettitt 599). Similarly, in the story Gaskell demonstrates how the Puritans distort religion itself. Gaskell's Puritans, like Conan Doyle's Mormons, threaten Lois through their Gothically fanatic religious practices. However, Gaskell's story functions more complexly than Conan Doyle's, and I suggest she uses Lois' sad demise as a juridical parable, reminding readers that although the Salem Witch trials happened in America in a foreign brand of Protestantism, their fanatical roots are deeply English. Readers must condemn fanaticism in a historical other before checking similar tendencies in their own religious practices.

Elizabeth Gaskell is well known for being a Unitarian, albeit an unorthodox one whose congregation was sometimes scandalized by her writing (Uglow 310). Foster and other critics have identified Unitarianism as a crucial element of Gaskell's perspectives and writing. As Felicity James observes, Unitarianism can be difficult to define, particularly since those who

identified as Rational Dissenters often held a broad range of perspectives; however, they share a denial of the Trinity, viewing God as one and Christ as a human example rather than God incarnate. Nineteenth-century Unitarians had a reputation for socially beneficial works and an ability to cooperate with those who held other faiths: they were “[t]olerant, progressive, and liberal” (Chapple 167). Dissenters of the period, regardless of creed, tended to unite around “a common insistence on the importance of individual interpretation of the scriptures,” and Unitarians in particular prioritized “the individual’s intellectual enquiry” (Felicity James 3-4). As Elizabeth Williams writes, their willingness to accommodate “so many shades of belief also made them the most tolerant of denominations” (9). Scholars like Rebecca Styler and Suzy Clarkson Holstein have recognized Unitarian impulses in *Lois the Witch*.<sup>86</sup>

Gaskell exemplified the nineteenth-century Unitarian reputation for tolerance and reason in her life and writing. For instance, she “found High Anglican services spiritually nourishing as well as beautiful,” and despite maintaining a strong belief that Christ was not God incarnate, she found Anglican materials from John Keble and John Henry Newman useful in “private devotions” (Chapple 173). This tolerance extends to her novels and stories, where she presents a variety of Christian perspectives, Anglican and Dissenting, with what Duthie calls a “lack of sectarian bias” (151). This tolerance seems primarily Protestant and Christian in nature, as Gaskell “maintained strong views on Roman Catholic doctrine” and was horrified when “her daughter showed signs of converting in the 1860s” (Styler “Problem” 44). However, prominent liberal Anglicans like F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley appreciated her work; this led her “to move in very superior Anglican circles” (Chapple 174). Broad Church Anglicanism, which also

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<sup>86</sup> Styler suggests Gaskell’s use of a specifically Unitarian source, timely criticism of Calvinism, and historical method heighten the sense in which Gaskell’s story is a Unitarian tale (“Lois” 73).

valued intellect and engaged with Higher Criticism, aligned with a variety of the social goals revealed in Gaskell's 1850s work.

*Lois the Witch* follows Lois Barclay, an English girl who is sent to New England to live with her extended Puritan family after her own parents' deaths. Religious conflicts of various kinds arise between Lois and her cruel aunt Grace and her cousins, Faith, Prudence, and Manasseh, who is mentally ill. At times, he feels "possessed with a devil," hearing a "voice that speaks to [him] continually" (Gaskell 194). His visions, which are especially eerie since it is unclear if they are a product of his own fantasies or actually supernatural, tell him that the only way for Lois to survive is to marry him. She refuses and finds herself friendless among her cold relatives. Her adherence to Anglicanism and rejection of Puritan culture lead her to be one of the outsiders accused of witchcraft in Gaskell's fictionalized version of the Salem witch trials. Alongside Native American enslaved women Nattee and Hota, Lois is eventually tried for witchcraft and executed by the Puritans. Feminist critics have usefully unlocked some of Gaskell's suggestions about gender and power in *Lois the Witch*.<sup>87</sup> In addition to being of interest to feminist scholars, *Lois the Witch* is also deeply religious, employing Gothicized fanaticism and the ambiguous supernatural to advocate for religious tolerance.

Gaskell's Puritans are religious fanatics operating in the Gothic tradition. Gothicized fanaticism in *Lois the Witch*, as in *A Study in Scarlet*, initially defines British religious identity against a fictionalized form of historical American Protestantism. Gothic fiction often renders foreign forms of belief fanatical as a means of discrediting not only other religions, but other cultures and ways of life. As America continued to become a cultural and imperial rival,

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<sup>87</sup> Deborah Wynne argues Gaskell uses the witch trials to suggest female hysteria is "a desperate response to repressive political and domestic regimes" rather than an innate biological quality (86). Diana Wallace contends Gaskell's historical Gothic stories "offer a searing proto-feminist indictment of the vulnerability of women and children within structures which support and even encourage male power and violence" (68).

reasserting English identity became a common literary theme. *Lois the Witch* cements and centers a surface-level generic English identity through religious representation. The discourse of fanaticism shows Englishness as rational and tolerant while the foreign becomes fanatical; however, Gaskell goes beyond accusing American Puritans of fanaticism and eventually turns the lens back upon the reader. I suggest Gaskell uses Lois' sad demise as a juridical parable, reminding readers that even though the Salem Witch trials happened in America in a foreign brand of Christian Protestantism, their fanatical roots are deeply English. Nineteenth-century readers are repeatedly reminded that they are the audience for whom the lesson is intended. The narrator points out,

it was not Nattee alone, nor young imaginative girls alone, that believed in these stories.

We can afford to smile at them now; but our English ancestors entertained superstitions of much the same character at the same period, and with less excuse, as the circumstances surrounding them were better known, and consequently more explicable by common sense than the real mysteries of the deep, untrodden forests of New England. (161)

*Lois the Witch* ultimately asks readers to condemn fanaticism in a historical other before interrogating their own religious practices and beliefs, regardless of affiliation or nation.

Gaskell's incorporation of Puritan historicity within this story increases her engagement with the Gothic and heightens the sense of a realistic cultural threat. Like *A Study in Scarlet*, it envisions the historical past as a setting where horror abounds and traces residues of historical horror for modern readers. The past intrudes upon the present, for the characters within the novel and for readers forced to square with this history. Ironically, Gaskell reveals that the difference between the past and present is not as vast as it seems. Gaskell relied on Unitarian minister Charles W. Upham's *Lectures on Witchcraft, Comprising a History of the Delusions in Salem, in*

1692 as her primary source, likely, as Kranzler points out, patterning Lois on Upham's description of Rebecca Nurse (364). Gaskell grounds her portrait through the use of historical figures like Mather and Hathorne; in fact, as Foster points out, the work includes part of Mather's "actual address to the Salem community, as printed in his 1689 *Memorable Providences*" (141). Historical Puritanism becomes, like Catholicism, a Gothicized religious model. Kranzler notes that actual "Puritans sought to differentiate themselves from Anglicanism and from Catholicism," rooting their beliefs in ideas from Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin, emphasizing "individual salvation through conversion," simplifying religious services by removing *The Book of Common Prayer*, and expressing "a now-famous moral and religious earnestness" with a "rigid acceptance of doctrine, and a disapproval of ritual in worship as well as in daily life" (354). Puritanism was considered by many an "ultra-Protestant threat to mainstream Anglicanism," leading to its being "troped as itself a kind of Catholicism" in Gothic depictions like Gaskell's (O'Malley 25). The Gothic paints both as sexually different in their commitments to extreme celibacy, despite their vastly different ecclesiological structures.<sup>88</sup> These anxieties emerge in *Lois the Witch*, where, despite lacking the sexually salacious implications of early Gothic anti-Catholicism, Puritanism becomes a focal point for deep concern. Although they are sexually deprived rather than sexually depraved like Conan Doyle's Mormons or early Gothic Catholics, Gaskell's Puritans practice improper forms of Protestantism, with grave consequences. As in Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the Gothic mode enables a critique of Calvinist theology and practice by using fictionalized versions of supernaturally inflected history. Gaskell uses Gothicized Puritanism to warn against the negative powers of groupthink and superstition, as the fanaticism Puritans foster leads to innocent death.

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<sup>88</sup> Catholic authority is held in an external system; most Puritans were self-governed and could come from a wide range of denominations.

Lois, unlike the Puritans, holds no Calvinist beliefs. To them, her faith is completely foreign, making her an apropos scapegoat.

This story, despite differing from many traditionally Gothic texts, shares the genre's topoi and concerns. Gaskell wrote a variety of stories in the Gothic mode, of which Foster argues *Lois the Witch* is "the most powerful" (123).<sup>89</sup> Elements that have led her work to be classified as Gothic include her "creation of atmosphere, building of suspense," and "ability to shock" (Foster 109). Gaskell specifically, as Styler points out, "uses Gothic for moral purposes," employing the genre's "symbolic language to explore the theme of evil" ("Problem" 33). The novella also engages the supernatural, which I contend plays a deeply ambiguous role in the story. Most critics read the story as rational, employing something akin to Radcliffe's explained supernatural; however, the text shows clear evidence Faith and Nattee attempt actual witchcraft and fulfills pagan and Puritan prophecies. Both the Barford witch's ominous declaration to Lois that "none shall save thee when thou art brought up for a witch" and Manasseh's vision of Lois, should she refuse to marry him, "as a corpse" come to pass (Gaskell 150, 178). This ambiguous supernatural ensconces the work even more deeply in the Gothic. Lois, a naive, religious, trapped young woman, also meets the criteria for a Gothic heroine, although unlike Radcliffe's heroines (but like Lucy Ferrier), her beloved arrives too late to be of any use rescuing her.

Gaskell expresses concerns about fanaticism in *Lois the Witch*, a topic she also engages outside the Gothic. Duthie suggests her "nonconformist inheritance" heightened her "awareness of the dangers of religious fanaticism," recording that Gaskell describes Continental historical religious persecution in nonfiction essays like "Traits and Stories of the Huguenots" and "An

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<sup>89</sup> Gaskell used the Gothic mode closer to the end of her life, producing *Lois the Witch*, "The Ghost in the Garden Room," "The Grey Woman," "A Dark Night's Work," "An Italian Institution," "The Cage at Cranford," and "How the First Floor Went to Crowley Castle" for *All the Year Round* (Foster *Elizabeth* 144).

Accursed Race” (150). In “The Heart of John Middleton,” a short story published in *Household Words* in December 1850, Gaskell takes on the perspective of John Middleton, “a fanatical Ranter or Primitive Methodist fired by stories of a vengeful Old Testament God” (Chapple “Unitarian Dissent” 165). Middleton’s testimony bears witness to his own religious conversion from a violent nonbeliever to a fervent preacher. Initially, his incipient Christianity, sparked by admiration for a young woman named Nelly, consists primarily of an admiration of Old Testament vengeance narratives, as Middleton wants a God who could “take my cause in hand, and revenge me on mine enemy” (Gaskell “The Heart of John Middleton” 154). A Methodist meeting later attracts him because of its connection to nature and inclusivity; this church meets “right under [God’s] great dome” and consists of individuals who are “care-worn, diseased, sorrowful, criminal” (154-5). Middleton appreciates the plain-spokenness of these dissenters and draws strength from his newfound religious practice. He becomes “zealous and fanatical,” refusing sympathy to all “beyond the set to whom I had affiliated myself”; he says he “would have persecuted all who differed from me, if I had only the power” (160). In short, Middleton’s conversion leads directly into his fanaticism. He still desires revenge against an old romantic rival, who conveniently stumbles upon their door during a storm. Middleton sees himself as the Jael of the Old Testament who takes in her enemy, Sisera, and kills him in his sleep.<sup>90</sup> He plans to do the same, but his wife, who dies that very night, persuades him not to. This story highlights Gaskell’s concerns about fanaticism, associated here not with foreigners but with another historicized, presumably Methodist, fanatic. Although the story ends abruptly, Middleton’s final turn away from violent enthusiasm toward grace and forgiveness happens through the death of his wife, who on her deathbed can forgive even the man who sent her there. Fanaticism is a

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<sup>90</sup> See Judges 4.

problem for which Gaskell's solution is no creed or sectarian affiliation. Instead, forgiveness and tolerance, attained here, as in *Lois the Witch*, through the death of a female scapegoat, establish healthy religion. Gaskell persistently links intolerance to persecution.

Religious toleration was central to Gaskell's outlook. Mark Canuel suggests the established Anglican church supported a tolerant (if not quite fully ecumenical) stance, not only in religion but also in the political arena (3). Further, he thinks the Gothic was specifically useful to these ends as its tropes permitted individuals to evaluate methods of "social organization" (Canuel 55-7). Anglicanism, while not fully ecumenical, exemplifies some of these tolerant strands embodied in Lois. As the Church of England continued to envision itself (in theory, if not in practice) as a *via media* between Catholicism and Puritanism, particularly Broad Church Anglicanism intended to unite a wide range of stances as a government religion. Gaskell was admired by and friends with Broad Church Anglicans, and it is notable that in this story her heroine seems aligned with them. However, in *Lois the Witch*, belief and points of doctrinal contention seem far less important than the way Puritan intolerance and power leads to accusation and death. Puritan maltreatment of others does stem from bad beliefs; yet, Gaskell's portrait suggests practice is more important than belief. Institutions like the Anglican church are not the solution, as Lois' memories indicate witch hunts existed in England, too. Instead, a tolerant attitude and rational approach to understanding the self and others become crucial.

Gaskell employs various mechanisms to show readers these Puritans may be dangerous fanatics. Simultaneously entirely communal and radically isolated, they are susceptible to fanatical behaviors on the individual and community levels. English emigrant Lois is decidedly *not* a Puritan, rendering her an outsider in New England. Her father was an Anglican clergyman, and "a Jacobite, as the adherents of the Stuarts were beginning at this time to be called. His

father, again, had been a follower of Archbishop Laud; so Lois had hitherto heard little of the conversation, and seen little of the ways of the Puritans” (Gaskell 145). She is predisposed to suspicion toward the Puritans as her familial affiliations and roots lie with the Church of England. Her family’s recent history involves the English Civil War, which sets the stage for Gaskell’s story invested in religious conflicts of various kinds. On her deathbed, Lois’ equally Anglican mother blames the “cruel men of the Commonwealth” for leaving Lois “very friendless” (141). The English Civil War has not only immediate consequences but also leaves Lois nowhere to go but America as her father’s brother was killed during the war. Unfortunately, her mother’s only brother, “a schismatic,” argued with Lois’ father before he left for the New World without saying goodbye, despite being “a kind lad until he took up these new-fangled notions” (141).<sup>91</sup> Her mother sees his Puritanism as a fanatic brand of religion.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, Gaskell’s Salem itself experienced a recent religious schism, “a great division in the religious body,” in which “Pastor Tappau had been the leader of the more violent, and ultimately, the successful party” (163). This schism, like the witch trials, descends from Upham’s history, which attributes the actual trials to a variety of factors like “the isolated and anomalous status of the village, property disputes involving the Putnam family, and the development of factions centered around Parris and the minister he had replaced” (Wallace 89). Additionally, the division seems to mirror the English Civil War, reminding readers that the two countries and forms of Protestantism, despite a variety of differences, are far more similar than Grace or Lois would like to admit. These backdrops of conflicts between people who profess similar identity markers parallel the conflict that leads to Lois’ death in that they occur among individuals who all

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<sup>91</sup> Schismatic is defined by Kranzler as “Independent or Presbyterian who separated from the Church of England on the basis of doctrinal disagreement” (354).

<sup>92</sup> A variety of denominations could be Puritans; the Hicksons and their town seem to be Presbyterian due to the use of the word “schismatic” and their highly Calvinistic outlook.

purportedly profess and practice a version of Protestant Christianity. Lois, completely new to the world of Puritanism, resists it as Anglicanism is deeply embedded in her religious heritage.

Lois learns from mentors and her own experiences that these Puritans are strange, cold, and ultimately dangerous. Captain Holderness, who serves as temporary guardian for Lois during her transatlantic journey, warns Lois about them, observing, “They are a queer set, these New Englanders ... They are rare chaps for praying; down on their knees at every turn of their life. Folk are none so busy in a new country” (Gaskell 143). Holderness’s perspective makes us question the Puritans, as their idle hands, spent even in prayer, become the devil’s playthings. Holderness observes the Puritans “are raging like heathens – at least, as like as godly folk can be – for the loss of their charter” (143).<sup>93</sup> Their reaction to this loss merits a comparison to “heathens,” despite their ultra-religiousness. In the background of this story is an incident with French pirates and colonists. Holderness recalls these “French Papist pirates” who kidnapped and raped a woman who cried out for help: “Save me from the power of man, O Lord Jesu!” (147). Despite hearing her cries, no one answers or saves her from the Catholic, foreign violence. This faintly prophetic recollection points at the story’s themes: the harm bystanders who do nothing cause, both to this woman and later to Lois, the harm humans cause, and the specific victimization of women in these scenarios. Nearby individuals refuse to save her; they lack “brave hearts or faith enough to go and succour the helpless” and are cursed to forever hear the victim’s cries (147). Puritan Elder Hawkins eventually blames the supernatural for human unwillingness to help, suggesting “the whole vision of the pirates and the cry of the woman” could be “a device of Satan’s” (147). Ascribing the whole incident to the supernatural absolves bystanders from guilt, in Puritan eyes. However, it does not absolve them in readers’, Lois’, or

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<sup>93</sup> “The Massachusetts State Charter was withdrawn by the English Crown in 1685 as a reaction to Puritan refusal to comply with royal policies” (Kranzler 355).

Widow Smith's, who declares "it was no vision; they were real living men who went ashore" (148). Hawkins insists the fault belongs to Satan, attributing evil to various others as he believes "these Red Indians are indeed the evil creatures of whom we read in Holy Scripture; and there is no doubt that they are in league with those abominable Papists, the French people in Canada" (148). In addition to overlooking human error, Hawkins links Native American practices with Satanic ones, tying those in turn to the French and the Catholics with racist discourse. Part of his fanaticism, then, stems from his unwillingness to respect the beliefs of others. For Gaskell, fanaticism is primarily problematic as it is intolerant, insular, and particularly harmful to women. Although Hawkins, too, is depicted as an other, he continues that cycle by enforcing his own fanatic superiority, viewing those unlike him as entirely godless. Threats of pirates and Native Americans concern Lois, whom Holderness warns has "come to a country where there are many perils, both from land and from sea" (148). His observation is true. The greatest risk to the heroine, however, is the Puritans themselves.

Gaskell's Puritans are dangerous, different, and directly contrasted with Anglicans. Lois finds herself amid "Puritan peculiarities" that "make her feel very lonely and strange" (146). She continually compares the Puritanism she dislikes to the Anglicanism her father preached and practiced, keeping up her own Anglicanism, for instance, by singing "the evening hymn she had so often sung in Barford church" (173). Gaskell marks most American Puritans with bizarre emotional and religious difference. For example, Elder Hawkins speaks "with the strong nasal twang of the Puritans," a foreign accent that amplifies the otherness of his harsh and twisted Christian practices (147). Puritan prayers are strange as well as problematic. Lois dislikes Grace's request for Pastor Tappau to pray about her being a "maiden from another land, who hath brought errors of that land as a seed with her, even across the great ocean, and who is letting

even now the little seeds shoot up into an evil tree” (162). The colonizing, enslaving Puritans forget their shared origins across the sea. Lois tells Faith she prefers “the prayers of our Church better” as “No clergyman in England can pray his own words, and therefore it is that he cannot judge of others so as to fit his prayers to what he esteems to be their case” (162). The Anglican institution, in Lois’ eyes, can place guardrails on religious practitioners, although we later find her father’s church did nothing to stop English witch hunts. Lois views institutional structures as able to limit fanaticism, rather than the individualism Conan Doyle highlights in *A Study in Scarlet*. Puritan prayer marks the Americans as different for Lois, but this quirk is not inherently the problem as Lois’ tolerant Anglicanism can accommodate a range of practices. This form of prayer merely signposts later monstrosities as it emphasizes the Puritans’ religious self-authorization. The Puritans are simultaneously extremely communal and extremely isolated, a dangerous combination. This paradox in which the community becomes one self-authorizing individual is what ultimately leads to their fanaticism.

