Utilising the Metaphysical: The Depiction of the Catholic Supernatural in Relation to Women's Empowerment and Secularism in Religious Horror Novels by Levin, Blatty and Hall

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Introduction

The 1960s were a time of significant social change in America, among which the increasingly active role of women in society and the (diminishing) importance of religion. The growing women's liberation movements caused more and more women to seek their own careers and develop their own identities. Next to this, a rise in secularism caused a decline in the number of people attending Church (Tentler, "Catholicism" 323). In this context, it is not surprising to see one specific subgenre of popular culture come into its own during this decade: the Horror story combining feminist and religious themes. For example, *Carnival of Souls* (1962), the adaptation of Fritz Lieber's novel *Conjure Wife*, titled *Burn-Witch Burn* (1962) in America, Ray Russell's *The Case Against Satan* (1962), and of course Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* and its 1968 film adaptation.

Since the 1960s, religious Horror has thrived in America. Not only have many notable works been produced that combine religious and feminist themes, but Catholic themes specifically have become a staple aspect of American religious Horror, William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971) being the keystone. Other notable works are Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* (1976-2018), David Seltzer's *The Omen* franchise (1976, 1978, 1981, 1991), Blatty's follow-up novel *Legion* (1983), John Carpenter's religious Horror films Prince of Darkness (1987) and *Vampires* (1998) Rupert Wainwrights' film *Stigmata* (1999) and Ted Dekker's *Thr3e* (2003), which revolves around the Catholic practice of confession.

Although the scholarly discussion of Catholic Horror has focused mainly on cinematic productions such as Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973), the subgenre manifested itself within the novel: first as a form of Gothic Fiction, later as a separate subgenre of Horror. It is crucial to note that Gothic Fiction mostly depicted an anti-Catholic stance, whereas most Catholic Horror promotes Catholic values. Among such Gothic Fiction novels are Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Radcliffe's *The Italian*

(1797), and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Diane Long Hoeveler notes that "[i]n Gothic literature, a reactionary, demonized and feudal Catholicism is created in order to stand in opposition to the modern Protestant individual" (3). In other words, within classic Gothic Fiction Catholicism was deemed the monstrous other in relation to Protestantism. By contrast, within Catholic Horror, Catholicism is present as a belief system that structures the characters' worldview, exposing the monstrous within the institution; for example, the perpetuation of monstrous acts within Catholicism in turn imposes patriarchal dominance.

The Catholic faith that underpins the genre's horrific aspects is highly significant to the American public. According to McDannell, religion, specifically Catholicism, is "[o]ne of the things that makes the United States unique in the industrialized world due to the continual commitment of its people to organized religious communities" (8). Because of its significance, Catholicism is utilised within movies as a central point of American culture, according to McDannell. She notes that "Catholic characters, spaces, and rituals have been stock features in popular films since the silent picture era. An intensely visual religion with a well-designed ritual and authority system, Catholicism lends itself to the drama and pageantry of the iconography of film" (14). It is important to remark that McDannell mainly explores the genre of Catholic Horror within the context of movies, not literature, as the concept of the Catholic Supernatural, such as the ritual of exorcism, is extremely potent for cinematic adaptions due to its dramatic, theatrical character.

The religious atmosphere within American society is characterised by "'polypiety'", due to its "religious diversity and multiformity" (Marty 303). Marty divides these main religious practices within the United States as "The Catholic Foundation", and "The Protestant Mainstream" (304-305). However, Catholicism within American society "builds upon elements of the religion that came with Columbus and his successors" (304). In later years, however, New England influenced the religious practices and introduced Protestantism,

"and while most of them came from their own religious freedom and economic betterment, they were highly conscious of the superiority of England", which entailed that the dominant religion within American society was Protestant (305). Later, Catholicism also gained more ground within American society due to the influence of the Kennedy family and the presidency of John Kennedy as he was "the nation's first Catholic president as he took oath of office in January 1961" (McAndrews 15).

Scholars have examined works such as *The Exorcist* and *Rosemary's Baby* through close-readings, film analyses and genre studies. The majority of the academic discussion, in particular by Nick Ripatrazone, Karyn Valerius, Ian Olney and Harry Benshoff, have focussed on the cinematic adaptations of these novels and the role of the female characters within these adaptations, placing their critical discussion within the broader framework of gender identities within the cinematic genre of Horror. An influential text regarding the depiction of women and gender inequality within Horror is Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993). Creed mainly focuses on cinematic representations instead of the original novels. Donna Heiland's *Gothic and Gender* (2004) does explore the role of women within literature, but it mainly focusses on the themes and patriarchal motifs found in traditional Gothic Literature instead of the more contemporary manifestations of the Horror genre.

Within this thesis, the definition of Horror Literature as proposed by Clive Bloom will be upheld. Horror Literature, as defined by Clive Bloom, is literature in which "there is always a presence of supernatural, demonic, violent, and unpredictable, usually present without explanation or logic" as "Horror is the literature of disjunction" (221). Although there is no a clear academic definition of Catholic Horror Literature, the genre is characterised as a subgenre of Horror Literature and revolves around a narrative based on or exemplifying Catholic ideals and values. These values often offer a contrast between right and wrong, heaven and hell, good and evil, or critique the institutionalised Catholic Church. This thesis

will apply this characterisation as the definition of the genre and will focus on three novels which will be placed within this definition.