Nowhere is this American fanaticism more evident than in the Hickson family and its main villain, Grace. In addition to refusing to welcome her orphaned niece Lois, she violently opposes other forms of religion, including brands of Protestantism, and demonstrates intolerance and hypocrisy. She accuses Lois’ parents of choosing money over religious loyalties (and aligning themselves with Catholicism despite being Anglicans, because Grace conflates the two), while reveling in the power of her own wealth, pride, and ambition. She remembers Lois’ mother as one “whose husband took the oaths to Charles Stuart, and stuck by his living when all godly men left theirs” (153). This is an “implied insult” (153). Grace intentionally calls the king by the name Charles Stuart, which Kranzler explains “is deliberately contemptuous, denying his legitimacy” (356). Lois retorts, despite having just met her aunt, “They might be godly men who

left their churches on that day of which you speak, madam; but they alone were not the godly men, and no one has a right to limit true godliness for mere opinion's sake" (Gaskell 153). Beyond defending Anglicanism, Lois suggests that godliness is unlimited by opinion as those who left (and stayed) were not "alone" in their godliness. In this, she reiterates the idea of tolerance. Even though Gaskell herself disagreed with Anglicans on matters of theology, it seems she appreciated the ability Canuel suggests it has to nurture a broad range of religious tolerance. Her definition of godliness is not linked to doctrinal minutiae or differences of opinion about practices like baptism or communion; rather, it is linked to the treatment of others. Opinions are an essential component of individual faith, but without a degree of tolerance, faith easily morphs into fanaticism in this story. Gaskell shows Lois' faith as vaguely ecumenical, but more important than her preference for Anglicanism is her ability to practice love and care for others, even as she herself faces execution. Notably, Lois' recollections of the witch hunts and murders in the England of her youth cloud a rosy view of the Church of England by the end of the story, which ultimately values tolerance over loyalty to a specific denomination.

Gaskell's Puritans miss the mark of many Christian virtues. Even their names are meaningful and ironic. Grace exhibits no grace and no mercy, Prudence lacks prudence, and Faith professes little faith in Puritan religion. Lois means "superior," and despite her ultimate fate and the confirmation of her righteousness, the Puritans treat her as far from superior. Manasseh was a common Biblical Puritan name meaning "one who causes to forget"; it was also the name of "the wicked king of Judah" (Kranzler 356). Manasseh cannot forget his obsession with marrying Lois, which contributes to her condemnation. Grace is especially hateful when Manasseh's visions cast Lois as his desired wife, and she declares they come from an evil spirit because a good one would not have chosen for him "a prelatist and a stranger like this girl"

(Gaskell 179).<sup>94</sup> Grace tells Lois she values her only “as a medicine” to relieve Manasseh’s “disturbed” mind (180). Clearly, these Puritans fail to uphold religious tenets of love and care for others. They distort various doctrines, such as defining godliness as avoiding witchcraft instead of caring for widow and orphan, a task the Puritans certainly do not do for Lois.

The Puritans twist biblical concepts, such as calling witchcraft “the sin without forgiveness” (184). Although the Bible does refer to witchcraft as a sin (punishable, true, by death in the Old Testament), there are in fact biblical Christians with witchcraft in their past, for instance, Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-25). To be fair, the historical Simon the Sorcerer is often considered “the first heretic” and “the father of Gnosticism” (Bruce 184). However, as Luke Timothy Johnson observes, conflicting historical references to Simon paint no one clear picture (146). The point as is relevant to Gaskell’s story of witchcraft is that Simon’s endeavors in sorcery do not automatically disqualify him from participation in the early church, even if his greed and thirst for power might. Puritans have little Biblical basis upon which to suggest witchcraft is categorically unforgivable. The only “unforgivable” sin listed in the New Testament is blaspheming the Holy Spirit,<sup>95</sup> which is generally not defined by theologians past or present as witchcraft. Manasseh is the sole Puritan who resists the Puritan misdefinition of unforgivable sin. He studies the Bible to understand whether witchcraft is “the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost,” largely hoping to determine if demonic possession is the root of his mental illness (Gaskell 193). He alone seems to pick up on the Puritans’ strange interpretive choice.

The issue of defining unforgivability continues to reveal the Puritan’s textual eisegesis when we look at Gaskell’s later use of the concept of an unforgivable sin, which reappears at the end of the story. Despite purportedly revering the Bible, they continue to misinterpret passages

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<sup>94</sup> “Prelatist” is an anti-Catholic slur, and Lois is decidedly not Catholic.

<sup>95</sup> Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29.

by overlaying them with their own opinions. In their final letter expressing remorse for the witch trials, the Puritans acknowledge their role in “the guilt of innocent blood; which sin, the Lord saith in Scripture, he would not pardon (2 Kings xxiv. 4)” (224). Instead of identifying witchcraft as unforgivable, they now cite an Old Testament passage to define unpardonable sin as violence against the innocent. Their bizarre interpretation seems again linked to their self-authorization. Despite their contrition, the Puritans seem to struggle with interpreting the Bible as this passage refers specifically to Israelite punishment for their unfaithfulness; they are removed from the presence of Yahweh specifically “because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood” (2 Kings 24:3-4, NIV). Gaskell seems to name her character after this king intentionally, linking Lois’ cousin to an evil king of Judah. The original text, translated by T. R. Hobbs as “Yahweh would not forgive this,” carries the connotation that God is unwilling, not unable, to forgive Manasseh’s sins (344). While shedding of innocent blood is persistently represented as abhorrent and evil, countless Biblical examples depict the sin itself as forgivable. Again, the Puritans’ exegetical abilities fail to demonstrate interpretive competency.

Michael Wheeler observes that in Gaskell’s work, “biblical allusion followed a uniquely Unitarian contour” (25). Gaskell likely references these passages with purposeful intent, using Puritan misunderstanding of unpardonable sin as an ironic literary device that heightens her criticism of the Puritan’s self-authorized religion. From Lois’ perspective, the lack of an established church leads to such confused beliefs. Gaskell’s Puritans, despite their constant prayer, lack critical skills or guidance in reading and interpreting the Bible. Extreme self-authorization drives them to misunderstand and misinterpret concepts of unforgivability. Their inability to apply principles of kindness and tolerance leads to cruelty and violence. Gaskell herself was “keenly aware of the harm frequently done by lack of consistency between principles

and practice in a professedly Christian society” (Duthie 155). Notably, Manasseh is the only Puritan shown to actively study the Bible, a copy “brought by his father from England” (Gaskell 193). This moment underlines the fact that all religious practices in *Lois the Witch*, including reading the King James Bible, share English roots, suggesting that the ultimate origin of the sins of the witch trials are not purely American or foreign; rather, they are deeply English.

Manasseh’s mental illness renders him one of the most “other” American Puritans. He is cursed, or gifted, or mentally ill, and the story’s ambiguity leaves readers wondering. When we first meet him, he looks off into the distance, “as if he saw a vision, or dreamed dreams” (156). This biblical allusion suggests, ironically or sincerely, that Manasseh could be a Puritan prophet.<sup>96</sup> Manasseh’s prayer, like other Puritan prayers, becomes “a long prayer for abstract spiritual blessings, for strength to combat Satan, and to quench his fiery darts, and at length assumed, so Lois thought, a purely personal character, as if the young man had forgotten the occasion, and even the people present, but was searching into the nature of the diseases that beset his own sick soul” (157). Grace and the family hide his affliction due to the social stigma and his status as only son. He fixes his eyes on marrying Lois, incorporating a supernatural argument in response to her resistance. He says, “It is borne in upon me – verily I see it as in a vision – that thou must be my spouse, and no other man’s. Thou canst not escape what is foredoomed,” which, he believes, is her death if she will not marry him (170). Sadly, his vision does come to pass, whether through supernatural or natural causes. Lois resists the idea his suit is God’s will, arguing his vision “is not ‘borne in upon me’, as you Puritans call it” (170). Nonetheless, Manasseh believes (in what may be another critique of Calvinism) that Lois is predestined to be his wife, as his vision portrayed her “as one of the elect, robed in white” (170). Tellingly, Lois

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<sup>96</sup> Gaskell’s phrase specifically references a passage in Joel 2:28, later quoted in Acts 2:17, which describes the bestowing of prophetic abilities.

replies, “I may take a dream to be truth, and hear my own fancies, if I think about them too long” (170). This warning against isolation echoes loudly as Manasseh’s visions in the woods grow more ominous in their content and the degree of belief he places in them. Through Manasseh and the other Puritans, Gaskell criticizes Antinomianism by showing these concepts of predestination are imposed upon Lois by human action, whether we take the story’s witchcraft to be real or imaginary. Manasseh’s own fanaticism, however, differs from the Puritan frenzy that leads to Lois’ death, and importantly, his Puritan prophecy does come to pass. As the vision says, Lois will die a horrible death. Whether Manasseh suffers from mental illness or has a second sight is ambiguous, but the Puritan deficiencies in understanding and treating him certainly contribute to the eventual witch trials. Manasseh believes his vision and takes part in bringing it into reality.

Grace’s other children also exhibit degrees of mental illness, a trait that Terence Wright points to as highlighting “the general instability of the New World community” (64). Prudence has an utter “lack of natural feeling and impish delight in mischief,” and Faith expresses an extreme degree of “vehemence of unrequited love” (Gaskell 180). As Prudence accuses Lois of witchcraft and Hota dies, Faith smiles “a bad and wicked smile” (201). Faith lacks sympathy, remorse, and concern for others. Louise Henson suggests the Hickson girls feature “a recently defined form of mental derangement, that of moral insanity” (260). The sisters, like their mother and brother, are emotionally stunted; they take pleasure in evil. Throughout the story, only two Puritans are depicted in a flattering light, minor characters Widow Smith and Pastor Nolan. Further, even though the Puritans who cause the trials eventually repent, Lois’ English beau Ralph Lucy aptly notes how futile their penitence is. These Puritans – and Americans – practice improper forms of Protestantism with grave consequences, which seems at first to recenter English religious superiority. They are clear fanatics whose groupthink and intolerance lead them

to use their religion to harm others in a wave of fanaticism that can be linked to their emotional and mental shortcomings. Whether Puritan deficiencies manifest in greed, hostility, intolerance, a proclivity to gossip, or mental illness, Gaskell's Puritans practice a foreign American Protestantism marked with a degree of religious otherness from tolerant Protestant Christianity.

Like Conan Doyle, Gaskell uses Gothicized versions of history to think through concepts of fanaticism. Puritan historical figure Cotton Mather<sup>97</sup> makes an appearance in *Lois the Witch*.<sup>98</sup> Conservative Mather, Kranzler points out, was "often blamed for the Salem witch trials, although he never actually attended one; however, he did not actively speak out against [the trials], and published *The Wonders of the Invisible World, an Account of the Tryals of Several Witches, Lately Executed in New-England (1693)*" (357). As with *A Study in Scarlet*'s Brigham Young, the historical figure provides a useful springboard for a fictionalized villain. Foster notes that Gaskell actually "quotes verbatim" from Mather's own writing (139). Her version of Mather is cold, unemotional, unyielding, and unmerciful. His speech employs a similar "skill which Antony used in his speech to the Romans after Caesar's murder" (Gaskell 203). His rhetorical finesse persuades the fanatic crowd to follow, with disastrous results. Mather recalls an earlier Bostonian incident of "witchcraft" where he claims to have rescued four children from an "Irish witch" (203). His speech is marked with othering impulses as this Puritan leader has no scruples with assigning blame to foreign scapegoats. He declares, in the former case,

it was Satan himself that held power over her. For a very remarkable thing it was, that she was not permitted by that evil spirit to read any godly or religious book, speaking the truth as it is in Jesus. She could read Popish books well enough, while both sight and

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<sup>97</sup> Interestingly, Gaskell actually published some using the pseudonym "Cotton Mather Mills," as her maiden publication signature in *Howitt's Journal* (Uglow 172).

<sup>98</sup> Mr. Hawthorn and Mr. Goodwin, two other historical figures, also serve as background characters.

speech seemed to fail her when I gave her the Assembly's Catechism. Again, she was fond of that prelatical Book of Common Prayer, which is but the Roman mass book in an English and ungodly shape. (203-4)

Mather, like Grace, blurs Catholicism and English Protestantism, which would be unlikely to please either Catholics or English Protestants, and notes the witch can read Catholic materials, showing his belief that Catholicism is itself demonic and evil. This Gothic trope brings to mind *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, in which Wringhim cannot read the Bible he looks at. Though he can see "columns, chapters, and verses ... it was in a language of which [he] was wholly ignorant, and all intersected with red lines, and verses" (Hogg 94). An inability to read the Bible is a Gothic means of discerning whether someone is demonically possessed or practicing witchcraft. Mather observes in this former case that the Book of Common Prayer soothes the accused witch but declares she could never "read the Lord's Prayer, whatever book she met with it in, proving thereby distinctly that she was in league with the devil" (Gaskell 204). This is ironic because Gaskell's Puritans dislike scripted prayers yet use one scripted by Jesus Christ as a test for this alleged witch. Mather's anti-Anglicanism emerges in his hatred of the Book of Common Prayer, a quintessential Church of England text.

Lois' trial reveals how dangerous fanaticism can be. Mather and the other Puritans buy Prudence's falsified fit and accusation, and bystanders do nothing, mirroring the aforementioned incident with the French pirates. Neither Grace nor Faith defends Lois. Faith, who has actually been flirting with supernatural powers, says "It is for God to judge whether thou art a witch, or not" (206). Gaskell's bystanders are just as bad as the accuser, and "[t]hose who might have been, who ought to have been, her friends, were either averse or indifferent to her; though only Prudence made any open outcry against her" (207). Their conformity echoes the crowds who

crucified Christ, as various critics have observed, and Lois steps into the scapegoat role. Fear, prejudice against the foreign Anglican girl, and fanaticism take over. Manasseh is the only one who speaks for her, but in his heretical speech he shares his visions and, more dangerously, critiques Calvinism and determinism. Mather warns him not to blaspheme, but Manasseh continues, sharing his “vision of her death as a condemned witch for many months past” and the voice who declared marrying him was the only “escape for her” (208). Occasionally, his speech borders on reason; however, he blasphemes Puritan orthodoxy, claiming “if Lois was a witch, it had been shown him by prophecy; and if there was prophecy there must be foreknowledge; if foreknowledge, foredoom; if foredoom, no exercise of free will, and, therefore, that Lois was not justly amenable to punishment,” continually “plunging into heresy” (208-9). Manasseh continues endangering himself until his mother undermines him by declaring him mad. He can only be saved through Lois as scapegoat because Gaskell’s Puritans do not accept self-critique.

Notably, Manasseh is the one allowed to directly question Calvinist concepts of predestination, asking why they should be allowed to punish Lois, whose death he has seen “by the spirit of prophecy,” if she simply did “that in which she had no free will?” (208). Although she did nothing, even if she had, he suggests that since she had no choice in the matter they could not rightly punish her. His status as an outsider due to his mental illness equips him to see and question Puritan inconsistencies, but he goes unheard. The merciless Mather and the bloodthirsty Puritans are happy to cast stones at any nonconformist. The crowd believes Manasseh could be “another victim” of witchcraft, a lie Grace latches onto as “a healing balsam for her shame. With wilful, dishonest blindness, she would not see – not even in her secret heart would she acknowledge, that Manasseh had been strange, and moody, and violent long before the English girl had reached Salem” (209-10). Grace’s lies scapegoat Lois and the supernatural as she cannot

accept the reality of her son's madness or heresy. Her position of power protects her son at Lois' expense. The Puritans drag Lois away "from the congregation of Christians" (210). Irony drips from this line as Gaskell's phrasing indicates Christians, not heathens (and not Puritans or Catholics or Anglicans) sacrifice Lois, who was, despite her outsider status, just a short time ago among the congregation herself. This irony asks readers representing a variety of kinds of Christianity to consider how their own practices might perform similar exclusions.

Puritanism is not the only "other" American religion in *Lois the Witch*. Gaskell's Native Americans depict a foreign religious practice without roots in England or Europe. Holderness notes that Puritans (and people in America generally) believe Native Americans could be in league with Satan to affright the Christians out of the heathen country ... Folk get affrighted of the real dangers, and in their fright imagine, perchance, dangers that are not. But who knows? Holy Scripture speaks of witches and wizards, and of the power of the Evil One in desert places; and even in the old country we have heard tell of those who have sold their souls for ever for the little power they get for a few years on earth. (149)

Holderness warns Lois to fear external threats from the forest and sea, not the colonizing Puritans, terrified by Native American religious practice that looks like witchcraft to them. Outside, foreign religion appears dangerous. Nattee, the Native American servant enslaved by Grace and her family, entertains the young girls and scares them with "wild stories" about "the wizards of her race," "weird stories" with

a ghastly, unexpressed suggestion of some human sacrifice being needed to complete the success of any incantation to the Evil One; and the poor old creature, herself believing and shuddering as she narrated her tale in broken English, took a strange, unconscious pleasure in her power over her hearers – young girls of the oppressing race, which had

brought her down into a state little differing from slavery, and reduced her people to outcasts on the hunting-grounds which had belonged to her fathers. (160)

Nattee's stories have great power over the girls and the Puritans, and ironically, both she and Lois become human sacrifices. Nattee loves Faith, but no other white people, hating Pastor Tappau in "an exaggeration of the mute, unspoken hatred of Faith" (164). Her practices, whether real or not, constitute the actual attempts to engage with the occult in the story. Gaskell's sympathetic portrayal acknowledges the harm colonizers have done to Nattee's tribe, yet her religious practices are painted as exotic and pagan. Nattee's stories scare Lois, who is concerned about the possibility of "the double-headed snake" emerging

from each blackberry-bush – that wicked, cunning, accursed creature in the service of the Indian wizards, that had such power over all those white maidens who met the eyes placed at either end of his long, sinuous, creeping body, so that loathe him, loathe the Indian race as they would, off they must go into the forest to seek out some Indian man, and must beg to be taken into his wigwam, abjuring faith and race for ever? (160-1)

The strangeness of this foreign faith is not merely in its enchantment; it is also lodged in Nattee's empowerment through this eerie, magical religion that gives her a modicum of control over the white girls whose families enslave her. These religious legends give an unordinary power to the oppressed race, scaring the Puritans because of difference, a clear sexualized threat, and non-Christian imagery that, especially through icons like the snake, seems demonic. These legends, fully believed by many characters, heighten the text's use of the ambiguous supernatural.

Elizabeth Gaskell uses what I term the ambiguous, rather than the "real" or "explained," supernatural in *Lois the Witch*. Critics like Wynne and Styler read the story as rational, employing something akin to Ann Radcliffe's explained supernatural. Taking a more enchanted

view of the novella, Morse reads Hannah's prophecy as a curse (94), and Holstein acknowledges that "Lois never doubts the existence of witches" (47). Although the primary threat in *Lois the Witch* is certainly human, there is undeniable evidence that supernatural witchcraft *could* exist. The text shows clear evidence that Lois's cousin Faith and the enslaved Nattee attempt actual witchcraft. Nattee and Faith's attempted spells on Mr. Nolan, Pastor Tappau's family, and possibly others *do* seem to work. Additionally, the narrative fulfills both pagan and Puritan prophecies. The visions of Lois' demise by both the Barford witch and by Manasseh are fulfilled. Readers cannot be sure if these events have real, explainable causes or are actually supernatural.

In Walpole and other "male Gothic," the supernatural is undoubtedly real; in Radcliffe and "female Gothic," it is explained as having natural causes.<sup>99</sup> This story resists explaining away or validating paranormal sources for the seemingly supernatural events. Mid-century Gothic continued to play a role in an "ambivalent secularizing process" that redefined the religious experience, as Diane Long Hoeveler argues. She writes that ambivalence about the supernatural and about secularization led to "an imaginative space in which both the material (science and reason) and the supernatural (God and the devil) coexisted as equally powerful explanatory paradigms" (Hoeveler *Gothic* 6). Gothic forms granted an ambiguity in answering questions about the supernatural, leaving explanations open ended and allowing a variety of interpretations. Thus, I contend Gaskell's use of the ambiguous supernatural underlines her desire for individuals to permit a variety of religious and supernatural worldviews and experiences, evaluating religion primarily through its effects on others and the community.

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<sup>99</sup> This distinction between "male" and "female" Gothic, originating in Ellen Moers' 1976 *Literary Women*, has been criticized by various scholars and is primarily to do with the topoi and structure of the types of Gothic narrative rather than the author's gender (Smith and Wallace 2).

Nattee clearly engages in attempted witchcraft, which is linked to her foreign religious practices. She chants words, “half in her own language, half in broken English – droned over some simmering pipkin, from which the smell was, to say the least, unearthly,” and when Grace expresses concern that these “heathen ways” will lead to “mischief,” Faith leaves immediately (Gaskell 174). Clearly, Faith and Nattee are up to something secretive, likely a spell working to bring back Mr. Nolan. When he does come to visit, their reactions confirm this: “the girl had become deadly white at the intelligence, while, at the same time, her eyes met the keen, cunning eyes of the old Indian with a peculiar look of half-wondering awe, while Nattee’s looks expressed triumphant satisfaction” (175). Nattee is overjoyed, muttering she “know how to call, and then white man must come” (176). Although this visit could easily be coincidental, for them it confirms the success of witchcraft and the existence of supernatural dark forces. Lois fears both Nattee’s status as an unchristened person as well as her “mixtures” stirred “over the fire” and “the strange chants she sings to herself” (186-7). Faith believes, “If Nattee has powers beyond what you and I have, she will not use them for evil; at least not evil to those whom she loves” (187). This seems to be Faith’s justification for real attempted witchcraft, a shallow rationalization that the tale does not endorse. Lois is not comforted, for she believes “such powers are only given by the Evil One” (187).

Faith, not Lois, is the guilty Puritan witch engaging with what she believes is the occult for her own worldly purposes. After Mr. Nolan’s visit, she weeps, likely from a combination of jealousy, love, and the confirmation of the supernatural in the success of Nattee’s charm. She may also feel contrition for actively participating in witchcraft, which she will never be caught or punished for, while her cousin, the man she loves, and the servant who loves her will die for it. She sends Nolan a letter that could be her confession; when it goes unopened, Faith becomes

indifferent to the first tried “witch” Hota’s hanging, declaring, “Let her die, and let all other witches look to themselves; for there be many kinds of witchcraft abroad” (198-9). Whether the results of Faith’s work are coincidental or supernatural is ambiguous. However, reading the story through the possibility that Gaskell’s Gothic supernatural is intentionally ambiguous, rather than explained or real, emphasizes her call for right treatment of others since it is impossible to truly know some things, but it is always possible to treat others with kindness and mercy.

Ultimately for Gaskell, it is how one uses belief and its accordant practices, not the practices themselves, that determine their relative goodness. Gothic tropes help Gaskell reiterate ideas about how to prevent fanaticism, even in her ambiguous use of the supernatural. Manasseh’s visions themselves could be caused by Nattee as a form of revenge upon the people who have enslaved her. The evidence for witchcraft that leads to Hota’s death, which originates with a strange sound and broken crockery, could similarly be a result of Nattee and Faith’s handiwork to aim mischief at Pastor Tappau, whom they hate because he was a rival to Pastor Nolan (183). What the Puritans read as witchcraft in this incident could be explained by Tappau’s children’s naughtiness, but it equally could be a result of supernatural forces summoned by Nattee and Faith. This ambiguity supports Gaskell’s epistemological tolerance. Whether their spells are real or not matters less than their clear hatred for Tappau and their lack of concern over the deaths of innocent scapegoats. Not answering the question directly reminds readers that multiple interpretations can coexist. Using the ambiguous supernatural, rather than explaining the supernatural away or featuring clearly real paranormal events, enables Gaskell to shift her critique. Belief or lack thereof, whether in witchcraft or religion, is less of an issue than the way a person treats others. Further, the story’s prophecies have the same effects whether they are really a product of a second sight or are merely self-fulfilling. Gaskell’s use of

Gothicized fanaticism in this story suggests that orthopraxy, or correct behavior, is more important than orthodoxy, or right doctrine, since actions are what impact others and true orthodoxy may be impossible for flawed communities and individuals to ever reach.

Gaskell's Gothic portrait of the Salem Witch Trials incorporates history but holds a lesson for present readers, as the concerns in the story have not disappeared. The historical distance and Gothic mode enable her to use the story as a juridical parable. The sub-genre of the juridical parable asks the audience to pass judgment on characters in a story before applying that same analysis to themselves. Throughout *Lois the Witch*, Gaskell reminds readers that the legacy of the witch trials originates not in the New World but in the old one, in their shared heritage. Fanaticism is a danger in America just as it was in England, which, in many ways, haunts Lois. At first glance, Gaskell's story seems to depict American brands of Christianity as illegitimate as they tend to lead toward deadly fanaticisms. However, Lois recalls similar witch hunts back in England. When she first hears about alleged witchcraft in Salem, she remarks, "They sound like the old stories I used to hear in Barford" (Gaskell 183). The past and present Gothically intertwine as England and its sins colonized the New World. Lois recalls a witch she encountered as a child in Barford, a woman who, after a spring marked with disease and livestock death, became the scapegoat. Lois witnessed a gruesome, horrifying, and prophetic sight:

old Hannah in the water, her grey hair all streaming down her shoulders, and her face bloody and black with the stones and the mud they had been throwing at her, and her cat tied round her neck. I hid my face, I know, as soon as I saw the fearsome sight, for her eyes met mine as they were glaring with fury – poor, helpless, baited creature! – and she caught the sight of me, and cried out, 'Parson's wench, parson's wench, yonder, in thy nurse's arms, thy dad hath never tried for to save me, and none shall save thee when thou

art brought up for a witch.’ Oh! the words rang in my ears, when I was dropping asleep, for years after. I used to dream that I was in that pond, all men hating me with their eyes because I was a witch; and, at times, her black cat used to seem living again, and say over those dreadful words. (150)

Sadly, the pagan prophecy made in Lois’ youth comes true. The ambiguous supernatural quality of the prophecy leaves open the possibility that the intolerance shown by Lois’ parents has direct consequences. Witchcraft and fanaticism, then, are not purely American concerns. *Lois the Witch*, despite initially appearing to use the discourse of Gothic fanaticism to uplift English superiority, can be read as a juridical parable that asks readers to critique an other before applying that same judgment to the self. By evaluating foreign Puritans, readers can learn to see similar impulses in their own actions, pass judgment on themselves, and work to change.

Gaskell writes not to American Puritans, but to nineteenth-century *All the Year Round* readers. Lois’ history links the horrors of Puritanism back to Anglicanism and England. In this, the story functions like a juridical parable. The lessons about how we treat others grow out of the story’s Gothic elements, like the use of the ambiguous supernatural, the intrusion of the past into the present, and the incorporation of historicity. Gaskell writes of perceived witchcraft, “We read about it, we look on it from the outside; but we can hardly realize the terror it induced” (185). The narrator acknowledges the external position of readers as judges, and at first, it is easy to condemn the Puritans based on the cruel death of the heroine, their various “other” qualities, their intolerance, and their fanaticism. However, the story asks us to look inside, too. Gaskell suggests that, while fanaticism can affect foreign and historical others, it can be just as dangerous in ourselves. And, in a proto-feminist way, she reminds readers that the victims of fanaticism disproportionately tend to be women. Although Gaskell respected Anglicanism and found it

useful, she does not see institutionalized religion as a solution for fanaticism. Rather, concepts of rationalism and tolerance (which are, for her, associated with Englishness) can prevent fanaticism and the harm it causes. Gaskell goes beyond demonization and turns the lens upon the reader, asking them to root out their own fanaticisms before accusing others of the same.

Lois exemplifies right action and care for others until the end of her life, resigned to her fate as if she has known this would be her end since the Barford witch's prophecy. Lois realizes there is "no escape, natural or supernatural for her, unless by man's mercy. And what was man's mercy in such times of panic? Lois knew that it was nothing; instinct more than reason taught her, that panic calls out cowardice, and cowardice cruelty" (212). Here lies Gaskell's chilling reminder about fanaticism. In jail, Lois again sings the Anglican Evening hymn and prays the Lord's prayer, pausing to ensure "in her heart of hearts she did forgive" (212-3). Her ability to recite these words shows readers that even by Mather's flawed logic she is no witch, underlining the tragedy of the novella's conclusion. Before dying, Lois ministers to Nattee. She shares the gospel, and the jailer hears Lois

telling, as if to a young child, the marvellous and sorrowful story of one who died on the cross for us and for our sakes. As long as she spoke, the Indian woman's terror seemed lulled; but the instant she paused, for weariness, Nattee cried out afresh, as if some wild beast were following her ... And then Lois went on, saying all the blessed words she could remember, and comforting the helpless Indian woman with the sense of the presence of a Heavenly Friend. And in comforting her, Lois was comforted; in strengthening her, Lois was strengthened. (222)

As Styler and other critics have observed, Lois becomes a Christlike figure, ministering to others even until her own innocent death at the hands of the guilty. Interestingly, Gaskell's heroine

comes not from her own religious tradition but from Anglicanism, embodying tolerance even in the writing. The novella concludes with the Puritans learning their lesson and repenting, years later. Holderness and Lucy find Lois dead, and Lucy dedicates himself to a life of celibacy. The Puritans' confessions mean little to him, but he agrees to join them in prayer for forgiveness every April 29, for Lois' sake. Her forgiveness touches not only Americans but English people in Barford with its transtemporal and transatlantic lessons. Sins and repentance alike are shared, and Gaskell shows that stories of the past hold lessons for contemporary people of faith. Throughout *Lois the Witch*, Gaskell cautions readers against fanatics and against their own uncritical, irrational potential, differentiating between religion and morality as two distinct, disparate categories. The story suggests that modern Christianity, regardless of affiliation, is at risk when intolerance replaces reason. Further, Gaskell's pagan characters are similar to Puritan characters, who bear similarities to Native American religion as well as historic Anglicanism itself. Gaskell's novella seeks not to uphold one specific religious tradition but to call for tolerance and warn against the monstrosities caused by fanaticism, a caution resonating for people of all kinds of faith.

Ultimately, it is how one uses belief and its accordant practices, not the practices themselves, that determine their relative goodness. Gothic tropes help Gaskell reiterate ideas about how to prevent fanaticism, even in her ambiguous use of the supernatural. This ambiguity does not impact the story's deep tragedy. Regardless, Gaskell's lesson is similar. If witchcraft and pagan and Puritan prophecies *are* real in the story, the reminder is to conduct fair, rational investigations. If the story's supernatural events are not real, the argument for rationality against fanaticism still rings loud and clear. In both of these novellas, Gothic fanaticism becomes a useful means of interrogating the boundaries of historical and contemporary religious practice. In

Conan Doyle and Gaskell's Gothic, religion becomes tyrannous because it is interwoven with an institution that uses it to manipulate and control people. At first glance, this manifests in American foreign others, whose forms of Protestantism lead to fanaticism and victimization of young women. Thus, in some sense, these novellas uphold a British Protestant sense of identity. However, the stories, intentionally or not, serve as prudent reminders to English readers that the very qualities that lead to fanaticism could be present in their own midst, whether they lie in the criminal underworld or in the self.

**Coda: *The Witch***

Both *A Study in Scarlet* and *Lois the Witch* hold a noteworthy legacy. Sherlock Holmes stories have been widely adapted for the stage and screen, often modernizing some of the less flattering aspects of the original tales. For instance, the BBC's version of *A Study in Scarlet* in *Sherlock*, "A Study in Pink," elides the entire Mormon plot and replaces it with the story of a terminally ill cab driver hired to kill people by Sherlock's foe Moriarty. This choice contemporizes the narrative, reimagines the story for the modern world, and avoids an offensive depiction of Mormonism. Although some modern Gothic films and books depict foreign religious practices as other, they often complicate the narrative, such as in the 2019 horror film *Midsommar*, in which a foreign Swedish cult practices extreme ritualized communal violence that involves human sacrifice. At first, their violent religious practices render them Gothically other; however, at the end of the film the heroine decides to stay with her newly adopted culture as they, despite clinging to cultural practices Westernized cultures find horrifying, are the only ones who offer her empathy or true community. Their culture, so seemingly foreign, is actually more sympathetic than the American one she grew up in. Neo-Gothic tends to avoid nineteenth-

century Imperial Gothic tendencies.<sup>100</sup> However, foreign stages remain useful to Gothic creators as they explore the boundaries of religious practice and interrogate institutional power structures. Sometimes these stages also incorporate history, like Conan Doyle and Gaskell.

The Salem Witch Trials retain a particular fascination, serving as a baseline for pieces as canonically literary as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* as well as family-friendly comedy films like Disney's *Hocus Pocus*. A notable descendent of *Lois the Witch* is Robert Eggers' 2015 film *The Witch: A New England Folktale*, which despite being set sixty years before the trials employs the Gothic historic frame to critique religious extremism and its specifically harmful scapegoating effects on women. In the film, an English Puritan family in New England is exiled and forced to live on the outskirts of a wood, presumably for nonconformist religious belief. Deeply and legalistically religious, even among Puritans, the family seems to get by until their baby is kidnapped by a witch. The audience sees her kill the child and bathe in his blood; unlike in Gaskell's story, the supernatural is chillingly real from the outset. The family is quite Calvinist, exemplified in the way the father, William, catechizes his eldest son Caleb on the tenets of original sin (which are linked to sex, and thus to women). After the loss of their first son, odd occurrences snowball. Katherine, the mother, thinks her husband has cursed the family. She blames his beliefs for their expulsion from civilization, their rotting crop, their vulnerability to starvation, and her unbaptized baby, whom she believes is now in hell. Caleb goes missing, is raped by the witch, and returns possessed. In exorcizing him, the family partakes in rituals like bleeding him and praying in ways that eerily mirror the witchcraft they fear so deeply. This juxtaposition suggests extreme religious practice is just as dangerous as the occult.

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<sup>100</sup> Patrick Brantlinger identifies Imperial Gothic as the late century revival of adventure narratives that incorporated Gothic topoi; these works frequently feature themes such as going native, insanity, "reverse invasion or colonisation," "Racial, civilisational or psychological degeneration," sexual anarchy, concerns about feminism as well as homosexuality, and the "possible reality of hauntings and other occult phenomena" (204).

At the accusations of her younger siblings (who, it turns out, have actually been communing with the devil through their black goat), Thomasin, more or less the film's heroine, is blamed for her brothers' deaths, the rotten corn crop, and even the loss of her mother's silver cup, sold by her father. She calls him a hypocrite for blaming his own sin on a young girl, but neither of her parents believes she is not a witch. William boards up all three surviving children in the goat pen and prays, eventually confessing to God everything is his fault because he is "infected with the filth of pride" (01:09:21-01:09:24). In the morning, William finds that only Thomasin has survived the night; he is attacked and killed by the black goat, too. As the goat charges him for the last time, William declares, "Corruption, thou art my father" (01:16:14-01:16:15). Katherine attacks Thomasin, who kills her mother in the struggle. Thomasin, left alone, visits the black goat and asks him to speak to her. She has not been a witch, but the consequences of legalistic religious practice lead to her entire family blaming her for everything that has gone wrong. This scapegoating leads to her demise, in which, her family dead, she signs Satan's book and joins the coven of witches dancing naked in the woods, becoming the witch her family feared she already was. The family's radical beliefs about evil become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and as James Churchill writes, filmmaker "Eggers punishes their dogmatism by making every one of their extreme beliefs come true" (168). While Lois never so much as attempts witchcraft, Thomasin sees joining the evil coven, a fanatical group itself, as her only remaining option.

As in Gaskell's *Lois the Witch*, Eggers' film utilizes the setting and frames of historical religious fanatics to critique modern ones. The Puritanism in the film seems mostly detached from modern denominational analogues, reflecting LaPorte's observation that "widespread indifference to denominations among Christians is a new phenomenon" (145). *The Witch* depicts

a doctrinally generic Puritanism drawn for contemporary audiences who are more likely to concentrate on the film's incisive criticism of misogyny over its residual Calvinism. While Eggers' focus ultimately lands on the way religious extremism unequally harms women, and while the supernatural witches in his film are undoubtedly real, the film builds upon frames like the one used by Gaskell for specifically religious critiques. He condemns religious fanaticism because, as in *Lois the Witch* and in *A Study in Scarlet*, it specifically harms women. Simon Abrams calls *The Witch* a "fantasy about empowerment," an assertion Churchill resists as Thomasin's final "commitment to Satan ... necessitates the signing of a book and an act of surrender to a master" (167). Thus, he suggests, *The Witch* explores how "the extremism of [Puritan fanaticism] ironically breeds the extremism of [Satanism]" (167). Fanicisms of both varieties are Gothicized in this violent, deeply scary film that critiques strict, patriarchal religious practice and condemns intolerant, fanatical groups. In a sense, *The Witch* functions as another juridical parable. It asks readers to condemn the hypocrisy and sexism in the film's Puritans before they can, ideally, see and extinguish those same inclinations in their own religious structures. Gothic fanaticism used here is no tool to bolster nationalism; however, it retains the ability to conduct incisive and pertinent religious criticism.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### Draining Religion: Vampires and Fanaticism

From their drinking of human blood to their sexual and anti-religious practices, vampires are known for transgressions embodying the uncanny, the supernatural, and the magnetically appealing villain. These quintessentially Gothic monsters are the subject of countless films and popular novels as well as the centerpiece of many scholarly monographs. In the nineteenth century, the vampire figure separates socially acceptable and transgressive identities. Early vampires like Geraldine in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" are marked by sexual deviance: Geraldine's predatory attitude toward Christabel marks her as societally unacceptable on a variety of fronts that go beyond her evil nature or use of magic. John Polidori's 1819 *The Vampyre* critiques class structures through the aristocratic vampire Lord Ruthven's total destruction of every aspect of Aubrey's life. Sheridan Le Fanu's 1887 *Carmilla* also uses the vampire figure to condemn an "unacceptable" social identity, marking the titular vampire with sexual *and* religious transgression. In addition to seducing Laura, Carmilla shows an aversion to religion and finds funeral procession hymns "discordant" (Le Fanu 31). Laura never sees Carmilla pray, thinking if she had not heard of her baptism she would "have doubted her being a Christian" (45). As Patrick O'Malley demonstrates, sexual and religious deviances intertwine in nineteenth-century Gothic, frequently coalescing around homoeroticism and perverse versions of Catholicism (6). These served in many ways to reinforce national and religious Protestant identity markers. In the 1890s specifically, he writes, religious and sexual transgressions come to "function as metaphors *for* each other" in "an epistemological slippage that the Gothic itself made possible" (O'Malley 4). The vampire figure persistently embodies these dual deviances,

and, as Timothy K. Beal writes, each monster becomes “a form of theological expression” (8).<sup>101</sup> Vampires have always patrolled the borders of identities and practices, policing acceptability.

Vampiric “religion” is obviously deviant in its malevolent violence, substitution of blood drinking for the Eucharist, and rarely consensual forms of sexuality. It also lends insight to the structures of leadership and control within fanatical groups. Vampiric leaders are often powerful outsiders marked with degrees of social, sexual, or religious difference who control others through wielding aspects of fanaticism. As discussed, fanatics exhibit the following:

- Willingness to resort to violent *actions* based on their beliefs, whether they harm the self or others, and an inclination to sacrifice self or others for the cause.
- Excessive devotion and wholehearted commitment to a concept or leader, marked with an over-reliance on emotion.
- Insular thinking, self-authorization, and a lack of critique applied to power structures or the self.
- No “epistemological humility” (Calhoun 350), an inability to admit fault or error, and/or a view of themselves as infallible, with claims to sole truth.
- A lack of rootedness in or acceptance of historical tradition or diverse community.

Stereotypical nineteenth-century vampires fit several of these criteria; so do their followers.

Although contemporary vampires occasionally eschew bloodlust, nineteenth-century ones act violently to survive. They rarely sacrifice themselves, but they often sacrifice others. They tend to weaponize emotion, as in Carmilla’s manipulation of Laura’s feelings. They authorize themselves and rarely critique their own actions; they forbid tolerance and require exclusion.

Vampires meet many of the criteria for a fanatic, employing these aspects of belief as a

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<sup>101</sup> Beal’s own reading of *Dracula* overlooks much of the evidence for the more minute religious questions in the book regarding Catholicism, ecumenicism, etc.

mechanism of control over their followers. As my introduction outlined, fanaticism primarily lies in practice, rather than internal belief, although there are clear overlaps between the two.

Fanatics act violently because of their beliefs, but violent action need not always be direct. Thus, vampires and their followers alike can be evaluated not merely as monsters, but as fanatics.

Gothic fanaticism is often a tool for authors to render outsiders' practices monstrous; within late nineteenth-century fiction, vampires use the topoi of fanaticism to control humans and their underlings. Their undemocratic use of power heightens their evil, which becomes especially compounded when it manifests in monstrous women. Like the discourses of love and nationalism, the language of vampirism becomes a useful Gothic code for exploring fanaticism and what happens when devotion outgrows its boundaries. This linkage of religious fanaticism and monstrosity underlines the social dangers of excessive religion. Accusing certain practices of fanaticism or associating them with the monstrous polices the intensity of religiously driven behavior. Christopher Herbert identifies "the trope of the vampiric spiritual advisor" as appearing in a variety of nineteenth-century religious mentors like Hogg's Gil-Martin, Brontë's St. John Rivers, and Dickens' Mr. Vholes (215).<sup>102</sup> His examples are not supernatural blood-drinkers, showing instead the discursive link between vampirism and religion. Vampiric religion is a draining force, and the language of vampirism, both in these metaphoric examples and the following literal ones, becomes used to sort appropriate and inappropriate faith practices.