The novels that will be analysed in this thesis are Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971) and Karen Hall's *Dark Debts* (1997). These three novels act as defining representations of the genre in their respective timeframes due to their popularity and the way they thematically bring together the rise of feminist thought and secularisation in post-war American culture.

Although academic discussion of *Rosemary's Baby* has revolved around the cinematic adaptation released in 1968, the original novel offers an ambiguous, but often critical perspective on religion and the role of women within society. Through the depiction of Satanism, the novel suggests that Christianity, in particular Catholicism, has created its own evil to emphasise its goodness. As Robert Lima points out, "Christianity did cause to evolve the creature which the Satanists in *Rosemary's Baby* worship and serve" as it "gave form and substance to a distinct demonic personality through misreadings and verbatim interpretations of Biblical passages, apocryphal texts, and those works labeled pseudepigraphal"[1] (212). Rosemary's own struggle, Lima proposes, offers both a positive and negative attitude towards Catholicism, mainly due to her difficulty to completely distance herself from religion. However, Lima suggests, "the reversal in favor of faith is neither explosive nor hurried; it is the result of a series of soul-shaking events through which Rosemary's Catholicism is put in relief" (215). Furthermore, Charles Hicks argues that the novel contrasts the desire for motherhood and its implications for women. He points out that "initially, the narrative of Levin's novel is concerned with a woman whose identity is libidinally intertwined with the desire to reproduce, a desire that is subsequently appropriated and reterritorialized by the

[1] The Oxford English Dictionary defines pseudepigraphal as "relating to or having the character of pseudepigrapha; falsely titled or attributed; spurious or pseudonymous" (pseudepigraphal, adj.)

coven in order to ensure the production of the anti-Christ" (301). The desire for motherhood, the search for the female identity and the role of religion form three different facets that initially appear to be mutually exclusive but are resolved to exist alongside each other in the conclusion of Levin's novel.

Four years after the publication of Levin's seminal Catholic Horror novel, screenwriter William Peter Blatty published *The Exorcist.* Blatty's novel has since become one of the most famous and influential Horror works of the twentieth century, partly due to its highly successful cinematic adaptation by William Friedkin. According to Matt Cardin, *The Exorcist* "reflects conservative and Christian anxieties about the rising popularity of 'New Age' and occult spiritual beliefs and practices" (359). Next to this, Sara Williams argues that *The Exorcist* is heavily critical on the implications of autonomy for women, suggesting that the novel "presents an extreme consequence of severing the Oedipal bond before its potential resolution, for Regan solicits then violently rejects all other possible father figures whom she sees as replacing the original father's place in the family unit" (229).

In 1997, Karen Hall published the bestselling novel *Dark Debts*, which can be perceived as a postmodern rewrite of *The Exorcist.* It encompasses similar themes but moves in a distinctly different direction. *Dark Debts*, while less well-known today than *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist*, remains an intriguing novel in the context of Catholic Horror due to its critical content regarding religious practices. Furthermore, it is intriguing because of Hall's decision to rewrite the text in 2016, after converting to Catholicism. *Dark Debts* was highly successful when first published in 1996 "with a 150,000-copy print run. Paramount optioned the film rights. Fans hounded her for a sequel, and Ms. Hall's publisher and agent urged her to write another novel to capitalize on the momentum" (Alter). Although, there is no active scholarly debate on the novel whatsoever, it remains a significant text because it can be read as a direct critical response to *The Exorcist*. The original novel's critical stance towards

Catholicism and the role of women, as well as its progressive stance towards priests within the institutionalised Catholic Church, certainly make this a crucial text for this thesis, as it provides a critical, female-driven narrative.

This thesis will examine the utilisation of the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural within the genre of Catholic Horror by analysing *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Exorcist* and *Dark Debts* within their respective socio-historical contexts. It aims to illustrate the way the changing role of women within society due to the women's liberation movement and the rise of secularism in the United States have influenced these novels and how these influences are manifested through depictions of the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural, such as possessions and exorcisms. The aspects of exorcisms will mostly be explored in relation to societal critique and gender. All three novels do not engage with possession and exorcism by chance, possession in these novels are not just demonic possession, in the Catholic sense, but also men's possession of women in an ideological sense.

For this purpose, I will focus on the original prose fictions, as these written narratives offer a more ambiguous as well as a more detailed, in-depth account of (anti)feminist themes, portrayal of the characters, the presence of the Catholic Supernatural, and the manner in which the depiction of the role of women is established by the original author. This is in contrast to cinematic adaptations that are interpreted by their directors, screenwriters, actors, producers etc. as well. Furthermore, examining the narratives within the sociohistorical context of their time offers an in depth and more critical analysis of the narrative's contents, due to the implications and reactions to these respective contexts. This offers an intriguing analysis of these novels, as these have not been researched within this framework as of yet. The novels will be examined by focusing on the role of women in society and feminist theory of second-wave feminism as proposed by, among others, Betty Friedan, as well as the radical feminist theory in relation to Catholicism set out by radical feminist theorist Mary Daly.

Furthermore, this thesis will explore the metaphysical religious experience through the theories offered by Rudolf Otto and through S.L. Varnado's interpretation of Otto in Horror Literature. Lastly, this thesis will analyse the Catholic Supernatural, which will be read through the metaphysical, such as demonic possessions, exorcisms, as proposed by, among others, Andrew Greeley, Francis Young and David Elkins's notions on the soul. Greeley notes "Catholic devotions include, […] Mary the mother of Jesus, angels and saints, souls in purgatory, statues, stained-glass windows, holy water, religious medals, candles. Most other Christian denominations do not engage in such devotions" (5). Greeley's description exemplifies the importance of the specific Catholic nature of these novels and the supernatural manifestations of these instances, as these supernatural representations present in the novels adhere to Catholic values alone.

Through this critical lens I will explore the following question: How do Catholic religious Horror novels from the second half of the twentieth century react to the social changes of the 1960s with regard to the growing movements of radical feminism and rising secularism, and how does the reaction to these changes influence the portrayal of women and representation of religion in these novels, in particular male-female relationships, personal autonomy, and the Catholic Supernatural? This thesis will illustrate that, through the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural, the characterisation and concepts within the narratives voice their critique on the societal changes of the 1960s. This will be analysed through a close reading of the original texts and the exploration of the Catholic Supernatural and hierarchy within the sociohistorical context of the women's movement of the 1960s.

Firstly, the theoretical framework of this thesis will be defined and the academic discussion regarding its concepts will be set out. Secondly, I will explore Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* and will illustrate that Rosemary is presented as a housewife without autonomy. However, through the birth of her son, the anti-Christ, Rosemary is reborn and becomes the

individual she aspired to be. Thirdly, I will further examine *The Exorcist* and argue that Father Karras is presented as the ultimate male saviour for the secular Chris MacNeil as she embodies the opposite of the conservative Catholic values. Lastly, I will examine Hall's *Dark Debts* and present that the novel is critical on institutionalised religion throughout the character of Michael, it is subsequently an inversion of the male saviour, as Michael is ultimately saved by women in his struggle with his faith and the novel's exorcisms.

Overall, this thesis will illustrate that these novels utilise the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural and convey criticism in the narratives through the characters to voice critique on the changing role of women in American society due to the women's liberation movement and the rise of secularism in the United States of the 1960s.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces and contextualises the academic framework within which the primary texts will be analysed. This framework will consist of the sociohistorical context of the women's movement and secularism. Next to this, the institutionalised ideologies of the Catholic Church and the metaphysical expressions of these ideologies will be set out. This will then be further expanded on through radical feminist theories on institutionalised religion regarding women's roles and identities within the Catholic Church.

Second-Wave Feminism of the 60s and 70s

Within two decades, specifically during the 1960s and 70s, the women's movement steadily increased in number of supporters and its influence was noticed within both the private and public sphere. Within the public sphere there were changes in women's legal stance, whereas within the private sphere women were pleading for more autonomy and careers next to their role as housewives. The women's movement would later be regarded as "the largest social movement in the history of the United states. Its impact has been felt in every home […] in all aspects of personal and public life" (Baxandall and Gordon 414). The women's movement that began in the early 1960s lasted roughly two decades and became classified as the second wave of feminism, which follows first-wave feminism ranging from the late nineteenth century until the early twentieth century. Second-wave feminism was ignited by the "Commission on the Status of Women", a report established by the United Nations in 1947 (Walters 97). A year later, the United Nations issued the defining "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", which "acknowledged that men and women had 'equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution', as well as women's entitlement to 'special care and assistance' in their role as mothers" (Walters 97). According to Crenshaw, "[t]he report, which revealed great discrimination against women in American life […] led to

the formation of many local, state, and federal government women's groups as well as many independent women's liberation organizations" (33). The organisations[2] quickly grew in numbers and the emergence of feminist writers and supporters had begun. These feminist writers gained popularity amongst the American population and brought feminism to the public. Three of the most influential and well-known writers were Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millett. Their texts have been regarded as canonical works and have proven to be substantial within the theoretical framework of feminism.

These canonical works surfaced after the 1947's "Commission on the Status of Women" report. Among these works, De Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* (1949). Herein she contends that women are regarded as the weaker sex and that this is justified by society as she exemplifies that "a man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong", therefore, "there is an absolute human type, the masculine" (76). She continues by illustrating how society views humanity as strictly male, and that women only exist "relative to [men]; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (76). The lack of autonomy and rights for women is a disgrace, according to De Beauvoir, and she proposes that "we must get out of these ruts; we must discard the vague notions of superiority, inferiority, equality which have hitherto corrupted every discussion of the subject and start afresh" (82).