Nowhere is the coagulation of religion and vampirism more evident than in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), where the evil vampire desires to spread his desecrative, fanatic religion in England. The novel denounces fanaticism through a call for ecumenism and an

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<sup>102</sup> Herbert, who believes all of these are categorized as vampiric specifically to criticize Evangelicalism, even suggests this applies to characters like Eliot's Dinah Morris, a contention he admits may only seem tenable for "a disenchanted reader" (215).

ultimate rejection of fanatics by monster and heroes alike. This metaphor also appears in George MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895), wherein Adam's first wife Lilith, transformed into a vampire, controls the city of Bulika by marginally empowering and then manipulating citizens. Rejection of maternity becomes her fanatic pursuit. Through Lilith's abandonment of motherhood, MacDonald comments on the New Woman, whom he seems to see as fanatical and bad (albeit redeemable). Both Dracula and Lilith meet the aforementioned criteria, fanatical in part because they insist on changing the practices of those who follow them. They are completely willing to resort to violence to survive based on literal cravings for blood and their less tangible desires to control others. They do not sacrifice themselves for a cause, but they are more than happy to allow their followers to die in their stead. Followers of Dracula and Lilith are forced to exhibit wholehearted commitment and eventually participate in groupthink. They do not criticize the obvious problems with their leaders, and they believe their vampires have sole access to secret truths. Lilith and Dracula see themselves as infallible. These two novels demonstrate the levers and dangers of fanatical power structures. Additionally, both Stoker and Macdonald use these shapes in the context of the New Woman, an element of culture with its own set of beliefs and practices. These novels use religious and vampiric tropes to outline visions of appropriate womanhood, policing not its ideals but its practices.

Finally, vampirism figures in Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897), in which Harriet Brandt, a psychic vampire, bears the consequences of her parents' Gothic fanaticisms. Her father was a mad scientist who practiced vivisection; her mother was a biracial Voodoo priestess whose own mother was bitten by a bat. This legacy curses her to drain life out of those around her, despite her benign intentions. She herself does not act fanatically, although she inspires an enthusiastic devotion in her suitors. The novel does not actively comment on

contemporary religion, although it does reflect an increase in the real supernatural in late nineteenth-century Gothic, a trend Milbank and others have noted. The titular “blood of the vampire” refers to Harriet’s own blood. As the offspring of fanatic tropes, the mad scientist and foreign religion, she cannot help but continually harm others who are nonetheless drawn to her, unintentionally killing them. Her dangerous nature becomes overlaid with issues of race and colonialism. The novel Gothicizes the influence of the past, suggesting that children (and the colonial global context in which enslavement was not far gone) may continue to pay high prices for historic crimes. Although Marryat’s text features overt racism and expresses colonial ambivalence, it suggests that Gothic fanaticism’s legacy is useful to parsing out a global situation where the literal and figurative monsters, despite being slain, are never truly gone.

### ***Dracula***

Bram Stoker’s masterpiece *Dracula* was published at the close of a century filled with changes in technology, belief, and global power structures, all of which surface as concerns in the novel. Many critics read *Dracula* as addressing late nineteenth-century anxieties surrounding homosexuality, Eastern European (Jewish) immigrants, or the New Woman. Its horrors are particularly frightening as ancient, foreign threats endanger modern, “civilized” Britain; many critics have observed the novel’s engagement with this Gothic trope (Margree and Randall, Mighall). *Dracula*’s presence violates the safety of middle-class Englishness; he is a symbolic threat and a literal concern. At its heart, *Dracula* is an invasion narrative that overlays vampirism with perverse iterations of Christian symbols. As O’Malley, Milbank, D. Bruno Starrs, and others have pointed out, the work is ripe with religious imagery, allusions, and characters.

The role of Catholicism in *Dracula* is somewhat fraught. As Judith Halberstam has noted, *Dracula* himself is coded with the physical markers used in contemporaneous anti-Semitic

stereotypes.<sup>103</sup> O'Malley points out that these signals similarly caricatured Catholics (155). Historical Gothic tends to depict Catholics as strange, perverse, and "Other" due to political and religious identity markers at stake. Some critics read *Dracula* as anti-Catholic in this tradition (O'Malley 130, Knight and Mason 191-3). However, although *Dracula*'s Catholicism is presented as mystical and supernatural, its trappings are an essential component of survival for the protagonists. Catholicism seems to be beneficial (if somewhat odd) in Stoker's world. Starrs argues the novel's theme is ultimately "pro-Catholic," and Milbank resists those who "read Stoker as anti-Catholic" (235). Starrs goes so far as to suggest that the scope of the novel traces Harker and Seward's conversions from English Protestantism to Catholicism, which is set up from the beginning as a safeguard against Dracula and vampirism. Harker's reactions to Catholic superstitions mark the novel with skepticism, but crucifixes, rosaries, and the Host become powerful symbols and defenses against Dracula alongside modern technology and ancient folklore. The tolerant, useful, and benevolent Catholic Van Helsing serves as a leader for the vampire slayers, underlining the novel's ecumenism.

Some critics emphasize the nuances of the novel's religious point. Noelle Bowles contends that *Dracula* shows more concern over Anglican controversies than the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism. Christopher Herbert also reads the novel's vampirism as fanatical, interpreting *Dracula* as anti-Evangelical.<sup>104</sup> Importantly, religious tolerance marks the novel's heroes. Alison Milbank argues that *Dracula* envisions a "universal Church" and builds a case for ecumenism (231-2).<sup>105</sup> Jonathan Greenaway contends *Dracula* serves as an example of

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<sup>103</sup> She points out many similarities between Dracula's descriptions and anti-Semitic discourse: "his appearance, his relation to money/gold, his parasitism, his degeneracy, his impermanence or lack of allegiance to a fatherland, and his femininity ... his physiognomy" (92).

<sup>104</sup> While there are no clear Evangelicals in the book, Herbert reads vampirism as a version of Evangelicalism (213).

<sup>105</sup> Lori Branch extends Milbank's argument by suggesting it leaves out "the possibility that Stoker's particularly Protestant ecumenism and sympathy with Catholics laid the very groundwork for instrumentalizing that Catholic

the dangerous power of religious language to justify violence and is not a “simple paean to the powers of ecumenicalism” (161). Nonetheless, various modes of Christian belief, both Protestant and Catholic, are affirmed in the novel. Count Dracula, who appears as the opposite of Christ, threatens both belief systems; thus, both systems must be engaged to defeat him. Only a marginally religiously tolerant group could possibly overcome the vampire. As Stoker shows through the little team (or, church) of vampire slayers, each of whom can represent a different facet of Christianity, all denominations are welcome and useful. Van Helsing’s Catholicism, Seward’s positivism, and the Harkers’ devout Anglicanisms unite against a common enemy. Their “power of combination,” as Van Helsing declares, is one of their most important strengths (Stoker 166). Unlike Dracula, the slayers can work as a team. The Count possesses the ability to control others and make them work with and for him, but he and these women are not a real team. His followers contribute no skills or voices; they merely do his bidding. The spirit of ecumenism itself helps diffuse fanaticism as it resists monovocal groupthink and overreliance on emotion while centering tolerance and rejecting self-authorization. Through Renfield’s religious devotion and Lucy’s grotesque conversion, Stoker suggests fanaticism is a feature of evil that belongs to the vampire and is itself vampiric. Those who follow the vampire become dangerous fanatics, ultimately rejected by the vampire slayers and the Count himself. *Dracula’s* broadly construed ecumenical Christianity protects against fanaticism, which is contagious and localized in Dracula’s desire to populate England with his own bloodthirsty followers.

As several critics have pointed out, Dracula is depicted as an anti-Christ with a missional agenda, rendered a foreign inverse of Christ through various dark parallels (Milbank, Starrs, O’Malley, et al.). Most obvious of these is his unholy sacrament, the drinking of his blood,

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faith as a potentially material Christianity” that could potentially “staunch the bleeding of the gaping social wound of capitalism and consumption” (254).

which grants eternal undeath. Additionally, Dracula is called “the author of all this our sorrow” by Van Helsing, much like Christ is called the “author and finisher of our faith” (*King James Bible*, Heb. 12:2) (Stoker 242). He wants his boxes of earth placed in a chapel of a building, creating an ironically unholy ground in which to rest. As Christ controls the wind and the waves, Dracula controls the wolves and the fog. After Lucy’s death and burial, she walks out of her tomb due to Dracula’s evil powers, evoking the resurrections of Lazarus and of Christ.<sup>106</sup> Dracula is “not human - not even beast,” according to Mina’s journal (255). His powers enable him to puppet others through violence, mental control, and quasi-religious manipulation. His inhumanity and nature as an anti-Christ set him up to be read as a fanatic leader. He presides over the church of vampirism, where fanatics like Renfield worship, women like his brides and Lucy follow him blindly and bloodthirstily, and Mina is almost forced to join against her will. Dracula is not merely against Christ but is presented as a clear oppositional analog, both fanatic and creator of fanatics. This underlines that fanaticism can be interpreted not simply as damaging but as actively monstrous and vampiric. The spread of Dracula’s anti-church of vampirism, which seems a dark parody of missionary work, directly threatens Englishness and human life.<sup>107</sup>

*Dracula’s* invasion narrative is deeply evangelistic, particularly in the way Dracula seduces, hypnotizes, and manipulates victims like Lucy and Renfield.<sup>108</sup> Van Helsing says, according to legend, the undead “must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world; for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening” (Stoker 239). This eerily

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<sup>106</sup> See John 11.

<sup>107</sup> Milbank usefully coins the term “anti-church” to describe Dracula’s goal and followers (190).

<sup>108</sup> So evangelistic, in fact, that Christopher Herbert reads the Count’s mission as an indictment of evangelical mission work in his conclusion to *Evangelical Gothic*.

parallels the Christian great commission to spread the gospel.<sup>109</sup> Vampirism itself becomes a fanatical religion that consumes individuals, drains spiritual meaning, and destroys community. Because vampires are created by drinking from Dracula, they are intimately linked with their leader, whom they cannot help but follow. Dracula's first "converts" are what critics sometimes call his "brides," the trio of vampire women who try to seduce and drain Jonathan. They appear very little in the book and are the quintessentially deviant, perverse, 1890s monstrous fictive women, but they seem almost fanatics, controlled by their lust for blood and by Count Dracula himself. Jonathan's journal recounts their fearsome beauty stirring desire and terror. The women cannot control their sexualized, animalistic lust for him; as one is about to drink from him, she "actually licked her lips like an animal" (45). Just as the blonde is about to bite and drink from him, the Count interrupts angrily, with red eyes, "as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them. ... With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back" using "the same imperious gesture [Jonathan] had seen used to the wolves" (46). He governs his community like he commands his animals.

As the leader, Dracula requires total control at all times. When the women are caught about to feast on Jonathan, the Count becomes livid once he realizes his orders were disobeyed. He reprimands them: "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? ... Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me" (46). Their direct disregard for his orders, rather than Jonathan's endangerment, fuels his rage. Dracula will not be questioned or disobeyed. He uses the language of love to manipulate them by alternating threats with care, for instance, providing them a child for dinner. He permits no room for actual dissent and successfully maintains control over these women, perhaps because they

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<sup>109</sup> See Matthew 28:19-20.

have all loved him at some point. Through the bonds of “love” (real or not), they can be controlled; this is a fanatical power structure. In *Dracula*, religious and sexual deviance are “completely entwined” (O’Malley 159). These women may only do Dracula’s bidding, and their sexuality renders them dangerous concerns for Van Helsing, who eventually slays all three when they pursue him and Mina. These fanatic followers mean little to Dracula outside of what he can use them for. Being a fanatic, the novel suggests, quashes democratic practices. Fanaticism makes it impossible for followers to have any real voice, tolerance, or thinking ability. All they have is bloodlust and a desire (or zombie-like willingness) to follow the Count.

Stoker’s female vampires are misogynistic in addition to monstrous. Gina Wisker reads a “constant tension between punishment and celebration of their transgressive nature” in the novel, a tension that renders clear interpretation slippery (150). As critics like Margree and Randall have observed, concerns about gender were especially high during the 1890s, when the vampire was frequently used to “explore the problem of the modern woman” (221). Scholars generally agree that, regardless of the stance Stoker takes, the novel is invested in anxieties surrounding the New Woman. This icon was the subject of much debate after a century during which “the social and economic position of women underwent accelerated change,” especially in terms of educational access, employment, and marriage law (Richardson and Willis 5). There is no one “New Woman” or set of New Woman ideals, but Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis suggest models shared “certain common features,” namely “her perceived newness, her autonomous self-definition and her determination to set her own agenda in developing an alternative vision of the future” (12). She could be athletic, sexually liberated, unmarried, educated, and/or employed in a middle-class job. Practically speaking, although the New Woman did mark great change, many saw this new model of womanhood as an opportunity “to achieve social and political power by

reinventing rather than rejecting their domestic role” (Richardson and Willis 9). Some Evangelicals and religious individuals were concerned, however, that this reform and reinvention would lead to sexual promiscuity. Female vampires reflect these anxieties.

*Dracula* is invested in policing the propriety of women’s behaviors. The novel violently punishes women who stray beyond certain gendered norms, forcing them into fanatic servitude. Its complex take proposes that some qualities of the New Woman are more welcome than others. New Women are not inherently harmful or immoral, Stoker’s novel suggests, but for one to be beneficial to society, she must still adhere to certain templates. Mina represents the less threatening version: she is smart, useful, and employable in a middle-class job. She fits with models that “present a clear-cut right and wrong New Woman,” using “binary logic” to suggest the right kind could “make for social regeneration not only without sacrificing feminine charm and moral purity but by making these her very methods and goals” (Richardson and Willis 11). Mina, praised by Van Helsing for her “man’s brain” and “woman’s heart,” fits one side of this dichotomous model (Stoker 262). Although her intelligence is repeatedly praised, she eventually submits to patriarchal authority and protection, conforming to conventional marital standards of femininity. Since she fits this pattern, vampirism polices her behavior but does not annihilate her. As I have argued, belief and practice can identify fanaticism. The same can apply to anxieties around the New Woman. Some theoretical aspects of the New Woman seemed less threatening, and a woman with “improper” beliefs could still adhere to societal expectations about “proper” actions. Mina, despite what others see as her unorthodox mental acuity and her participation in middle-class work, nonetheless conforms to expectations about marriage, faithfulness, usefulness, modesty, childbearing, and religiosity. Thus, her practices ensure she is nonthreatening.

Lucy's actions, however, especially regarding her sexuality and preying on children once she is a vampire, render her version of the New Woman fanatical. Many critics argue Lucy represents the New Woman's sexual freedom based on her wish for three husbands or her vampiric seductiveness. While some believe Lucy's letters "reveal her as more shallow and frivolous" than a typical New Woman (Senf 69) or read her immaturity as a sign she is a poor New Woman, if she is to be considered one at all (Brennan 3), as a sexualized vampire, she certainly falls in line with literary precedents Carmilla and Lilith. As a vampire, Lucy's former self is completely gone, and even though her previous "loveliness had come back to her in death" (185), she is now marked with a "voluptuous voice" (181) and begins to prey upon children.<sup>110</sup> Beyond this obviously evil lust, she is fanatical in her willingness to resort to violence in her single-minded pursuit of blood that involves no self-awareness. As a vampire, she can no longer think for herself, has no ability to critique or regulate her actions, and blindly follows Dracula's bidding and her own thirst. While earlier in the novel seeing Lucy as a fanatical form of the New Woman is, perhaps, a stretch, by the time she is a vampire, she embodies cultural anxieties about the dangers posed to the family by the New Woman whose actions were not kept in check. As Cohen suggests, women who transgress gender boundaries are constructed as monstrous (9). *Dracula* exhibits misogyny in its victimization and control of women, often through intimate forms of violence that, as Greenaway points out, are justified through "the language of morality and theology" (167). Dracula himself prefers to prey on women and induct them, rather than the men he also uses (like Jonathan and Renfield) into his anti-church, selecting women as his particular victims in part because he finds them easier to control. Gothicized fanaticism enables *Dracula* to comment on gender politics using the language of religion.

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<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, Nina Auerbach reads Lucy's transformation as making her "more virtuous" since as a vampire she only directs her amorous advances toward her husband instead of all the men present (79).

Lucy's choice to prey on children renders her as perverse and transgressive as a woman in this time could possibly be. As a vampire, she does not just decline motherhood – she actively thwarts it. Children are attracted to the “bloofer lady” (219), and “by her power over them they come to her” (239). She persuades children over whom she has power to follow her, just as Dracula preys on women to fold into his circle. Van Helsing says that if Lucy continues to drink from these children, they will eventually become vampires too. As a vampire, she is a “nightmare of Lucy,” an undead member of Dracula's anti-church, new inside and out (238). Like the brides, her actions are now animalistic. Dr. Seward compares her new form to a cat, with “eyes unclean and full of hell-fire,” blazing “with unholy light” as she tosses her child victim on the ground and growls “over it as a dog growls over a bone” (236). She retains some memory of her life, however, as she approaches Arthur, seductively beckoning him to “Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!” (236). These are her only words as a vampire, and her offer of rest has a slight religiosity about it. Seward notices “something diabolically sweet in her tones” that seems to put Arthur “under a spell,” and he moves to accept her embrace before Van Helsing intervenes (236). Lucy has become a part of Dracula's mission as an underling fanatic leader working to fulfill their shared dark mission. Vampires go forth and multiply, perversely echoing Biblical language and commissions. The female fanatic, in this novel, only uses her power over children, while men structure and reinforce hierarchies.

In Stoker's world, fanatics and vampires alike are irretrievable and irredeemable. They may not be restored to humanity or community, although they may be restored to eternal salvation.<sup>111</sup> Even in Lucy's case, the vampire must be slain. This horrific scene is generally read

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<sup>111</sup> Mina can be saved because her transformation is not completed.

as punitive gang rape in a scene Jones describes as “a violent reinstatement of male sexual dominance” (87). However, as Mighall points out, Lucy is slain according to folklore’s prescriptions (233). A religious lens leads me to suggest the additional possibility of reading this scene as an exorcism that removes a fanatic from a position of power. As they slay Lucy’s vampire, they read the “prayer for the dead,” and Van Helsing tells Arthur to “strike in God’s name,” as killing the vampire is, for him and the group, a religious activity with eternal, spiritual stakes (Stoker 240). The stake that pierces her is referred to as “mercy-bearing,” rendering her death a strange form of exorcism (241). The slaying, intended to expel a demon, works in what Greenaway calls “a form of highly violent and patriarchal spiritual warfare” (165). Lucy’s body reverts to her own appearance and sweetness, and they feel “the holy calm that lay like sunshine over the wasted face and form was only an earthly token and symbol of the calm that was to reign forever” (241). According to Van Helsing, “she is not a grinning devil now – not any more a foul Thing for all eternity. No longer she is the devil’s Un-Dead. She is God’s true dead, whose soul is with him!” (242). Their combined religious affiliations and talents exorcize Lucy, whose soul can now rest in peace. Thus, *Dracula* suggests that fanatics may not be rehabilitated to community. This novel’s fanaticism is a dangerous problem with a violent solution.

The novel’s primary fanatic is Seward’s mental patient Renfield, who is decidedly unwelcome on the vampire-slaying team. What renders him undesirable is not his insanity, however. Renfield, who knows Latin, is well-educated. Everything except his madness “reinforces his resemblance to the central professional characters” (Senf 77). His fanaticism prevents him from finding a true home either with them or in Dracula’s anti-Church. His own religious affiliation is complex: he ostensibly prays to the same God the rest worship, but he is a “man who had a strange belief” founded in a weaponized use of scripture and worship of Dracula

(Stoker 261). His blind devotion to a vampire's monstrous creed sets him apart. Once Dracula arrives in England, Renfield tells Seward "the Master is at hand," and although this is perceived as a "sudden form of religious mania" and dismissed as a symptom of his insanity, the parallel is clear: Dracula is Renfield's Christ, the object of his obsessive adoration (114). Greenaway reads Renfield as a "John the Baptist type figure" who sees the monster as a deity (166). Seward diagnoses Renfield with something that "looks like religious mania," and he thinks Renfield "will soon think that he himself is God" (Stoker 114). This mania renders him unfit to function in an equitable community. Renfield's fanaticism denies him the ability to truly coexist with others.

Renfield is clearly mentally ill. Although there are overlaps between his mental illness and fanaticism, the two also diverge. In the Gothic tradition, mental illness and fanaticism often walk hand in hand, as seen in Hogg's Robert Wringhim or in Gaskell's Manasseh. However, an important distinction I make is that fanaticism lies primarily in behavior, not just in belief or thought. Having a strange or deeply held belief does not render one fanatical, but being willing to act violently toward the self or others in the name of said belief does. This differentiation helpfully separates mental illness from fanaticism, as does the observation that fanaticism does not permit criticism of the self or of one's practices.<sup>112</sup> Renfield certainly acts upon his beliefs and is described as a faithful follower of Dracula, almost the product of a missionary. Renfield prays outside the door of Carfax (Dracula's purchased London mansion) when he escapes: "I am here to do your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and you will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in your distribution of good things?" (116). He views himself as enslaved to the vampire deity. In a chilling episode, Renfield cuts Dr. Seward's

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<sup>112</sup> This means that *Lois the Witch's* Manasseh may be categorized more as mentally ill than fanatical since he does apply critique to the Puritans, if not to his own problematic actions toward Lois.

hand and licks the blood from the floor, chanting “The blood is the life! the blood is the life!” (159). This parallels Christian theology as Christ’s blood is considered eternally life-giving. As Milbank points out, then, Dracula’s vampiric religion ties practitioners together through blood, of which they are commanded to partake (239). Renfield misquotes the Bible, like many fanatics, in his pursuit of blood and animals to eat, appropriating Deuteronomy 12:23 for his own purposes. This passage ironically forbids the practice of eating blood. Renfield thus directly inverts Biblical law.