A few years later, Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). In her book, she illustrates that the idea that women are strictly meant to concern themselves with their duty as mother and the management of the household is often incorrect and detrimental. Friedan exemplifies the growing unfulfillment of women and contends that:

> [i]f a woman had a problem in the 1950's and 1960's, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their

[2] Organisations founded in 1964 such as the federal agency EEOC (the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), and later that year the feminist organisation NOW (the National Organisation for Women). After a year, more conservative feminists also founded WEAL (Women's Equity Action League) (Davis 51).

> lives, she thought. What kind of woman was she is she did not feel this mysterious fulfilment of waxing the kitchen floor? (19)

The unhappiness of housewives that Friedan illustrates stems from the idea that women are created for only their "womanly duties" and are not capable of fulfilling their own individual desires as they are denied "careers or any commitment outside the home" (54).

Friedan pleads for women to supress the so-called feminine mystique and to seek agency and individuality of their own (336). Initially, this plea seemed to be answered, as women "returned to college and careers and made […] massive occupational and financial gains" (Evans 49). Moreover, the women's movement continued expanding and spreading throughout the United States. However, these changes in occupations for women were also met with opposition and hostility, and conservatives fought for these changes to be dismissed (Evans 48). Another aspect Friedan touches upon is that of the consumeristic attitudes that were expected of housewives of the 60's with regard to house making and domestic purchases, because "[p]roperly manipulated […], American housewives can be given the sense of identity, purpose, creativity, the self-realization, even the sexual joy they lack – by the buying of things" (208). Lydia Martens further exemplifies Friedan's notions on consumerism and build upon its privilege by noting that

> calling upon women of all kinds to avoid the temptations of affluence and its incessant consumerism, Friedan's account could thus be read as a story for all women to avoid the trap of the mystique; an ideology which found its closest approximation in the lives of well-to-do white suburban middle class women. (42)

Therefore, avoiding consumerism would be avoiding subordination. Contrastingly, Ella Howard suggests that "Feminist scholars have acknowledged the role of consumerism in the construction of women's identities, considering it a site of female pleasure or labor and either liberatory or pseudo emancipatory expression" (138). Moreover, Howard points out, that

"[e]xamining the role of consumerism within second-wave feminism reveals the tensions between feminist activism and corporate culture (138). In other words, consumeristic ideas were both regarded as positive within women's search for autonomy as well as negative within the stance of keeping women marginalised.

Lastly, a writer who greatly impacted the discussion of women's rights is Kate Millett. In 1968, she published *Sexual Politics,* which focussed on the way patriarchal structures influence the political and personal relationships of women. According to Millett, in general politics consist of "power structured relationships" (35). Similarly, the politics of relationships of women and men are therefore "relationship[s] of dominance and subordinance" (122). This notion of dominance can clearly be regarded within the issues of inequality between men and women in the 60s, such as the absence of legal rights for women, the wage gap, and domestic hierarchies, and this thus forms the basis of the patriarchal society.

Catholicism in the United States

The issue of inequality for women within American society often recurred in debates on heavily patriarchal structures within society which focussed on subordination, such as institutionalised religion, in particular the structures within the Catholic Church. Despite the legacy of Puritanism, especially in New England, the Catholic Church also has an important foothold within the history of twentieth century American society. In one of his latest publications, "Catholicism in America," Leslie Woodcock Tentler's explains that from 1920 until 1965 American Catholicism was "more fervent, and certainly more disciplined, in these decades than ever before", and "religious endogamy was the norm for Catholics in almost every part of the country" (322). With this endogamy came a certain authority within these hierarchal structures. Tentler illustrates that "*Popes,* cardinals, and bishops claimed to have final authority on issues of faith and morals, and […] the laity granted them such authority" (*Church Confronts Modernity* 182). This authority had in turn been accepted by Catholics on

the grounds that "Christ endowed the Church with full authority to rule, in matters religious and moral, their entire lives" (183). Tentler claims that an important difference to the other major religion in the United States, Protestantism, is that "Protestant parents taught their children to think for themselves, Catholic parents were more likely to stress the importance of obedience" (187). Therefore, Catholic constituents put complete faith and control within the hands of the authorial structures and figures within the Church, without contesting or reflecting on these matters themselves.

However, despite the growth of Catholicism and the manner in which the Catholic religious following was devoted to the Catholic Church in the 1950s, after the 1960s, noticeably during the rise of second-wave feminism, the Church saw "declining rates of religious participation, a weakened sense of identity, and an unprecedented degree of ideological polarization" (Tentler, "Catholicism" 323). Strikingly, "10 percent of priests resigned their ministries in these tumultuous years, as seminary enrollments plummeted; the population of women religious, without whom many Catholic schools were no longer viable, declined even more rapidly" (323). This decline in religious worship is said to be due to the fact that these times were "marked by a cultural revolution" ("Catholicism" 190). According to Tentler, this cultural revolution "called all social institutions into question, including religion. It also championed individual rights and freedom" (*The Church* 190). The population increasingly started to think for themselves as they became more educated, which was especially true for women.

Because the women's movement's power increased simultaneously with the decline of religious following, women became more aware of the patriarchal structures of the Catholic Church. Although the Protestant Church has a structure of hierarchy as well, the Catholic Church has a clearer structure of power in place through positions of Jesuit priests, bishops, cardinals, and most obviously the Pope, who all are deemed closer to God than the regular

religious population. Since these positions are solely accessible to men, the Catholic Church proves to be incredibly problematic in the lack of equality in men and women.

According to Callum G. Brown, the decline in religious worship can mostly be attributed to two factors, namely "women's liberation (encompassing sexual liberation, and desire for equality in education, occupation and self-expression), and religious change (primarily the growth of a secular outlook of varying intensity)" (173). The conservative population did not react positively to these changes and caused "political and social debate," according to Brown (173). He argues that these debates ultimately culminated in the so-called "culture wars and result[ed] in strong reactions to the above trends (movements to promote 'traditional family values', chastity before marriage, anti-abortion, religious conversion and conservative religious movements)" (173). Mary Henold argues that "The Roman Catholic Church was and is patriarchal and androcentric; despite refusing to admit women to ordained ministry and to major positions of authority, the Church does not acknowledge that it perpetuates sexism against women" (2). Therefore the Catholic Church can be deemed inherently patriarchal.

Radical Feminism & Catholicism

This opposition against the women's movement and the change for agency for religious sisters did not stop the feminist movement from spreading their ideas on the role of women within society and within the Church. However, religious sisters and religious feminists encountered more difficulties in trying to dovetail their religious beliefs with their feminist notions. As Janet Eccles points out, "second wave feminism viewed religion as patriarchal and misogynistic. Hence many feminist women found it hard to remain within religious traditions which legitimated the oppression of and discrimination against women" (54). In the beginning of the feminist manifests of 1960s, however, religious feminists had hoped to combine their ideals and "Catholic feminists were generally optimistic about the

Church's future and their relationship to it" (Henold 37). Catholic feminists had their own understanding of this relationship and the combination of being religious and a feminist: "Catholic feminists regularly explained their feminism in terms of their commitment to a gospel mandate for social justice, liberation, and radical equality. They considered feminism a Christian principle" (Henold 6). Ultimately, it proved too difficult for these women to abide by this combination of religion and feminism. The religious sisters and religious feminists received no support from the Church or the male leaders and constituents, and "the worldwide institutional Catholic Church is openly hostile toward feminism and feminists" (Henold 2).

Despite the optimistic efforts of the Catholic feminists to combine their faith, "American feminism has tended to be led by secular feminists who have shown considerable skepticism about the feasibility of a joint feminist/religious identification" (Henold 2). The feminist movement with regard to religion, therefore, was mainly led by increasingly secular feminist writers such as Mary Daly and Elizabeth Farians. Daly and Farians were Catholic themselves. Daly later "emerged as one of the first 'revolutionary' feminist theologians, that is, a theologian who rejected Christianity as irredeemably oppressive" (Henold 39). Additionally, Farians was convinced "that religious feminists needed to organize so that they might change the culture of the Church and educate women as to the roots of sexism in religious tradition" (Henold 74). However, as time went on, and the women's movement gained more momentum, Daly and Farians moved away from the Church as they came to find that the two were incompatible. They were then classified as radical feminists, which "historians of feminism reserve the term 'radical feminism' for a specific group of women active at a particular time, that is, those women who developed, espoused, and practiced radical feminist theory in the years 1968–75" (68).

For example, in one of her manifests, Farians wrote that "[r]eligion discriminates against women in its doctrine, practice and law. This injustice in turn reinforces the

discrimination in the wider society by seeming to give it divine approval" (1). She pled for the religious sisters to become priests to break the deeply rooted psychological idea that the presence of women is "defiling the holy" by becoming priests and "touching the sacred" (4). As long as the religious sisters fail to take part in these positions "there will be lingering doubt about the intrinsic holiness and wholeness of women" (4). Farians furthermore argues that if women are discriminated against by the Church, the Church itself is not a holy construction,

> [e]ither religion promotes human development and well-being or it is destructive and cannot be representative of the true God. This must be kept in mind when we insist that the life, human development and well-being we are talking about is that of women as well as men. Then we can say with clear conviction and without fear or guilt that if Jesus was not a feminist, he was not of God. (6)

These radical notions were generally not accepted by her theological colleagues, yet she remained adamant for the need for change.

Mary Daly supported Farians' ideas and documented her findings on the subject of religion and its treatment of women. Daly published works concerning religion extensively, such as the famous *The Church and The Second Sex* (1968) and *Beyond God the Father* (1973). Whilst writing *The Church and The Second Sex*, Daly had been more involved with the Church whereas whilst writing *Beyond* she had distanced herself from religion completely. According to Daly, the institution of the Church upholds a patriarchal structure and vouches for it as the "'oppression of women has its cause in the will to perpetuate the family and to keep the patrimony intact'" (*The Church* 63). This patrimony is enforced "by the fact that God is called Father, that Christ is male, that the angels, though they are pure spirits, have masculine names" (66). It is not surprising, therefore, that the woman has been deemed lesser and is absent within the Catholic hierarchy.