Though willing to use Renfield’s adoration, Dracula will not accept him into his community. He manipulates Renfield’s devotion so that he eventually allows the monster access to Mina, the novel’s center of moral goodness. It is not active evil but fanatic, uncritical worship that leaves her vulnerable. Renfield seems to care for Mina and thus does not invite the monster in out of malice but out of the hopes that doing so will gain him access to the vampire’s community and power. His testimony recounting his inviting the vampire in mirrors Evangelical religious conversion narratives. He opens the window and says, “Come in, Lord and Master!” to the Count, who enters and essentially ignores Renfield from this point until he kills him (311). Renfield submits himself to Dracula as Christians are to submit themselves to Christ, but Dracula has used Renfield and now cares little for him. As a cult leader, Dracula cares only for power. The monster gives Renfield just enough attention to control him, while Renfield single-mindedly devotes himself to the vampire’s cause that ultimately leads to his death.

Unfortunately for Renfield, Dracula will never accept his brand of fanaticism as an inroad to communal intimacy. He seems only to bestow the gift of vampiric religious participation on his female followers, likely because they remain easier to control.<sup>113</sup> The monster finds

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<sup>113</sup> The text also implies sexual possibilities, but control and sex are not mutually exclusive.

Renfield's devotion useful but shows him no affection. The vampire fanatic leader is more than willing to *use* fanatics but will not engage them in community or provide them social equality. In *Dracula*, vampirism and fanaticism intertwine, highlighting and rendering monstrous the dangers of distorted religion. Renfield exemplifies unchecked, uncritical zeal and is unable to see his master's faults. The Count's religion has no diverse community, history, or textual foundation, and even Lucy, once converted, grows blindly and utterly devoted. The rest of the novel's calls for ecumenism and tolerance cast the vampiric depiction of fanaticism into sharp distinction. Van Helsing's model of leadership allows for difference to be incorporated, which in turn enables community as the range of acceptable beliefs is flexible. The ecumenical church emphasizes community-minded practices, reducing fanatical actions. However, depicting female vampires as particularly fanatical within the novel's structure heightens the text's discomfort with New Women who do not, in practice, conform to conventional gender norms.

### ***Lilith***

Fantasy and children's author George MacDonald also engaged with the vampire in his explicitly religious *Lilith* (1895).<sup>114</sup> MacDonald had worked as a Congregationalist minister but in 1853 was charged with heresy and "forced to resign" (Prickett 224).<sup>115</sup> Bonnie Gaarden writes that MacDonald was "devout but heterodox" (20). His universalist leanings, which contributed to his firing, emerge in *Lilith* (McCann 115). After leaving the congregation, MacDonald turned to fiction-writing as a platform and to make a living. As John R. de Jong observes, MacDonald's

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<sup>114</sup> Janet McCann observes that "*Lilith* was written in an inspired fury, and the first version underwent practically no revision," which explains "some of the confusing elements of the novel" (110). MacDonald did later revise *Lilith*, however, and Raeper clarifies that "the story underwent many mutations between the first drafts and the published book" (367).

<sup>115</sup> This heresy consisted of being influenced by German theology (Higher Biblical criticism) and preaching "the possibility of life after death for the heathen" (Prickett 224). MacDonald and family eventually moved to London and joined the Anglican Church (Prickett 225).

exact beliefs and proposals are difficult to pin down (2). However, his fiction consistently reflects a hopeful, tolerant theology and belief in a benevolent God. William Raeper identifies *Lilith* as “MacDonald’s masterpiece” but also his “dark night of the soul” (364). Many initial readers found *Lilith* “disturbing” (Gaarden 21), although Jeanne Murray Walker suggests the backlash against *Lilith* had more to do with its forms than its theology (179). MacDonald was concerned there was a metaphorical “vampire in residence at [religion’s] heart; a usurper, an imposter” in a critique de Jong suggests is aimed not at any particular sect but at Christianity in general (2). This concern that religion itself has become vampiric permeates *Lilith*.

The fantasy novel records Mr. Vane’s journey through a mirror into a mystical, spiritual world where he encounters Adam and his wife, Little Ones (children) he must save, and Lilith. She is an evil vampire queen who tyrannously rules the city of Bulika, enforcing a zero-child policy by drinking the blood of infants born there. Vane’s various adventures in this land guide him toward character growth and eventual salvation in a trajectory similar to Lilith’s. Vane must rid himself of any giant-like tendencies before he can help the Little Ones, who are centered as good because they epitomize humility. Along the way, Vane falls in love with Lilith’s daughter Lona, whom Lilith eventually kills (but is resurrected). Vane must learn to relinquish his vanity and forget his name in this highly symbolic plotline. Lilith herself is also forced to become submissive. While being somewhat misogynistic, MacDonald’s work is deeply invested in religious questions of salvation, suggesting redemption is possible for all. Additionally, it depicts fanaticism as problematic as it inherently lacks a virtue MacDonald values most: humility.

Like *Dracula*, *Lilith* responds to the New Woman as the title character’s evil origin story stems from her choosing power over motherhood. The novel praises conventional maternity and argues that dutiful motherhood is woman’s divine vocational calling. As Judith Gero John

observes, MacDonald repeatedly depicts maternal figures as “ageless, powerful, and eternal” (28).<sup>116</sup> His work repeatedly honors women who adhere to Victorian domestic virtues while revealing ambivalence about the social power women were gaining. Lilith’s refusal to submit to expectations about motherhood and leadership render her an evil, bloodthirsty monster and contribute to her status as monstrous leader of the Bulikans. As Stephen Prickett points out, *Lilith* centers obedience (242). This obedience applies to narrator Vane and the men in the novel, but it is specifically enforced upon Lilith for disobeying God and Adam by rejecting motherhood and actively killing children. Through the metaphor of the vampire, typically used to symbolize what the author believes is a draining force, MacDonald problematizes women who resist maternity. As Gray points out, MacDonald’s work consistently depicts women as either Angels or demons, always praising motherhood (119). *Lilith* caricatures the New Woman (just as early Gothic caricatures Catholicism), rendering a woman who refuses maternity a monster who worships herself and leads a group of fanatics astray. The practices of the New Woman embodied by Lilith, like those in *Lucy*, are characterized as fanatical and dangerous.

Notably, Lilith is not MacDonald’s invention. She is a figure from Jewish legend, originating in the Alphabet of Ben Sira c. 700-1000 CE (Ditzman 143). The brief tale describes Lilith as Adam’s first wife who refuses to take on a passive role during sexual intercourse, arguing, “The two of us are equal, since we are both from the earth” (Sira). The mythic Lilith flees, and a trio of angels is sent to persuade her to return. She rejects reconciliation, even though she is threatened with drowning and the deaths of hundreds of her children. To avenge her demon offspring, the Lilith of legend becomes “a slayer of infants and seducer of sleeping men,” which Gaarden thinks was influenced by “the Babylonian incubi and succubae” as well as the

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<sup>116</sup> He lost his own mother at a young age and was raised by his grandmother (John 28).

fourth century Greek Lamiae (23). Many critics identify her persona as a femme fatale (Raeper, de Jong). Although the Hebrew legend provides a baseline for MacDonald's Lilith, as Walker shows, MacDonald Gothicizes the myth, appropriating the figure into a completely new character (180). It is especially Gothic to incorporate a monster with a historical legacy, as Gothic fiction maintains a persistent concern for the past and its horrifying eruptions into the present. For MacDonald, this becomes especially significant because of Lilith's religious connotations, which are primarily tied to Judaism.<sup>117</sup> In his version, Lilith's nature as a vampire is unclear to readers and to Vane when he first encounters her, thinking her a corpse. Her body is cold like the dead, "quite naked," with "beautiful yet terrible teeth" (105-6). These things point to her being a vampire, although MacDonald never uses the word.

Vampirism is not Lilith's nature – it is her choice. She seems to have become a vampire because of her transgressions rather than a mystical transfer of blood. Her sins and suicide have transformed her into a shapeshifting vampire that can take the form of a cat. Lilith even takes life from Vane, biting him while he sleeps. MacDonald describes her as a leech (113). She uses her beauty to convince others to do what she wants. Vane is oddly drawn to Lilith, despite her draining his blood for restorative purposes. Although he eventually learns to resist her, many cannot, including those in the city she rules. Mr. Raven (Lilith's husband Adam) shares her backstory. He recalls,

her first thought was *power*; she counted it slavery to be one with me, and bear children for Him who gave her being. One child, indeed, she bore; then, puffed with the fancy that she had created her, would have me fall down and worship her! Finding, however, that I would but love and honour, never obey and worship her, she poured out her blood to

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<sup>117</sup> Given the increasing antisemitism of the late 1800s, it is interesting that MacDonald incorporates a Jewish myth into his story.

escape me, fled to the army of the aliens, and soon had so ensnared the heart of the great Shadow, that he became her slave, wrought her will, and made her queen of Hell. ... The one child of her body she fears and hates, and would kill, asserting a right, which is a lie, over what God sent through her into His new world. ... Vilest of God's creatures, she lives by the blood and lives and souls of men. (164)

Lilith's vampirism is connected to her lust for power, hatred for children, and desire to be worshiped. De Jong reads Lilith as "anti-child and, therefore, the antichrist," as instead of giving blood "on behalf of the children, she drinks it" (227). Her vampirism is also the result of suicide.<sup>118</sup> The former passage hints that she may have seduced and wed "the great Shadow," a stand-in for Satan (164). Lilith, like Dracula, is not only antagonistic to religious elements in the plot. She is painted as their direct opposite. Given the novel's focus on maternity and the death of her daughter at her hands, Lilith can be read as an anti-Mary as well as an anti-Eve.

Lilith herself is a bit of a fanatic, in addition to a rebel and killer. The vampire queen has the capabilities to analyze others, but she does not apply critique to her own actions. She resorts to violence repeatedly and sacrifices others, including her own daughter, to insure she maintains power and a child-free environment. Her single-minded, violent behavior reveals a wholehearted, excessive commitment to her own causes. She has a view of herself as infallible, which structures her approach to power. Further, she employs the mechanisms of fanaticism, inspiring terror as she reigns over Bulika. Her vampirism and mobilization of fanaticism are located in her rejection of maternity. It is known by her people that she fears a prophecy about "the birth of an infant destined to her destruction," but she conceals from them her blood drinking and need for more (188). Ditzman observes, she "uses her high-ranking status to eliminate any potential that

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<sup>118</sup> Many legendary and folkloric vampire tales, like *Carmilla*, feature suicide as an origin for vampirism.

the prophecy will be fulfilled” (145). If she thinks there is a “baby, she sends [a leopardess] immediately to suck its blood, and then it either dies or grows up an idiot” (MacDonald 126). This leopardess is Lilith, who can shapeshift and drink blood in that form, too. Like Lucy, she prefers the blood of children. Vane learns Lilith’s paranoia, another feature of fanaticism, has led her to spurn marriage and send “witches around to teach the women spells that keep babies away, and give them horrible things to eat” (127). This suggests Lilith may be disseminating birth control and abortion methods.

In the late nineteenth-century, across all social classes women “increasingly restricted the number of children they bore” (Sauer 90).<sup>119</sup> Concerns about abortion simultaneously rose, and Sauer links declining birth rates to “a higher incidence of abortion” and “increased resort to contraception,” especially among married middle-class women (91).<sup>120</sup> MacDonald would likely disapprove of abortive practices as he believed children were “fresh from God” and “morally superior to adults” (Gaarden 26). Lilith’s anti-child beliefs go beyond her own refusal to bear children or a propagandic suggestion that Bulikans should follow her lead. She violently requires *all* Bulikan women to be child-free, drinking the blood of any infants who are born and cannot escape. Lilith’s influence goes beyond leadership: she prevents children through any means necessary. Walker suggests *Lilith* combines various ancient mythologies to riff on ideas about fertility and infanticide (181). She fears death because it involves humility, so, like the biblical King Herod, she kills and prevents the birth of babies to maintain power. She leads the Bulikans as if they were fanatics following her, much as Dracula commands his converts.

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<sup>119</sup> “Between 1880 and 1900, the British crude birth rate fell by over 20 per cent, and Matras has estimated that the percentage of married women who limited their fertility increased from about 20 per cent of those born between 1831 and 1845 to about 43 per cent of those born between 1861 and 1870” (Sauer 90).

<sup>120</sup> Abortion was widely criticized in medical literature and fiction of the period, despite an 1899 “rejection of the prevailing ethic” (Sauer 92).

Bulika, Lilith's city, is a horrible urban space, disconnected from nature. Bulikans are "cowards, in abject terror of animals!" (MacDonald 188). Prickett observes that Bulika calls to mind an "England of capitalism and commerce," which MacDonald saw as a "hideous moral distortion" (242). Marx's multiple metaphoric uses of the vampire as a description of capital shows the two may have shared a few opinions about the vampiric, destructive power of cities. Lilith's literal vampirism inspires a city to participate in capitalistic vampirism. Vane is told,

The people of Bulika were formerly simple folk, tilling the ground and pasturing sheep. [Lilith] came among them, and they received her hospitably. She taught them to dig for diamonds and opals and sell them to strangers, and made them give up tillage and pasturage and build a city. One day they found a huge snake and killed it; which so enraged her that she declared herself their princess and became terrible to them. (82)

Prior to Lilith's time in power, Bulikans worked humbly, connected to nature and the earth. Her tutelage inspired their lust for money and wealth, and she used her position to transform them. Her leadership, which utilizes the levers of fanaticism, created an urban nightmare. Vane finds the inhabitants of Bulika "rude," idle, and hostile to strangers (130). Violent men harass him, and none of the "more benevolent-looking" bystanders step in since Vane "looked poor," and "to the citizens of Bulika ... poverty was an offence! Deformity and sickness were taxed; and no legislation of their princess was more heartily approved of than what tended to make poverty subserve wealth" (130). Lilith's laws reward the greed she inspires. Bulika's source of power comes from being inside her city, as "beyond the walls they were cowards every one" (130). The citizens believe "it is a disgrace to work," spending their days in luxury, cruelty, and digging "for precious stones in their cellars" (133). Bulikans are ashamed to labor or belong to a lower class,

living off inheritances like a stereotypical aristocratic vampire.<sup>121</sup> They worship Lilith and money, objects of their cold fanaticism. They forget those who fall poor in an effort to maintain their wealth and exclusive community. Bulikans believe Lilith's ability to inspire fear protects them from strangers, and they remain loyal to her because she keeps them "safe and free and rich!" (133). Lilith manipulates a group of fanatics who follow her through fear, devotion, and greed, concepts MacDonald shows to be hollow. Their discriminative community believes they "are more ancient and noble than any other nation" (133-4). Ironically, Lilith herself was once a stranger. The bigoted Bulikans will overlook this, however, as she encourages their sense of superiority. This xenophobia fuels her own power: by scapegoating foreigners and the poor, perhaps no one will care about her evil purge of children. First, she gave Bulikans economic power; then, she became the ultimate, usurped power. Although this novel is less overtly Gothic, Lilith's tyranny and vampirism make her an inherently Gothicized, if redeemable, villain.

Although MacDonald does not directly make this allusion, given his life and career it is possible to read Lilith as a sort of Pharaoh. In Exodus, Pharaoh sees Hebrew babies as a threat and demands all male Hebrew children be thrown into the Nile. This is similar to Lilith's insistence that no children are born. The first plague in the Exodus story is a river of blood. Life forces become tainted in both these stories. Lilith's firstborn, Lona, dies at her own hands, much like Pharaoh's firstborn son dies as a direct result of his unwillingness to free the enslaved Hebrews. Lilith could fit a similar category as Pharaoh as she is a mythical figure whose origin story is set in Old Testament times. Lilith's cruel reign of Bulika mirrors the evil Pharaoh's rule of Egypt and brutality to the enslaved Hebrews. The difference is that Bulikans willingly enslave

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<sup>121</sup> Vampire literature had been used to critique aristocratic attitudes throughout the century, starting with John Polidori's 1818 *The Vampyre*. Although the Bulikans are not literal vampires, they have, under Lilith's tutelage, drained their city of life and vitality.

themselves to her through fanatical pursuit of wealth and prominence, drained not of blood but of virtue. Although Lilith is a literal vampire, she is also figuratively meaningful in ways that extend beyond the novel's anxieties surrounding the New Woman. She ruins Bulika, but inhabitants continue to be lured by economic prosperity and ruled by fear. Lilith and Dracula use similar methods to maintain control: weaponizing violence and threats alternated with affection and gifts. The people of Bulika follow Lilith blindly, finding validation in their economic success. Their self-deception contributes to their fanaticism.

Like the Bulikans, Vane is also briefly seduced by Lilith. He notices that her "presence had had a strange influence" he wants to both "resist" and "analyse" (129). His affections put him at risk for Lilith's enchantments. As McCann writes, "Vane's furious and consuming infatuation with Lilith brings grief," and his obsession causes him to overlook "the clear signs that she is a dangerous witch" (112). Yet again, romantic love becomes similar to religious fanaticism in that Vane, while infatuated, follows Lilith blindly. Eventually he realizes he "was a tame animal for her to feed upon; a human fountain for a thirst demoniac! She showed me favour the more easily to use me!" (MacDonald 148). Lilith is strangely alluring to Vane, who is "simultaneously attracted and repelled" to her (141). Vane struggles faces confusion as he tries to reconcile her beauty with her "wickedness" (142). She intentionally appeals to his vanity and uses claims of love to manipulate him, demanding, "To satisfy the hunger of my love, you must follow me, looking for nothing, not gratitude, not even pity in return!" (144). This hypnotic, fanatical love persuades sane individuals to do irrational, terrible things. Exploitation of love and fear become the fanatic ruler's best weapons. Lilith's speeches reveal a talent in gaslighting as she attempts to trick Vane into following her based on his unrequited physical attraction. He eventually learns to see through Lilith's evil ways, even though his vanity tempts him "to love a

lie” that Lilith loves him (146). This same love of a lie guides Bulikan fanatics and encourages Lilith to pursue her own interests instead of submitting, as MacDonald believes she must.

Fanaticism resides in behavior, not merely belief, and the behavior of vampires and their followers renders them a problem. Vampires exhibit and employ elements of fanaticism, such as Calhoun’s observed “complete lack of epistemological humility” (350), communal thinking, and extreme, violent loyalty. Fanaticism becomes powerful, both as a phenomenon for Lilith who exploits others through it and for MacDonald, who uses its Gothicized language to condemn aspects of New Woman ideology. Lilith manipulates fanatics through trickery that prevents them from criticizing her, engaging with diverse communities, or analyzing themselves. The self-authorized fanatic leader deceptively convinces followers their authority stems from elsewhere. MacDonald seems to think the New Woman, like Lilith, is self-authorized and prideful, lacking self-critique and inspiring a violence that harms family structures as well as children. Vane observes, Lilith “had usurped beyond her share in self-creation, and her part had undone [God’s]!” (231). As a woman who seizes power, she sucks life out of community and the world by rejecting her “natural” calling, thus becoming a vampire.

Lilith’s petulance and rebellion are in pursuit of self-definition, which makes it hard not to read her as a victim in spite of her evil. Lilith, like Heathcliff and other fanatics, has delusions of deity. Her fanatic stance places herself as a god, especially over men and Bulikans, in what seems to be not a critique of a specific denomination but of New Woman ideology. Lilith insists, “What I choose to be, you cannot change” (224). She calls this freedom, but Adam says, pedantically, “she loves not freedom who would enslave: she is herself a slave. ... you are the slave of every slave you have made” (224). MacDonald suggests women should not be empowered over men or God, but also that following others should be a choice, never forced.

Anti-child fanaticism has tainted Lilith's nature, which Adam insists is "good"; however, Lilith insists on acting "as my Self desires" (223). Even the news that she has killed her own daughter is met with her indifference. Her pride in self-ownership must be relinquished before Lilith can be reconciled to Adam and God.<sup>122</sup> On truly seeing her life, Lilith eventually repents. She cannot unclench her fist, which must be amputated and buried far away. Although a new one grows in its place, this entire scenario feels like a reinstatement of patriarchal male sexual dominance, a literal cutting off of her power. Gray calls Lilith's amputation "humiliation and castration," language that assumes a somewhat odd gender identity by suggesting Lilith clings to a source of stolen phallic power (122). Lilith's usurpation is coded as masculine, and the novel overly praises adherence to conventional gender roles. It is unclear what precisely motivates her change, but once she relinquishes "something that is not hers," like all MacDonald's creations, she is redeemable (235). Despite *Lilith's* Universalist message, as Raeper points out, it espouses no "doctrine of easy access into heaven" (365). Lilith must be penetrated by a white worm to be changed from the inside out. As with Lucy, her redemption has an unpleasant sexualized interpretation wherein deviant feminine power must be sexually dominated and controlled. Fanaticism is a method of control and power that works for a little while but is ultimately patriarchally conquered. Although God can remake her, she resists as much as she can, longing to remain "queen of Hell, and mistress of the worlds!" (229).

Lilith is redeemable only if she repents and conforms to conventional Christian definitions of feminine maternity. Her rejection of motherhood must be corrected by her first husband Adam, her God-appointed master, rather than Vane or even God because husbands, in MacDonald's fantasy world, serve as head. She must relinquish her lust for power and hatred of

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<sup>122</sup> Polygamy is weirdly overlooked in this book.

children. When Adam tries to open her eyes to her evil, she resists, declaring, “no one ever made me. I defy that Power to unmake me from a free woman! You are his slave, and I defy you! ... you shall not compel me to anything against my will!” (224). Adam concedes that “[s]uch a compulsion would be without value,” and tells her that the light (of God) can change her, but she insists, “That light shall not enter me: I hate it! – Begone, slave!” (224). Lilith invokes the language of slave/master, the same language Renfield uses to refer to Dracula. This discourse of enslavement is noteworthy in the context of vampire fiction and in the context of fanaticism. Fanatic vampires mentally (and sometimes physically) enslave their followers, who often initially buy in willingly. They *could* reject her, but they chose not to. MacDonald thinks true religious humility is chosen, not forced. Vampires allow their followers no choice.

Lilith encourages fanaticism in others through manipulation, bad leadership, and selfishness. Her redemption can come only after she is forced to repent. Without her hand and her former attitude, she is no longer a danger to children, and her vampirism and fanaticism end. While MacDonald’s vision of womanhood is problematic, it does offer the possibility of redemption to power-hungry women and fanatics who place themselves as God. Lilith can be redeemed through subservience and a willingness to humble herself. In *Lilith*, the fanatic is restored by conforming to gender norms. MacDonald argues Christians must be humble and obedient; fanatics are often only one of the above. The Bulikan fanatics obey Lilith because she provides for them, but they lack humility. Both virtues are essential, MacDonald suggests, especially for women but also for Vane. Those who reject humility become fanatical in pursuit of power and their own self-interest. Although anyone can be redeemed in this story, they must first learn humility, a possible safeguard against fanaticism.<sup>123</sup> While MacDonald holds this standard

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<sup>123</sup> De Jong suggests that Lilith’s redemptive nature reflects MacDonald’s belief that even the vampiric church could be saved (10).

for both men and women, he reveals a belief that the consequences for female hubris are much more dangerous. True humility, for men like Vane, means rising above vanity and pride to become heroic. For women like Lilith, it means relinquishing one's desires and submitting willingly to prescribed gender roles that center around maternity.

### ***The Blood of the Vampire***

Florence Marryat, well-known sensation author and spiritualist, also published a vampire novel in 1897.<sup>124</sup> Hers, *The Blood of the Vampire*, differs in a major regard from Stoker's *Dracula* or MacDonald's *Lilith*. Her vampire, Harriet Brandt, does not literally thirst for the blood of humans; she is a psychic vampire who drains the life forces of those around her. Her parentage, a mad-scientist father and a Creole, mixed-race mother who was a Voodoo priestess, curses her with a vampiric nature, and after draining the lives of various individuals, including her new husband, she commits suicide, paying heavily for her parents' crimes. Marryat's text is no indictment of fanaticism, nor does she use the vampire to directly explore the way fanaticism drains a spiritual community. Further, her text is less explicitly religious than vampire fiction tends to be. Marryat does, however, suggest Harriet's vampirism stems directly from her parents' natures. Both fit conventional Gothic types: the mad scientist and the foreign biracial religious leader. Race and fanatic religion are linked within this racist text. Harriet's mother, a caricature, is said to have thirsted for actual blood because her own mother, while pregnant, was bitten by a vampire bat. People feared her violent tendencies and connection to the occult; people feared

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<sup>124</sup> Marryat believed in spiritualism and imaginationism, evidenced in *There is No Death: My Eyewitness Experience with the Great Mediums* (1891), where Marryat describes a dead child's materialization at a séance (Hammack 893). Her associations with spiritualism meant she faced accusations of scandal, "exaggeration and improbability," but she persisted and engaged "forbidden topics such as women's sexual knowledge and marital abuse" (Lennox 3). Her work often focuses on "the vulnerability of women," primarily in the marital and medical institutions (Depledge viii). *The Blood of the Vampire* was written, as Macfie notes, after Marryat herself was "accused of being a psychic vampire" (64).

Harriet's father's violent and cruel experiments. Harriet is cursed with a vampiric legacy through her parents' engagements with Gothic fanatic tropes. Her inherited vampirism is unintentional, but it nonetheless causes great harm. This speaks to the colonial context, interrogating the concept of inherited guilt (an early Gothic trope) on a global stage where enslavement and colonial crimes, though not actively perpetrated by Harriet, still maintain a Gothic legacy of harm. Significantly, *The Blood of the Vampire* engages with all three arenas of Gothicized fanaticism I have identified: excessive romantic love, nationalism, and vampire fiction.

Harriet herself is not a fanatic in the sense that Robert Wringhim or the other female vampires might be; she speaks poorly of her Catholic education and seems to care little about faith after having "had any amount of religion crammed down my throat in the Convent" (Marryat 10). However, the shapes of fanatical romantic love echo throughout her relationships with others, especially men. Her mentor Baroness Gobelli quotes a song from the Gothic opera *Blue Beard* that makes a telling allusion about Harriet. Whereas the Bluebeard of fairy tales is known for killing his wives, Harriet unintentionally drains and kills those who are close to or love her, all while thinking she is showing them affection and love. She becomes the bluebeard. This Gothic reference helps underscore the degree to which her love is dangerous and, perhaps, fanatical. She sees love as possession and control, whether it is aimed at her new friend's baby or at her romantic partners, much like the lovers in *Wuthering Heights*.

Not only does Harriet have excessive affection for others, but she also catalyzes a reaction of excessive love in men like Ralph Pullen, Bobby Bates, and her eventual husband Anthony Pullen. She tells her first love interest, Ralph, that she loves him within mere days of meeting him, "feverishly," in an admission he returns regardless of his engagement to Elinor Leyton (62). She has a similar effect on Anthony, who despite having heard and believed

negative things about her, falls almost instantly in love. He later confesses to his cousin Margaret Pullen that Harriet “attracts without knowing it” and “is a mass of magnetism,” which she notes is eerily similar to Ralph’s initial reaction to her (138). Young Bobby Bates, whose affections Harriet permitted, dies in response to seeing her love for Anthony – his love cultivated by her vampirism has drained him and been so excessive as to cause his death of a broken heart. When Harriet and Anthony become engaged, he knows about her birth, but he believes that “the only stigmas worth thinking about are those we bring upon ourselves by our misconduct” (139). However, this naivete eventually gets him killed. Harriet’s parentage leaves her a curse that impacts her accidental behavior. Excessive love from or for her ends in a cruel and unusual punishment for all parties involved. Her unconscious vampirism, a “drawing way about her that pulls a fellow into the net before he knows what he is about,” employs affection to lure people (142). Unlike earlier vampiric leaders who intentionally manipulate the levers of fanaticism to evil ends, Harriet unconsciously attracts her prey using excessive romantic affection. Her vampirism still affords her a bit of control over her suitors, but some, like Ralph, are able to escape. She vacillates between heroine and villain throughout the novel, and as a reader it is difficult to know which she is intended to be. While no blood drinking occurs in the text, Harriet’s deadly impact on others is clear, and her Caribbean heritage shapes her vampirism.

The Caribbean, though not a setting in *The Blood of the Vampire*, plays a significant role. Harriet was born and raised in Jamaica but left the West Indies for Europe. The novel begins in Belgium, where she meets a group of vacationing English elites. Her heritage follows her. Wisker suggests that Harriet could be a soucouyant, a Caribbean female vampire that survives on “babies and young children” (156). Although Harriet does not actively drink blood, her energy vampirism that kills children and others around her links her to this Caribbean monster. Sean

Macfie notes that female vampires did not merely lurk in the pages of late nineteenth-century fiction – Caribbean versions like the Soucouyant and Loogaroo were written about in anthropology and linked to Obeah and Caribbean witchcraft (58).<sup>125</sup> Critics have observed the ways the novel demonstrates fears about the consequences of the colonies, and what becomes extremely clear is that in Marryat’s novel, “race plays a central role in understanding occult power” (Willburn 438).<sup>126</sup> The story, like *Dracula*, has been read “as a reverse colonization narrative” that Joseph suggests “informs and is informed by contemporary perspectives on post-emancipation conditions in the British West Indies” (189).<sup>127</sup> He argues that Harriet’s status, laced with ambivalence, depicts her both as “a pitiable victim of biological inheritance and a hot-tempered woman with a sadistic streak,” reflecting Marryat’s “similarly conflicted view of black West Indians under British rule” (Joseph 199). Octavia Davis compares Harriet to Bertha Mason, suggesting their similar Creole heritage “threatens the stability of the middle-class British family” (43). The racist novel suggests Harriet’s “primeval blood endows her with a pathological hardiness” that “allows her to endure the primal miasma of the tropical West Indies” (Davis 43). Harriet’s curse and vampirism stem in part from her racial identity, which Marryat links to “degraded blackness” (Joseph 199). Vampirism constitutes a foreign threat that reflects perceived inferiority of the non-English, especially the non-English of color.

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<sup>125</sup> “In his 1889 anthropological study *Obeah: Witchcraft in the West Indies* Hesketh Bell speaks of the prevalence of black magic rites and the incidence of female vampirism amongst West Indian women” (Macfie 58).

<sup>126</sup> Willburn writes, “race is frequently the leading factor, even above gender, provided as a reason for a character’s occult powers ... because it reflects a changing balance of power between Britain and Jamaica” (438-9).

<sup>127</sup> Marryat’s novel showcases “a creolized Caribbean as dangerous because it threatens British colonial dominance. ... *The Blood of the Vampire* paints a portrait of the Caribbean in which the specter of black self-governance looms large as a threat to British cultural hegemony and economic power. ... Marryat mobilizes a constellation of intersecting discourses – of unnatural black motherhood, Haitian Vodou and Jamaican obeah, cannibalism, post-emancipation moral and economic decline, and the curse of black blood – to render the prospect of black political empowerment threatening to both whites and blacks” (Joseph 190).

Harriet is the product of fanatic Gothic tropes, born illegitimately to a mad scientist and a Voodoo Priestess, raised by a Black enslaved man and Catholic nuns. Her mother Miss Carey's racial identity and reputation for Obeah tie her to the foreign. Voodoo, an Afro-Caribbean form of religion, seems foreign and dangerous, and although the text provides little description of it, Marryat relies on racist stereotypes. Miss Carey, an emblem of this exotic non-Christian religion with a reputation for violence and an association with blackness and excess, is a threatening fanatic. Voodoo appears as a Gothic foreign religion, depicted as actively monstrous. Harriet's mother is a racist caricature, described by Doctor Phillips thus:

She was not a woman [sic] she was a fiend, a fitting match for Henry Brandt! To my mind she was a revolting creature. A fat, flabby half caste who hardly ever moved out of her chair but sat eating all day long until the power to move had almost left her! I can see her now with her sensual mouth, her greedy eyes, her low forehead and half-formed brain, and her lust for blood. It was said that the only thing which made her laugh was to watch the dying agonies of the poor creatures her brutal protector slaughtered. But she thirsted for blood, she loved the sight and smell of it, she would taste it on the tip of her finger when it came in her way. ... She was killed at the same time as Brandt. Indeed the natives would have killed her in preference to him had they been obliged to choose, for they attributed all the atrocities that went on in the laboratory to her influence. They said she was 'Obeah,' which means diabolical witchcraft in their language. (Marryat 68-9)

Miss Carey, born to a woman enslaved by Judge Carey of Barbadoes, became Brandt's mistress as a teenager, adding further racism, possible rape, and sexual scandal to Harriet's lineage (77). Her mother was a monstrous product of colonialism and enslavement, both victim and villain. She held a reputation for Obeah among the locals, who "ascribed all the deaths and diseases that

took place on the plantation to her malign influence” (77). As Joseph observes, this description “resonates with accounts like Carlyle’s and Froude’s of pumpkin-eating black West Indians who refused to work after emancipation,” and her “sloth and gluttony reflect the metropolitan view of these choices as racialized moral failings” (200). She even contributes to her husband’s violent experiments on the people they enslave. Doctor Phillips believes Harriet directly inherited her vampirism from her mother’s racial identity. She passes for white, but as Hammack points out, characters “claim to detect Creole characteristics” linked to her “symptoms of relative sexual deviancy” and refusal “to accept rejection” (Hammack 887, 891). Dr. Phillips acknowledges Harriet does not “harm intentionally or even consciously”; however, “the deadly attributes of her bloodthirsty parents have descended on her,” and “those she apparently cares for most, and clings to most, will soonest fade out of existence, whilst she continues to live all the stronger that her victims die!” (79). Harriet expresses embarrassment and contempt toward her maternal line.

Henry Brandt’s unethical science experiments render Harriet’s father equally Gothic and fanatical. Harriet recalls little of him but thinks he “was a great doctor and scientist” (16).

However, Dr. Phillips warns Margaret that Brandt “was not worthy of the name” of doctor (67).

He was a scientist perhaps—a murderer certainly! ... This man Brandt matriculated in the Swiss hospitals, whence he was expelled for having caused the death of more than one patient by trying his scientific experiments upon them. ... Even there Henry Brandt’s barbarity was considered to render him unfit for associating with civilized practitioners, and he was expelled with ignominy. Having a private fortune he settled in Jamaica and set up his laboratory there, and I would not shock your ears by detailing one hundredth part of the atrocities that were said to take place under his supervision ... He was known to have decoyed natives into his Pandemonium who were never heard of again ... I am

glad to say, his negroes revolted and, after having murdered him with appropriate atrocity, set fire to his house and burned it and all his property to the ground. ... he richly deserved his fate, and no torture could be too severe for one who spent his worthless life in torturing god's helpless animals! (67-8)

Henry Brandt's evil crimes against nature suggest, to Dr. Phillips at least, that he earned his fate. His character type parallels earlier Gothic mad scientists like Victor Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll, whose unethical experiments render them canonical Gothic villains and scientific fanatics. *Frankenstein* openly uses the language of religious fanaticism to describe Frankenstein's obsession with forbidden science, cementing the idea that the mad scientist is a fanatic whose devotion lies not with a deity but with the self's own scientific advancements.<sup>128</sup> Henry Brandt can be read alongside his scientific predecessors not just as mad scientist but as a fanatic. Despite not engaging in transgressive science herself, Harriet inherits the punishment for his crimes, too. As a child she only barely escaped sharing her parents' deaths and was raised in a convent, then spends most of the novel in willful denial of her curse. Although Harriet is sympathetic compared to Lilith or Dracula, she is nonetheless dangerous, and as with other vampires, her charms ultimately lead to great harm.

Harriet grows up within the Gothic triad of Catholicism, mad science, and foreign religion marked with ethnic "other"-ness. Both nature and nurture contribute to her vampirism. Her convent education marks her with Catholicism, but she rebels against it and is elated to be "free at last, after ten long years of imprisonment" in the "horrid Convent" (10). Harriet remarks she has no close religious ties. Her upbringing is foreign and accented by fanaticism in various

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<sup>128</sup> Victor Frankenstein created his monster when "attacked by the fatal passion" (Shelley 39), realizes his "hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation" (62), and eventually sees that fanaticism, "a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment" (118).

ways: she has her father's mad science, her mother's status as voodoo priestess, a multiracial nature, and a Catholic education.<sup>129</sup> The question of whether descendants are responsible for their ancestor's sins, embedded into the fabric of the Gothic since Walpole, is a thematic center of *The Blood of the Vampire*. Anthony muses about Harriet's legacy and deems it ridiculous for "the sins of the fathers ever to be visited upon the children" (146). However, his eventual death, alongside her other victims, demonstrates that she has *clearly* inherited these traits and must pay for her parents' crimes. Harriet sits at the crux of Gothic fanaticism as she has been isolated, is a racial and religious other, and is raised in a Catholicism she does not abide by. She fits many of the patterns of the New Woman and rejects conventional religious femininity. From the crucible of isolation, she becomes a Gothic heroine (or villain) imprinted with all of the negative forces we have seen across nineteenth-century Gothic fanatics. Harriet's vampirism reflects her outsider status, and Marryat's Gothic discourse centers the superiority of "proper" Britishness.

Three women in the novel are vampiric: Harriet, her mother Miss Carey, and Baroness Gobelli, a gluttonous, greedy new money type and Harriet's new maternal influence. Using these women, Macfie suggests, Marryat demonstrates ways women who transgress can literally and figuratively be drains (61). Notably, as Lennox points out, all of them "conform to gender-, class-, and race-based stereotypes regarding gluttons" (8). Davis argues that each exists "in anabolic relation to her environment," demonstrating that to be a certain kind of female, in this novel, is to leech off others.<sup>130</sup> Their relative distance from race and class-based social norms

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<sup>129</sup> Even her voice, which is siren-like, is influenced by her Catholic education as a nun taught her to sing in a manner Dr. Phillips thinks "would be enough to drag any man down to perdition" (71).

<sup>130</sup> Davis shows how contemporary science believed blood to carry energy women lost through a variety of feminine experiences; in this paradigm people believed women needed to "compensate for this loss by drawing energy from their environments" (46).

monitors perceptions of appropriate feminine behavior and identity.<sup>131</sup> Willburn suggests Harriet can be read “as a wealthy Jamaican colonizing the concept of English womanhood” (440). Harriet intentionally fabricates a vision of herself that is properly English, practicing her accent and assuring her new acquaintances, “I am an Englishwoman, you know!” (13). However, the novel suggests her actual heritage is inescapably violent, cementing traditional ideas about essential English identity categories and contributing, like Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet*, to a Gothic sense that the foreign is a threat. Harriet’s status as vampire is less evil than the others in this chapter; however, she is no less dangerous. She may not be a blood-drinking fanatical vampire like Lilith or Lucy, but the narrative reveals similar anxieties about perceived imperial threats, and in a sense Harriet’s unstable status as both heroine and villain makes her a foil to other female vampires. She does not seek to harm others, yet they continue to be drained and often die because of her presence, a trend she intentionally ignores.

Harriet Brandt’s vampirism is hinted at through her appearance and animal-like nature. Harriet is “more remarkable perhaps than beautiful,” “tall but slight and lissom,” “almost boneless,” with “colourless but clear” skin, “dark and narrow [eyes] with heavy lids and thick black lashes,” and a large mouth “with lips of a deep blood colour, displaying small white teeth” (Marryat 4). Characters and Marryat use animalistic language to describe her (Hammack 892). This language also hints at her status as a psychic vampire. For instance, Harriet eats ravenously and unashamedly, “eyes fixed upon her food as if she feared some one might deprive her of it” (Marryat 4). Miss Leyton observes Harriet “ate like a pig!” (9). Her “impenetrably black” eyes “seemed to stir and kindle and then go out again when she spoke of anything that interested her.

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<sup>131</sup> “Where the projection of Mrs. Brandt’s and Harriet’s vampirism is predominately rooted in racial and sexual tensions, the portrayal of Madame Gobelli as a vampire most evidently springs from class anxieties. ... to be working class is to be vampiric upon those who form the professional classes or who belong, through heredity, to the aristocracy” (Macfie 63).

... She seemed to hypnotise her as the snake is said to hypnotise the bird” (29). Harriet has a mesmerizing, controlling effect on others from whom she unconsciously steals energy. Her new acquaintances Margaret and Elinor feel uneasy about her, hinting further at her unconscious vampirism. Margaret notices “something about her that oppresses me. ... I get neuralgia whenever we have been a short time together – and she leaves me in low spirits” (38). Elinor suggests this is because of Harriet’s “detestable school-girl habit of hanging upon one’s arm and dragging one down almost to the earth!” (39). Harriet is not the stereotypical Gothic heroine: demure, polite, selfless. She is ravenous for life, relationships, and love, and she is selfish (albeit in a less overtly toxic way than, say, Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*). Harriet is also drawn to dark things and violence. She admits to taking great childhood amusement when the overseer of her father’s plantation allowed her to whip young enslaved children (17). At an art exhibit, she is compelled by a violent painting that holds her attention.<sup>132</sup> Throughout the novel, women’s suspicions of Harriet are partly due to their exclusivity but are also tinged with racism and their unconscious reactions to her vampiric nature.