Daly argued the Catholic Church wanted to keep women within the realms of the family life. She exemplified the Catholic Church's notions that "[t]he children, especially the younger among them, need the care of their mother at home. This domestic role of hers must be safely preserved" (*The Church* 120). This preservation is one of the Church's main concerns regarding the role of women in society, in particular women who are part of the privileged white middle or upper class, and those who do not uphold the idea of the "Eternal Woman":

> Although among progressive Catholic theologian and writers there is an increasing trend away from the stereotypes, there has been a continual stream of Catholic works of a semi-theological nature which are based upon the 'eternal feminine' motif. (*The Church* 147)

This feminine motif manifested itself in the image of the "Eternal Woman," which "claims the significance of woman, not in light of her phycological or biological, historical or social position, but under her symbolic aspect" (*The Church* 148).

Furthermore, Daly contended that "theologian Harvey Cox has described with logic and power the need for the Church to fulfil its role as cultural exorcist. This means that the Church has the duty of exorcising the 'demons'" (169). Here, the figurative demons represent the growing autonomy of women regarding family life, their careers and their own individuality. This resembles the historical prosecution of women who were deemed different and thus branded witches.[3] Daly argued that the women's movement and secular society attributes to attaining "truly equal educational, professional, and political opportunities," and the "psychological and social pressures which hinder them from using these opportunities can be combated successfully, the Church will grudgingly but inevitably follow suit" (192). However, illustrated in *Beyond*, the Church is too great and influential to follow the changes

[3] Mary Daly later wrote a book regarding the occult and the patriarchal society views on these notions and witchcraft named *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language.*

which occur in the society around them (204). The Church seems to be exempt from creating and following change and are free to attain the patriarchal structures of the divine hierarchy. In *Beyond*, Daly exemplified that one of the reasons these structures and notions are being maintained is due to the imagery of the "biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven, rewarding and punishing according to his mysterious and seemingly arbitrary will" (13). Furthermore, Daly stated that,

> [t]his image has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in 'his' heaven is a father ruling 'his' people, then it is in the 'nature' of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated. (13)

Consequently, this caused for a conditioning where women "see any act that affirms the worth of the female ego as blameworthy. Female ambition can 'pass' only when it is diluted into vicarious ambition through the male or on behalf of patriarchal values" (*Beyond* 54). In a dogma in which women are only permitted to act by the grace of god and its male constituents, it is not surprising to view the man as saviour, especially in the context of the saviour Jesus Christ himself. Within the context of these texts regarding the women's movement, Catholic religious practices, the religious sisters, and the radical secular feminists, it is clear that the 1960s experienced a considerable amount of societal change regarding women's agency and careers as well as growing secularisation within American culture.

The Catholic Supernatural and The Metaphysical

A key concept of Catholic Horror novels is the Catholic Supernatural. This notion is defined by the way in which "Catholics live in an enchanted world" which contains "a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures" and "are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation" (Greeley 1). Greeley

sets out what would be incorporated by the Catholic Supernatural, such as "Mary the mother of Jesus, angels and saints, souls in purgatory […]. Most other Christian denominations do not engage in such devotions. Indeed, they dismiss them as superstition and perhaps idolatry" (5). As Greeley mentions here, these devotions are not exemplified within other American belief system such as that of "the Protestant religious imagination" (5). Additionally, Regina Hansen suggests that "Catholicism presents the fantastic events and powers it relates as real, location the supernatural in everyday life, in rituals that recur sometimes daily" (5). The concept of the ritual and that of the supernatural, thus, manifest themselves in the Catholic notions on demonic possessions and exorcisms.

An essential concept that needs to be addressed in order to properly understand the Catholic Supernatural is that of metaphysics. The basic structure of the word suggests its meaning, as the Greek meaning of meta is after. Therefore, metaphysics translates to "after the physical", metaphysics, then, is "a study that somehow 'goes beyond' physics, [and is] a study devoted to matters that transcend" that what is able to be physically grasped (Van Inwagen and Sullivan 1). This concept allows for a better consideration of concerns regarding matter and spirit. Franz Leenhardt notes that "Catholicism always tends to give the self-contradictory appearance of a spirituality which is indissolubly linked to the 'physical', the natural, and which at the same time is anxious to affirm the 'metaphysical', the supernatural" (93). Metaphysics will be explored within this thesis in connection with possessions and the representation of the devil and the demonic.

The depiction of Satan as the embodiment of evil is often illustrated within narratives to contrast the right and the wrong. As Per Faxneld points out, a "quite often employed, tool to give form to the main theme as well as several of the motifs (in particular, the tempter, the heroic villain, degenerated religion, and the supernatural) is Satan" (149). Faxneld argues that Satan is often depicted as the liberator of women, and thus as the pinnacle of loss of religion

(150). Furthermore, he states that the depiction of female demonic characters determines how readers "might have identified or sympathized to some extent with the demonic females in novels, since these are typically the only women in the narratives who have any agency and power to speak of" (150).