Harriet’s energy pulls vitality from those around her without her conscious knowledge. For instance, she begins to drain Margaret on a walk, getting uncomfortably closer and beginning to lean on her. Margaret grows “fainter and fainter,” “as if something or someone were drawing all her life away. She tried to disengage herself from the girl’s clasp but Harriet Brandt seemed to come after her, like a coiling snake” (18). The animalistic language underlines Harriet’s consumption of those close to her. Margaret escapes, and although she convinces others Harriet is to blame for her illness, Harriet does not realize she drains others. Nor is it intentional:

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<sup>132</sup> Harriet is “attracted” by “gory paintings by Antoine Joseph Wiertz, a Belgian romantic known for morbid depictions of decapitation” (Hammack 890).

She liked [Mrs. Pullen] so much ... she had so hoped she was going to be her friend—she would have done anything, and given anything, sooner than put her to inconvenience in any way. ... there was a cold empty feeling in her breast as though, in losing her hold on Margaret Pullen, she had lost something on which she had depended. (19)

This is not the first time Harriet has drained a friend. Her traveling companion grew ill sharing a sea cabin with her. As a child, she was responsible for the deaths of two wet nurses and a friend; she will also be responsible for the deaths of her adult lovers. Harriet's draining of others seems unintentional, but she ignores past scenarios that reveal a deadly record.

Harriet's curse becomes most evident in her treatment of babies and her relationships with men. As with the Lilith legend or with Lucy, the female vampire is most threatening in her ability to seduce men and harm children. Harriet's most unfortunate victim is baby Ethel, her new friend Margaret's daughter. Though not maternal, Harriet desires babies to hold and play with. Margaret dislikes Harriet's obsession with Ethel, but Harriet ignores these boundaries. She takes the infant from the nurse to play with, leeching her life force while showering the child with gifts despite her mother's protests. She adores Ethel as a consumer, for being a "sweet pink and white baby!" (28). Harriet likes Ethel partly because of her whiteness, making a variety of racist remarks about Jamaican babies. The child seems a toy as well as a source she can unconsciously suck life from without fear of adult rejection. Harriet intends no malevolence, but she thinks only of herself.<sup>133</sup> These behaviors toward the child would classify as grooming.<sup>134</sup>

Although she appears innocent and may have benign motives, her presence is ultimately

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<sup>133</sup> Harriet's traveling companion observes Harriet's fondness for children despite having little experience with them. She says since "there were no children at the Convent under ten years of age," Harriet "does not know how to make enough of them when she meets them. ... Some times, I tell her I think she would like to eat them" (58).

<sup>134</sup> I use this term in the legal, criminal sense, which refers to the process by which abusers manipulate child victims. Unfortunately, this term has been recently misappropriated and misused in a bigoted fashion. While Harriet does inappropriately act toward Ethel, her desire for her is predatory in a vampiric, rather than pedophilic, manner.

predatory, aligning her weirdly with Lucy and Lilith despite her proclaimed affections. When the baby becomes ill, Harriet shows no empathy. At this point, she has found a man to admire her and thus seems indifferent to Ethel's wellbeing. Harriet is surprised but not desolate on hearing of the child's death, more concerned about her own romantic disappointment.

Harriet craves intimacy and relationship but engaging in them harms others due to her cursed nature, which she slowly becomes aware of. Her love and affection are anything but selfless. Her brief relationship with the vain and popular Ralph Pullen catalyzes a sexual awakening, their physical relationship seeming "to rouse all the animal in Harriet Brandt's blood" (62). Ralph, on learning she is from Jamaica, believes he can see "a drop of Creole blood" in her eyes (49). After their first kiss, which "seemed to sap his vitality," he feels "faint and sick" (62). Her sexuality clearly enhances her life-draining abilities, and after their rendezvous, the formerly healthy Ralph looks quite ill (63). Like other female vampires, her dangerous sexuality aligns her with stereotypes about the New Woman. Male rejection draws out Harriet's animalistic tendencies. Ralph's broken promise sends her into a disproportionate spiral of anger despite her "longing with the fierceness of a tigress for blood, to feel his lips against her own and to hear him say that he adored her" (Marryat 87). When confronted by Ralph's fiancée, "[a]ll the Creole in her came to the surface – like her cruel mother she would have given over Ralph Pullen to the vivisectioning laboratory if she could" (111-2). Her eventual husband Anthony "knew all the while that the savage in her was *not* tamed—that at any moment, like the domesticated lion or tiger, her nature might assert itself and become furious, wild and intractable" (180). Harriet herself admits she is "not" a "good woman" (183). She is driven by passion, not reason, portrayed as sexually insatiable, with twinges of the New Woman and the lesbianism others suspect because of her physical affection for other women. After Ralph spurns

her, Harriet allows the young, sickly Bobby Bates to grow intimate with her, flattered by his attention and enjoying her power over men.<sup>135</sup> She treats him, like Ethel, as a toy. Harriet eventually falls in love with Anthony Pennell, leaving Bobby distraught. This disappointment, along with Harriet's draining, leads to Bobby's untimely death. He is not the last of her victims. The idea of love blinds her to the obvious patterns of harm she has unintentionally caused.

Marryat uses racialized notions of character to suggest violence is inherited. No one is harmed more, perhaps, than Harriet's eventual husband Anthony. He likes Harriet for her intelligence and disregards clear warnings about her parentage, believing "the only stigmas worth thinking about are those we bring upon ourselves by our misconduct" (139). Although Harriet does not actively work to hurt others, her unintentional evil nonetheless persists. The titular blood of the vampire is not what Harriet craves, nor is it merely racial (although Marryat's novel clearly warns against miscegenation). The blood of the vampire carries Gothicized fanaticism in its veins, and it curses Harriet. As she falls in love with Anthony, she begins to suck the life away from him, too. At his proposal, he promises to be her "devoted slave for ever!" (151). The language of enslavement is again linked to the power of a vampire over others, and in Harriet's case it is more than metaphorical as, despite enslavement legally having ended, the legacy of both the enslaved and the enslaver mingle in her blood. Beyond being the language of lovers, this promise is sinister in that it heightens the ambiguity regarding how much ability any of the men have to consent to or resist Harriet. Like other vampiric women, men devote themselves to her uncritically, ignoring the danger signs, because of her magnetic vampirism.

Harriet must mentally wrestle with this curse. After being warned by Doctor Phillips himself, she tries to end things with Anthony but fails. Harriet recalls a litany of incidents from

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<sup>135</sup> The narrator remarks, "The tigress deprived of blood will sometimes condescend to milder food" (91).

her childhood that provide evidence for the claims against her: harming two wet nurses, her childhood friend Caroline, and Bobby Bates. She comes to the realization that “with everybody I love” “I shall only do them harm!” (165). A fanatic legacy curses her to be unable to love without draining everyone close to her, whether white, black, male, or female. She has inherited fanatic blood, “the blood of the vampire ... that sucks its victims’ breaths until they die!” (166). This terrifies her, but she lacks the resolve to permanently send Anthony away. She thinks the curse is unfair and acts upon that feeling rather than the real danger she puts others in. Ralph earlier insisted Harriet was not to blame for the violence, and Dr. Phillips says “I quite allow that! Neither is it the fault of a madman that his progenitors had lunacy in their blood ... All the same the facts affect their lives and the lives of those with whom they come into contact. It is the curse of heredity!” (78). At the novel’s climax, Harriet uses her lack of intention to excuse her own actions. She asks how her parents had dared to even give birth to her,

an innocent yet hapless child of sin—the inheritor of their evil propensities—of their lust, their cruelty, their sensuality, their gluttony—and worst of all, the fatal heritage that made her a terror and a curse to her fellow-creatures? *How dared they?* ... Why had God’s vengeance not fallen upon them before they had completed their cruel work, or having accomplished it, why did He not let her perish with them...? (Marryat 176)

After a dark night of the soul, she convinces herself of her own innocence, deciding she has “been frightening myself with a chimera” (177). In this, she engages in willful blindness, intentionally disregarding the evidence that damns her and cultivating counterevidence that supports the belief she wants so badly to be true. This rewriting of her own history seems almost fanatical. Ultimately, she cannot overcome her cursed inheritance.

Love and fanaticism intermingle in Harriet, whose love makes her an unintentional murderer. Whereas other vampires become cult leaders, Harriet's status as psychic vampire leads her to control, drain, and kill lovers. She grapples with her fated suffering and begins to self-rationalize with delusions of martyrdom, deciding that each victim of her condition died from something else. Her emotional cravings trump real dangers. Marryat writes, "Money Harriet had no need of, but love—love she had thirsted for, as the hart thirsts for the water streams" (179). This comparison alludes to Psalm 42, in which the psalmist compares thirsting for God like a deer pants for water. Harriet's desire for love is implicitly religious, yet it is cursed. Anthony dies on their honeymoon. A servant summons a nun from a nearby convent to comfort the bereaved and distraught Harriet, but religion offers her no peace. Sister Angelica's

words and prayers had no effect upon Harriet. Her brain could hold but one idea—she had killed Tony! Doctor Phillips was right—it was she who had killed Margaret Pullen's baby and Bobby Bates, and to look further back, little Caroline, and now—now her Tony! the light of her life ... *she*, who worshipped him, whose pride was bound up in him, who was to have helped him and comforted him and waited on him all his life—she had killed him! (186)

She listens "dully" to the nun's comforts but still finds Catholicism weary and unhelpful (186). She knows it is her fault at this point and finally takes some sort of accountability for her actions, perhaps overcoming her fanaticism in this acknowledgement and self-awareness (as fanatics cannot – or will not – admit their own faults). Harriet's decision to end her own life Gothically concludes the novel. This suicide completes her parents' bloodthirstiness, and she, as a vampire, consumes even herself. Accompanying her will, she leaves Margaret a note: "Do not think more unkindly of me than you can help. My parents have made me unfit to live. Let me go to a world

where the curse of heredity which they laid upon me may be mercifully wiped out” (187). The power and satisfaction fanatic love provided turns out to be ephemeral and deadly.

*The Blood of the Vampire* provides another take on the Gothic topos of children who suffer for their parents’ crimes. Early Gothic children are often innocent victims punished directly for their parents’ sins. They do not inherit criminality, but Harriet’s legacy is constant yet unintentional harm to others. As Macfie, Zieger, and Hammack observe, the novel’s vampirism is medicalized, and Dr. Phillips’ readings of Harriet’s case render it disease like:

I should certainly say that your temperament was more of the *drawing* than the *yielding* order, Miss Brandt, but that is not your fault you know. ... you are not likely to make those with whom you intimately associate stronger either in mind or body. You will always exert a weakening and debilitating effect ... You will have, in fact, *sucked them dry*. ... You must never hope to keep anyone near you for long, without injuring them.

Make it your rule through life never to cleave to any one person altogether. (162)

Dr. Phillips’ diagnoses are “motivated by racist and misogynist attitudes,” as Macfie points out (62). Zieger reads both *Dracula* and *The Blood of the Vampire* as narratives that center and use addiction in the context of imperialistic concerns. Like other invasion narratives, Marryat’s novel reflects anxieties about the extended dominance of the British empire. Harriet’s contagion is an international, yet deeply personal, threat.

Marryat’s novel provides an interesting question in the colonial context. Who is really to blame for the deaths Harriet causes? She is not always aware of her malignity and does not actively or intentionally harm others. And yet, they inevitably die. Questions of guilt are fruitful since the novel leaves the answer ambiguous. Harriet’s crime is being the daughter of two evil fanatics in the context of colonialism. The novel is clearly anti-miscegenation and fairly racist,

but it speaks to a world wrestling with managing inherited guilt and unintentional continuing harm in a post-enslavement colonial context. Harriet does not actively set out to injure others. Perhaps the late nineteenth-century colonial agenda could claim similarly benign intentions. However, Harriet kills people in her childhood, her friend's daughter, and two men who love her, while draining others who manage to survive. Colonialism harmed (and harms) countless individuals; enslavement killed millions. Mild intentions pale in the face of these undeniable deaths. Marryat provokes us to ask what is to be done with agents of harm who damage others unintentionally because of inheritance. Beyond Harriet's fictional experiences, the harm caused by colonialism continued even after official enslavement ended. This is a Gothic legacy taken up to this day, and although Marryat's novel does not participate in a direct critique of the colonial project, it does reflect an ambivalence toward next steps. The novel's pessimistic conclusion provides no clarity or hope for a different moral system on an individual or global scale.

In *The Blood of the Vampire*, systemic fanaticism eclipses individual fanatical choices and loyalties. The systems have caused great harm, both to those surrounding Harriet and in the accounts of colonialism and racism in the novel that reveal just how cruel her parents were. Harriet lacks criminal intent or *mens rea*, but the harm is indisputable. Should she be held individually responsible? This question is also deeply Gothic, and Sandra Macpherson reads the roots of the role of intentionality in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, which she sees as "a literary precedent, paving the way not only for the *Confessions* but for *Caleb Williams*, *Frankenstein*, and *Wieland* - texts obsessed with unintentional crimes, in which the eponymous heroes gradually come to accept responsibility for the range of effects their actions help to produce" (111). The later Gothic hero who unintentionally kills or is responsible for the deaths of people most beloved also follows this trajectory, whether we look at *Otranto*'s Manfred, *Frankenstein*,

or even Catherine and Heathcliff. *The Blood of the Vampire* further takes up this question of intentionality as it traces Harriet's growing awareness of and willful blindness toward her own danger toward others. Harriet's list of victims cannot be erased by her benevolent (if selfish) intentions, but Marryat's novel shines a light on the role of systemic responsibility across generations. Hereditary and religious communities can both become fanatical; *The Blood of the Vampire* suggests that tainted community is not only contagious but also inheritable.

Harriet's vampirism is the product of systemic forces. She is not transformed by an evil agent like Dracula, nor does she become a blood drinker through her own suicide like Lilith or Carmilla. Nor does she actively intend to harm like most of her vampiric predecessors. While she shares their deep selfishness, she consumes others in pursuit of their affection. Systemic, inherited traits render her a vampire in a curse that is a product of her heritage, much like early Gothic curses. Harriet's individual beliefs and actions matter little. She has two choices: isolate, living a lonely life with no close relationships; or, love and be loved while harming those she adores. This choice makes Harriet a somewhat tragic figure; yet, her willful blindness cannot negate the accidental deaths of so many people. Nonetheless, her curse arises not from her actions but from her parentage, and her choice to kill herself as an act of accountability offers no real solution in Marryat's thought experiment.

Marryat's colonially invested novel uses the forms of the vampire alongside the concepts of intentionality and guilt to perhaps speak to a broader context than the personal. Marryat does not condemn colonialism (or even enslavement, really), but she writes to a context where colonialism was inherited and causing clear harm. Her text asks if an individual can be blamed for something others did in the past, if Harriet can really shoulder the guilt for her parents' crimes or if her readers can be held accountable for the legacy of sins in the Caribbean. The

novel is not anti-colonial, as it contains no direct indictment of colonization or Empire. It is also not quite pro-colonial, either, although it reveals anxieties surrounding the colonial project. Rather than taking a clear stance on the issue, the novel (which seems meant to entertain above all as it belongs in the sensation genre) raises thought-provoking questions. If guilt is systemic and heritable in either case, what do we do when inheritors perpetrate continued yet accidental harm?<sup>136</sup> Harriet's classification as villain or heroine depends on whether or not intention is a criterion for that categorization. Good intentions alone cannot make her a heroine, but harmful actions alone also do not quite justify her status as villain. As the daughter of two Gothically fanatic tropes, her fate is inevitable. The colonial situation and her liminal status prevent her from being able to experience genuine love or happiness. The sins of colonizers and enslavers impact children cursed with this legacy. Despite being a clearly racist text, Marryat's novel speaks to notions of inherited systemic guilt, asking readers to consider what must be done with unintentional, systemic harm.

## **Conclusion**

In Gothic literature, vampirism bears polyvalent metaphorical meaning, often centered around sexual transgression, "other"-ness, or xenophobia. Vampirism also becomes a metaphor for fanaticism in nineteenth-century vampire fictions *Dracula*, *Lilith*, and *The Blood of the Vampire*. All of these vampires are slain in some way: Dracula/Lucy by the team of Christians, Lilith by Adam/pure virtue, and Harriet by her own heredity and hand. Fanaticism and fanatic tendencies are quashed by various methods, but vampirism is clearly linked to perverse religious practice as well as female sexual transgression and maternal rejection. In a sense, vampirism and

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<sup>136</sup> Though beyond the scope of this novel or study, it is interesting to ask this question of religious communities that enact unintentional harm on others.

fanaticism are both about control over the self or others. Dracula and Lilith find utility in employing the mechanisms of fanaticism, but the Gothic fanaticism embedded in Harriet's heritage prevents any happy ending.

Notably, all three of these novels employ the language of enslavement. Vampires enslave others and are slaves to their own thirst. Whether we are examining Renfield's declaration of his own enslavement to Dracula, Lilith's refusal to be enslaved by maternity, or the actual Creole context Harriet emerges from with historical enslavement and enslaving in her heritage, the language of slavery is present in the context of vampirism. This eventually becomes a metaphor used in Anne Rice's postmodern *Vampire Chronicles* and George R.R. Martin's vampire novel *Fevre Dream*. Vampirism and enslavement both tend to feature uneven power dynamics, violence enacted upon others, problematic sexual encounters, and blurry consent. Fanaticism may also fit with these two as it encourages violence and is not critical of the self in ways that might prevent problematic power dynamics. Fanatics do as they are told by their leaders; they can rarely see that leaders may be self-authorized. Fanaticism is a tool of power that facilitates control of others, and these nineteenth-century novelists suggest vampirism and fanaticism are both dangerous. While fanaticism offers the vampire temporary gains like power and expansion, the vampire is always slain or overcome. New Women can be painted as religious fanatics because the Gothicized forms of fanaticism in the century enable writers to demonize whatever they dislike. Fanaticism within the text gives power that is beyond what seems natural or appropriate, especially to a "good" Protestant. Fanaticism also, as these novels show, enslaves others, and after a century marked with violence surrounding the end of enslavement, the use of the discourse suggests that although slavery was now illegal, its legacy was far from gone. At the

end of a century filled with religious dissension and change, the discourse also reflects the sense that religion had, in many arenas, gone monstrously astray.

### **Coda: *Midnight Mass***

The vampire always rises again (Cohen 5-6). As Catherine Spooner points out, vampire fiction and film have become increasingly popular over the past 60 years (122). So, too, has the genre's engagement with religious ideas and fanaticism, whether this manifests in the clear postmodern religious critiques made in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, the power dynamics employed by the evil and cult-like Volturi clan in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, or the overt engagement of vampirism as a metaphor for fanaticism in season five of the HBO series *True Blood*. The most blatant example of vampirism becoming a metaphor for fanaticism in contemporary Gothic comes from Mike Flanagan's Netflix series *Midnight Mass* (2021), which openly suggests religious fanaticism is vampiric, comparing the two to alcoholism and addiction. The series provides not an alternative Gothicized history but a religious fable that cautions against overly eschatological, fanatical forms of belief that commodify religion.

*Midnight Mass* has a strong though unspoken link to *Dracula* and other nineteenth-century Gothic representations of religious fanatics. The series focuses on the small Crockett Island, where a strange priest arrives, bringing miracles – and a dark curse – with him. The characters start to experience miraculous physical healing. However, we learn that the reason for this healing is that Father Paul, who is actually the island's elderly clergyman Father John Pruitt, has somehow returned from a trip to Jerusalem in a younger body.<sup>137</sup> He found a vampire in the desert and mistook it for an angel of the Lord. As it attacked and drank from him, he recited the Lord's prayer, interpreting the winged creature not as a vampire but as an Angel. The monster

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<sup>137</sup> He goes by both names in the series; in this chapter I refer to him as Father Paul.

then fed him its own blood, restoring his youth. He construes this as a miracle, a modern reinstatement of the original Eucharist. He decides to bring the Angel home to Crockett Island, unaware of the monster's own malignant purpose, eerily like Dracula's. Eventually, Father Paul dies and wakes up thirsty. Having partaken of the Angel's blood, he is now part of the dark vampiric community. The priest does not seem to realize that his healings are not miraculous, but a product of the monster.

Father Paul laces the communion wine with the Angel's blood, feeding it to parishioners who begin to experience remarkable healing, from improved eyesight to a reversal of a child's paralysis. It even causes schoolteacher Erin Greene to lose her baby and become unpregnant in a strange reversal of the immaculate conception that devastates her. Thus, taking communion becomes an unknowingly evil sacrament. There is power in this blood, which resurrects and heals but also transforms people into vampires, although the word "vampire" is not used in the series. The "Angel" is similar to Count Dracula in its desire to replicate itself, and, like *Dracula*, the series is filled with distorted Catholic emblems. The Gothicized Eucharist centers this story about religious fanaticism. While Father Paul brings and shares the Angel's blood, his devotee Bev Keene is the story's true fanatic villain. Father Paul is often sympathetic, genuinely wanting good for others. Bev just lusts after the power a church can hold, and she sees mobilizing fanaticism as a way to gain that dominance. Over the series, she poisons a dog, sends a Muslim teenager home with a Bible, shames Erin for her pregnancy, and insists people who do not attend her church are going to hell. In the past, she used religion to persuade townspeople to spend the funds from an oil spill settlement on an unused recreation center. Riley Flynn describes this manipulation as the "Catholic church in a nutshell ... these small, starving villages with big fancy churches, getting bigger and fancier while the towns dry up, churches just popping up like

fat, plump little ticks sucking the town dry” (“Book II: Psalms” 00:45:20-00:45:39). Riley’s criticism unconsciously uses the central metaphor of the series to sum up the main point: that misused religion becomes vampiric.

The series uses vampirism, alcoholism, and religious fanaticism as analogs to emphasize the addictive nature of violent, exclusive religion. Vampires are alcoholics since they cannot stop drinking, which sustains them. Christians are also sustained through communion, literally in this series, as the wine contains healing vampire blood. To set the scene for a religious crisis, the series opens with a close-up shot of an ichthus on the back of a vehicle, illuminated by the flashing red and blue lights of emergency vehicles responding to a car crash caused by Riley’s drunk driving, years before the series’ main plot occurs. This image emphasizes the central idea that something is dangerously wrong with the state of religion. Riley, the young man from Crockett Island who killed the young woman in the other vehicle, is haunted by flashbacks of her staring at him in judgment. This incident sparks his loss of faith. After four years in prison, he returns home on the same day Father Paul arrives. Riley’s deeply religious family now has a no alcohol policy: his mother Annie admonishes her teenage son Warren, “no drinking” (“Book I: Genesis” 00:05:54-00:05:59). This becomes ironic as drinking the blood of the vampire in the communion wine eventually heals, destroys, and binds the whole group. The connections between alcoholism and communion are emphasized in a montage underscored by the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy.” As Father Paul administers the Eucharist at a weekday Mass, holding up the Host, the scene cuts to a man giving out a sobriety pin at the AA meeting Riley must attend on the mainland. The juxtaposition of these images highlights the similarities between rituals that bind communities, or at least that are supposed to.

Fanaticism stems from one's orientation and devotion, not affiliation. Fanatic religion correlates to alcoholism in *Midnight Mass*, and at the first AA meeting Father Paul hosts, he reminds Riley that Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine, suggesting "alcohol isn't good or bad, not itself" ("Book II: Psalms" 00:47:13- 00:47:20). So, too, with religion. Father Paul thinks God could transform Riley's pain and suffering into a purpose, but Riley responds,

No, alcohol isn't good or bad. But the version of me that would come out when I had enough to drink? He was bad. He was selfish, and careless, and he ruined my life. ... I fed him so he wouldn't hurt me. And then one morning I woke up and found out he'd killed someone. I. I killed someone. So who's to blame there? I am to blame there. God? He just kind of let it happen, didn't he? See that's the part I cannot square, because you're right – there is so much suffering in the world, so much, and then there's this higher power ... who could erase all that pain, just wave his hand and make it all go away but doesn't? ... The worst part is that it lets all the rest of us off the hook. ... Nothing good came out of my drinking. ("Book II: Psalms" 00:48:12-00:49:58)

Riley criticizes the "monstrous idea" that "suffering could be a gift from God" ("Book II: Psalms" 00:50:20-00:50:28). For this island, religion itself becomes an addiction that propels fanatical, bloodthirsty frenzies, just like alcoholism led to Riley's accident. Just as nothing good came out of Riley's drinking, nothing good will come out of fanatics partaking of the dark and dangerous Eucharist. The version of religion that emerges on Crockett Island, like this version of Riley, is careless, dangerous, and selfish, focusing on Christianity primarily as a commodity for earthly healing. Belief itself is neither good nor bad; rather, one's actions determine the relative goodness of one's religious practices. Fanaticism is addictive, the show suggests, but it can also be overcome as it is not linked to any specific religious creed.

The series complicates its critique of religious fanaticism by centering characters that face Islamophobic discrimination. Crockett Island does not accept outsiders Sheriff Hassan or his teenage son Ali on the basis of their religion and ethnicity. This discrimination, led mostly by Bev, includes island members persistently working to proselytize Ali. He eventually wants to visit St. Patrick's church, wishing to express agency and fit in with his friends. While his father initially says no, Hassan eventually permits Ali to attend mass despite his disapproval. Hassan's religious tolerance sharply differs from Bev's exclusivity and judgment. Later, when Dr. Sarah Gunning goes to Sheriff Hassan with a concern that a contagion is being spread at church, we learn discrimination is part of what compelled them to move from New York City to Crockett Island in the first place. After 9/11, a nonreligious Hassan joined the NYPD to help, thinking, "I'll show them they don't have to be afraid of us" ("Book VI: Acts of the Apostles" 00:24:23-00:24:29). He worked his way through the system and became a detective on the terrorism task force but was asked to persuade Muslims arrested on minor charges to spy on people at Mosques. After complaining, they started keeping tabs on Hassan, treating him like an "infiltrator" or "double agent" ("Book VI: Acts of the Apostles" 00:26:07-00:26:12). Racism increased, and Hassan could no longer work in plainclothes and was reassigned to the night shift, which showed him he had "lost their trust" ("Book VI: Acts of the Apostles" 00:26:24-00:26:28). He maintained his dignity as he could, but then his wife, for whom he converted to Islam, died from cancer. Without her, he took his son as far away as possible, ending up on Crockett Island, where there had been no "incident of intentional violence in almost a century" ("Book VI: Acts of the Apostles" 00:27:25-00:27:41). He saw the post as a possible refuge from religious intolerance, but in spite of trying to win them over, he faces intense Islamophobia as his religious affiliation renders him an outsider.

The island's insider Catholics struggle to participate in rational religion. This is exacerbated by Father Paul's increasingly fanatical sermons, including one in which he elaborates on the concept of passion: "This is one of my favorite days of the year, the Passion of our Lord. ... The word passion, it means a strong and barely controllable emotion, barely controllable, that's what Jesus felt when he gave his life for us so that we might have life eternal. What a gift" ("Book V: Gospel" 00:13:49-00:14:15). This definition he offers, however, emphasizes emotion as the center of faith rather than using the term's other meaning. "Passion," in the context of Christianity, typically refers to Christ's suffering and death, something a Catholic priest would absolutely know. As with Gaskell's Puritans, his suspect interpretive choice helps signpost his fanaticism. Father Paul continues with what appears to be increasing religious mania, becoming more and more unhinged until he declares that his congregation is an army fighting not for an earthly kingdom but for God in an upcoming war that will demand costly sacrifices from each of them. He suggests that feeling is the primary foundation for Christian faith. More concerning, he declares, "God's will, while perfect, changes, God's will dictates morality, and as God's will changes so does morality change. It changed with the new covenant; it changed when Jesus came. And we must as his army shed the old covenant and listen only to that. ... The gospel of the Lord, so full of horror is only Good because of where it is headed. The resurrection!" ("Book V: Gospel" 00:17:26-00:17:59). Until the scales fall from his eyes, Father Paul's focus is entirely on extending human life. Most congregants listen attentively to this sermon, drinking in every word. His speech reveals clear tenets of fanaticism, primarily religious self-authorization (the use of changeable conscience as the center of gravity for faith), invocation of violence through the military metaphors he engages, and using emotion ("passion") as the central criterion for conscience. His former lover, the healed Mildred Gunning,

is the only listener rightly horrified by the implications of Father Paul's divergent theology. She rushes out of Mass, chased by her daughter Sarah. Mildred declares, "I don't want you going back there ever again. That is *not* my church; that is not the man I knew" ("Book V: Gospel" 00:18:44-00:18:58). She can see that fanaticism and evil have tainted him.

The deep irony in the series is that no one openly remembers or discusses Christ's teachings, sacrifice, or covenant in any of these Masses or sermons. Christianity becomes a commodity. Those who are caught up in the fanatical mania do not seek to serve others through their faith; instead, they simply desire the literal, earthly healing Father Paul can provide through the vampire's blood. These religious practitioners are perverse both in their vampirism and in their theology. Although individual congregants may set their minds on higher things, in the series religion becomes fully commodified in the quest for eternal human life. Because Father Paul's initial miracles are beneficial and positive forces in a desperate community, they are hesitant to critique or resist what he offers later. Until the blood lust is revealed, only Riley views him with extreme skepticism that stems as much from his own struggles with faith as it does his rational mind. The island's myopic focus on earthly healing and resurrection, presented to them in a place of deep need, blinds them to the greater, more concerning issues with vampiric religion. This seems a pertinent critique of popular modern fundamentalism that focuses on the earthly gain congregants may receive rather than on how they can work to improve the world.

Even worse than actual religious communities with an overly eschatological focus is that in this series' vampiric brand of fanaticism, the goal is to live forever not by awaiting a heavenly afterlife but through literally sucking the lifeblood out of other human beings. When Riley initially refuses to drink Sturge's donated human blood in a first communion that would complete his unchosen transformation into a vampire, Bev, still human, quotes the Bible at him

in an attempt to express judgment and demonstrate her own worthiness to Father Paul. She declares, “He who drinks from the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment upon themselves” (“Book V: Gospel” 00:43:54-00:44:14).<sup>138</sup> This is ironic as no one openly thinks about Christ or the crucifixion while taking communion, here or anywhere else in the series. The inhabitants who drink the blood of the Angel do, perhaps, drink viewers’ judgment upon themselves, as we can see how the consequences of religious fanaticism eventually kill nearly every single one of them. The dark communion links the community of sinners not in penance or religious union but in their quest to avoid death. They are aware this gift of vampirism can be shared with any who drink and then die. Father Paul tells Riley to bestow it upon whomever he feels called. Instead of sharing this “gift” with others, however, Riley uses his testimony in an attempt to protect Erin. He takes her out on a rowboat and recounts his story to persuade her to escape while she can. He then combusts under the rays of the rising sun in an immolation that proves to Erin the validity of the threat. In this final choice of what to do with his vampirism, Riley focuses on community and helping others (namely Erin), not the evil powers in the blood he now shares. This selfless mindset, depicted as heroic in his sacrifice (and those of others), helps build the series’ rubric for good religion, evaluated by its impact on others.

The Eucharist becomes its most perverse when it reaches its fanatical zenith. Bev, finding Father Paul concerned over Riley’s absence, suggests they share the dark gift with others and make all congregants vampires. She believes “Easter Vigil has always been a night of baptism” and persuades Father Paul to use the midnight Mass as an opportunity to grow their numbers.

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<sup>138</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27.

Father Paul announces to the gathered congregation, “Tonight is the beginning of a new era and we are meant to celebrate the resurrection tonight, and we will, more than anyone ever has” (“Book VI: Acts of the Apostles” 00:44:10-00:44:23). He confesses to lying to them, revealing his true identity. He cites the miracles of healing on the island and says,

tonight we will be tested, just a little, but we will be tested as was Jesus. I was afraid when the new covenant was fulfilled for me, afraid as was our savior. ... Be imitators of Christ. I followed him into the valley of darkness and like our Lord, I endured death, mercifully short, a leap of faith ... was all he asked of me. And like Jesus, you will doubt, you will feel fear, but believe me... if you follow me, if you follow us, if you follow him, he will raise you again in his glory to eternal life. There is a price to be paid for everlasting life as there was for our savior ... each of us will have the opportunity tonight to pay that price. (“Book VI: Acts of the Apostles” 00:44:14-00:47:30)

He then invites Sturge to the front of the chapel, where he is handed a goblet. A shot evoking the Jonestown massacre reveals plastic cups of rat poison prepared in the back room. Father Paul reads a passage from the end of Revelation about eternal life and directs Sturge to drink not blood or wine but poison. He dies but is resurrected; this miracle and the arrival of the chasuble-clad Angel terrifies many congregants. All the while, Father Paul recites passages about Angels and being unafraid. Bev ensures poison is provided to all present. Partaking in this communion together means dying together, and perverting the sacraments thus highlights just how badly the island’s religion has gone astray.

Unfortunately, many congregants in the grips of fanatic zeal willingly drink the poison, including Hassan’s son Ali. People start dying all over the church, seizing and praying in a literal, horrifying baptism of blood. Some begin to wake up thirsty. A few, including Warren, his

mom Annie, Leeza, Sarah, Hassan, and Erin, escape the massacre as the waking vampires begin to violently feed on the living. In the back room, they find Bev hiding in fear, an ultimate fanatic showing little faith. After Erin shoots her, they run out, hoping to survive the night. When Bev is resurrected because of her regular consumption of the blood-laced communion wine, she enters the blood-covered church. Some new vampires are waking up; others who have slaked their thirst wonder what happened. Bev permits them to open the doors against Father Paul's wishes, declaring that those who have taken communion will be saved and that the remaining individuals can be dealt with by God. The Midnight Mass has become a midnight massacre, transforming something holy into something violent and perverse. This, the series suggests, is the end product of fanatical religion, which has high, deadly stakes. The newly created vampires awaken and break into houses to drink from sleeping people who did not attend mass. The few escapees hide, completely isolated on the island without boats, phones, or power. Erin realizes the vampire's plan to leave and spread this contagion on the mainland. As in *Dracula*, the goal, veiled in the language of missionary intent, is to colonize more and more people. Personal motives masquerading as religious ones fuel their gospel of immortality, as Father Paul admits to Mildred. He knows he misinterpreted the Angel and tells her he did everything not to spread a new gospel or bring life to Crockett; he simply could not bear the thought of her imminent death.

Bev eventually becomes the true villain while Father Paul becomes more sympathetic. She decides to burn all of the edifices on the island except the church, justifying her plan to destroy shelters with a verse out of Revelation. She calls it a "new flood of fire," designating St. Patrick's an ark where "good citizens" can take refuge ("Book VII: Revelation" 00:18:37-19:42). Father Paul expresses concern about who selects those who will be saved and what will happen to those who are not. Bev assigns them this task, but he rejects this, sees his errors, and repents,

calling them the “wolves” and realizing “it was never supposed to be about me, it’s supposed to be about God!” (“Book VII: Revelation” 00:30:52-00:31:33). He has finally perceived the central problem with the damaging faith of his vampiric community. It was never about actual worship or service at all. The fanaticism that took hold festers most terribly because it is inherently selfish and self-serving religion. Belief leads to extreme behaviors, which lead to mass casualties on the island. Reactively, Bev insults Father Paul and calls him a “test of my faith” and a “stumbling block” focused on “human things” (“Book VII: Revelation” 00:32:27-00:32:54). This ironically heightens the critique of fanaticism rather than of religious devotion itself.

Father Paul’s final discernment espouses the idea that one’s stance and humility, not one’s sectarian affiliation, determines the relative goodness of one’s religion. In demonstrating epistemological humility and applying self-critique, he admits he is wrong and ceases being a true fanatic. Bev becomes the self-appointed leader as Crockett Island burns. Her church is neither ecumenical nor safe. She excludes a man who has never attended church from those who will be saved. Father Paul, having finally seen his actions for what they were, calls her choice “monstrous” and welcomes the man into the shelter his church could provide as “All have to be welcome, or this isn’t really God’s house!” (“Book VII: Revelation” 00:38:59-39:08).

Unfortunately, Father Paul’s change of heart comes too late to save the island or its people. Inside the church, he finds his illegitimate daughter Sarah dousing the pews with gasoline. His pride in her determination and choice is short-lived as she is shot and killed, rejecting the life-saving blood he offers her. As Father Paul and her mother Mildred leave, they ignite the church. Once Bev’s group realizes there are no shelters left for them, they leave her to watch everything burn, alone. Their following was motivated by selfishness, not true devotion or faith.

Flanagan's series suggests that faith should be evaluated through one's treatment of others rather than one's religious orientation. This becomes especially clear as Annie, newly transformed, stumbles through the streets and finds her now-vampiric husband. They embrace lovingly and share that they have not been hurting people or drinking blood, despite craving it. Although she is afraid she would become "an animal that can't resist," both have found that untrue, and he says, "Whatever this is [doesn't] change who you are" ("Book VII: Revelation" 00:22:34-00:23:09). If vampirism is read as a religion, it is behavior, not belief or temptation, that matters. Around the island, people prepare to die when the sun rises. Annie begins to sing "Nearer my God to Thee," her unwavering faith bolstering her and her husband while their town burns. He joins her in singing, and as others in the clearing gather, they also raise their voices in the hymn. On the beach, Ali and Hasan perform Salat in Arabic together, knowing the rising sun will shortly kill Ali and that Hassan will soon succumb to his wounds. Only Bev faces the sunrise alone. On the bridge, Mildred and Father Paul hold Sarah's body. The use of the hymn throughout this montage suggests being near to God is about faith, community, and comfort, not fanaticism, exclusion, or a vampiric quest for immortality through commodified faith. Bev finally breaks down and cries, facing death not with hope or joy but with fear. She kneels petulantly on the beach, not to pray but to dig while frantically weeping, as if she could hide herself in the sand while the group she formerly helped lead continues to sing without her. The hymn finishes just before the sun rises, comforting the community who face death bravely and together. Mildred forgives Father Paul, and they reconcile with a kiss. As all of the disparate groups reunite, the sun rises, and the vampiric community becomes ash. As they heard from Father Paul on Ash Wednesday just a few weeks ago, from dust they are and to dust they return. Leeza and Warren sit in a canoe on the ocean, the only survivors. As ashes rain down from the

sky, Leeza takes Warren's hand and tells him she can no longer feel her legs. The "miracle" is over, but she interprets this as a good thing.

*Midnight Mass* seeks to define true religion. Several answers are offered, as main characters include Catholics, Muslims, and atheists. Interestingly, no Protestants are depicted in the series, although aspects of its fanaticism seem to directly comment on modern Evangelical fundamentalism. But the points have less to do with theology and everything to do with the way good and bad religion stems from our treatment of others, regardless of the god one does or does not pray to. Rosie Knight believes the series hinges on the idea that Jesus himself could be a vampire, playing with ideas about blood-drinking and the Eucharist. While her assertion that *Midnight Mass* uses the literal vampire to comment on "fanaticism, blind unquestioning faith, cruelty, and the way small towns are drained by corrupt leaders" is strong, the series' affirmation of a wide spectrum of paths to knowing God resists the contention that the series sees Christianity itself as the vampire (Knight). Flanagan says, "The only thing that matters is how that belief changes our behavior toward each other while we're alive" (qtd. in Romano).

*Midnight Mass* features fanatics who act violently because of their belief, harming self and others, who demonstrate excessive devotion and an inability to apply critique to the actions of their leader, an over-reliance on emotion, intolerance and insular thinking that claims the corner market on truth, a view of their leader as infallible, and a lack of intellectual diversity. The series problematizes these qualities in the context of religion, suggesting that whatever creed one does or does not choose, fanaticism is not merely dangerous but actively monstrous. Thus, the Gothic subgenre of vampire fiction becomes the perfect arena to explore these ideas and underline the violent, deadly costs of fanaticism when it succeeds. Flanagan's series speaks to a world where fundamentalism is increasing, according to Olivier Roy and others. Its caution is timely.

*Midnight Mass* uses the Eucharist as a means that brings initial healing and ultimate destruction. The sharing of the monster's blood creates a fanatical anti-church, just as in *Dracula*. The series does not denigrate religious faith overall but warns against fanaticism and points towards forgiveness and tolerance as safeguards. Ultimately, the Angel fails because the surviving humans destroy the boats and refuges on the island where the vampires have burned all the shelters, seeking to transform all into their own monstrosity. They fail and all die except two adolescents who, like the survivors at the end of *Dracula*, look on the destruction and can do little but tell the tale. Jonathan writes, "We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story" (Stoker 420). Only the story remains, and whether or not the surviving children in *Midnight Mass* share their gospel, they are forever changed by the events that reiterate an important truth: it is not *what* one believes, but *how* one acts on a belief that determines whether or not one is a fanatic. These Gothic narratives that take fanaticism as a central topic employ the power of story and the effective tropes of horror to shape heuristics for evaluating and understanding healthy religion. No one consensus is reached in the Gothic tradition, either in the nineteenth century or in contemporary neo-Gothic. However, as *Midnight Mass* and so many others suggest, evaluating religious practices by their effects on others can help prevent fanaticism and the harm it enacts.

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## VITA

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