Within the novels explored in this thesis, it is especially important to consider Satan as the motif for degenerated religion and how Satanism is the direct opposite of Catholic rituals and therefore the juxtaposing of right and wrong. Satanic practices and Satanism thus can be explained as "intentional, religiously motivated veneration of Satan" (Van Luijk 5). Here, "the emergence of Satanism is fundamentally linked to Christianity by the pivotal role the latter religion played proliferation of the concept of the devil" (16). Therefore, it can be said that without Christianity the personage of Satan and Satanism itself would not exist. This is particularly evident in Satanic rituals. These include the exact opposites of Catholic rituals, such as Black Mass and the inversion of crucifixes. A Black Mass is defined as "an inverted Roman Catholic Mass in which, by appropriately changing the formulae, Satan is worshipped, and Jesus Christ is cursed" (Van Luijk 43). The Black Mass fall under the Satanic category of Black Magic, another manifestation of the Satanic found in both Catholicism and Satanism through demonic possession and in turn exorcism.

Demonic possession, according to Young, refers to "people whose bodies are allegedly under control of an evil spirit" (20). These demonic possessions are exorcised by the Catholic Church to relieve the possessed as "an exorcist speaks with the authority of God to cast out demons" (8). However, Young notes "historically the main difference between exorcism and ritual magic has been one of authorization," which connects itself to the supernatural aspect of Catholicism (16). The exorcism lends itself to the definition of the metaphysical aspect of this Catholic Supernatural as well. As Felicitas Goodman notes, the exorcism "involves practically no physical handling of the patient at all, except for laying on

of hands or touching with sacred objects. […] They are then attacked by lengthy prayers and repeated cajoling, negotiations, and orders to leave" (Goodman 98). Therefore, the possession and the exorcism take place not within the physical realm but mainly finds itself in a plane of spirits and the invisible, the metaphysical.

It is crucial to explore the aspects of exorcisms in relation to societal critique and gender. Young presents "Catholic exorcism in the medieval and early modern periods as a gendered activity that involved the male-led church designating women as demonic" (24). As women were deemed inferior and cast away as demonic, possession became an issue of gender as well. Another context in which these possessions and exorcisms will be explored is within the possibility of societal critique:

> Average enlightened people would normally view exorcism as a Catholic church ceremony of long ago, irrelevant to concerns of today. But the fact is that despite (or because of?) advanced technological sophistication, affluence, and the improvement of the quality of life, irrational belief is proportionately growing in the modern Western world-fear from demonic possession, in particular, as it became clear after fictionalized versions for the shock-hungry, bored, blasé reading and moviegoing audience became overnight bestsellers. (Goodman xii)

Goodman here directly relates demonic possession to novels and cinematic productions regarding these subjects, therefore, suggesting the role of literature and movies in upholding the view on possession.

Next to the Catholic Supernatural and its rituals, the metaphysical in relation to religion is depicted within the discussion of religious experience. Most noticeably, in 1950, Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* (1917) was translated into English and *The Idea of the Holy* was published. This book exemplifies the psychology of religious experience and that this experience is something which goes beyond the rational, which "may be called non-rational

or supra-rational in the depths of the divine nature" ("Foreword"). Otto claims that "[his] book, recogniz[es] the profound importance of the non-rational for metaphysic, [and] makes a serious attempt to analyze all the more exactly the feeling which remains where the concept fails, and to introduce a terminology" ("Foreword"). This terminology, he explains, is that of "the numinous" (7). As this cannot be explained in existing terms, "the reader is invited to direct his mind to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience" (8). The feeling of the numinous, therefore, can be best described as a feeling of transcendental (spiritual) experience for which there cannot be a rational explanation and a feeling for which there is no comparison.

S.L. Varnado explains that within literary studies, Otto's concepts can be applied specifically to Horror and Gothic Fiction. Gothic and Horror Literature derive their essence from a certain credible reality. As Varnado points out, there is a "distinct element of feeling which is not drawn from ordinary, or 'natural,' experience but which nevertheless evokes an echo from the reader's sense of reality" (5). As the feeling of the supernatural within these stories are often unexplainable phenomena which can only be felt, Varnado proposes that Otto's theory can be applied to Horror as well. He exemplifies the notions Otto had concerning the supernatural and "preternatural events and magic" (15). Within this discussion, Otto introduces "the negative numinous", and connects it to the demonic, explaining that Satan's origin lies within "ferocity" and "fury", exemplified within the Bible and the Church (110). The ferocity of and propitiation is then connected to "the divine wrath" of God (110). Ultimately, "[i]n all religions, 'the devilish' plays its part and has its place as that which, opposed to the divine, has yet something in common with it" (110). Most striking is that Otto connects the negative numinous to the discussion of Satan and proposes the opposition between God and Satan within the numinous. If the numinous is the holy experience of religious enlightenment and that which is deemed good, the opposite of this would be the

negative numinous and the encounter with evil. As Otto exemplifies, the fury of Lucifer has its origin in the Bible, and within the idea of propitiation (the appeasing and atoning to a god or spirit), the negative numinous could be explained within the wrath of God. Furthermore, Varnado explains that "[f]or the most part, spirits pursue interests of their own, devoid of moral calculation, such as retrieving a key, a ring, or a lock of hair" (3). However, when spirits do employ morality, and this is linked to the religious experience and moral compass, it can be said that punishment from God would be the fury of Satan. The question of morality according to Otto:

> begins to be filled in with elements derived from the moral reason: righteousness in requital, and punishment for moral transgression. [...] Something supra-rational throbs and gleams, palpable and visible, in the Wrath of God, prompting to a sense of terror that no natural anger can arouse" (19)

If moral righteousness can be explained as being true to the Bible and the will of God, moral transgression would be moving away from this and would be deemed inexcusable. Within Horror Literature, therefore, its punishment is demonic possession.

Varnado explains the demonic within the negative numinous as "an incredible force [which] goes forth from them, and they exercise incredible power over all creatures, nay, perhaps even over the elements. And who can say how far such an influence may extend?" (104). Demonic and Satanic possession can be explained within this definition as well. Goodman links possession to the religious experience, noting that "changes in the body and perceived experience are inseparable aspects in possession, as in any other bona fide religious experience" (xvi). The possessed would be overpowered within their body and their soul; the soul which is in itself the metaphysical, as "the soul is that dimensions of our own being that reaches into the unknown" (Elkins 52). The negative numinous then, or the numinous of the supernatural, can be implemented within this phenomenon. Possession, therefore, is the

metaphysical manifestation of the punishment for moral transgression regarding the religious moral compass.

To define how these societal changes have impacted American literature, especially regarding gender, it is important to examine the implication these metaphysical manifestations have and how they are depicted within *Rosemary's Baby, The Exorcist*, and *Dark Debts*, especially concerning male-female relationships, personal autonomy, and the characters perceived stance on religion. This thesis will thus explore demonic possessions and the Satanic within these novels and will propose that the metaphysical of the Catholic Supernatural is utilised to punish moral transgression within the context of feminist ideas and religious secularism and to guide them back to religious morality.

Chapter 2: Autonomy, Rebirth and Satanism in Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*

Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) was published in the midst of the counter-culture era in the United States. The novel has been influential as it has produced several cinematic and television adaptations. Within the context of academic Gothic and Horror studies, Roman Polanski's film adaptation of the novel has been examined most often. Arguments regarding the cinematic adaption are, for example, that within the film "the structure and values of American society fall under Polanski's scrutiny with disturbing fascination" (Tarratt 91). Furthermore, the character of Rosemary "is granted opportunities to become an 'insider' through the acceptance of her 'place' as Guy's wife and by conforming to the framework of behaviours he prescribes" (Caputo 120). This chapter will focus on the novel, as one of its key characteristics is its ambiguous stance toward religion. This chapter will represent an analysis of these perceptions with regard to the character of Rosemary Woodhouse. Throughout the novel, Rosemary is portrayed as an obedient housewife. However, through the birth of her son, and ultimately through Satanism, she regains her autonomy and she herself is reborn.

By approaching the novel through the critical lens of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Daly's notions of the "Eternal Woman" (*The Church* 149) and examining it in the context of Satanism and the Catholic Supernatural, this chapter will illustrate that Rosemary regains autonomy through being her own saviour and her acceptance of Satanism through the birth of her son.

Critical lens: Satanism, Consumerism and the Eternal Woman

Throughout *Rosemary's Baby,* the concept of Satanism is depicted in relation to the Catholic Supernatural[4]. Faxneld argues that the depiction of female characters involved with demonic characters determines how readers "might have identified or sympathized to some

[4] Due to its recurring connection to consumerism, Satanism in *Rosemary's Baby* can also be read as a metaphor for the dangers of consumerism within American society and the irony behind this. However, this thesis will mainly focus on Satanism as a religion and a contrast to Catholicism with regard to women's autonomy.

extent with the demonic females in novels, since these are typically the only women in the narratives who have any agency and power to speak of" (150). In other words, female characters are more autonomous when they are involved with Satanism than if they are involved with the Catholic Church. Satanism and the Catholic Supernatural, then, is connected by Linda McCarthy to "voodoo, spiritualism, and folk variants of Roman Catholicism", and defines it as "[a] world of crosses, holy water, séances, candles, prayer, exorcism, strings of garlic, beheaded chickens, and the like" (75).

In the 1960s, women were often unable to form an identity for themselves, and there was a growing desire to change that. According to Friedan, during these times, consumerism and house-making were popular for two reasons. Firstly, to manipulate housewives in having a "sense of identity" (208). Secondly, to keep them from pursuing careers and staying within the house, or as

> [a] thinking vice-president says: 'Too many women getting educated. Don't want to stay home. Unhealthy. If they all get to be scientists and such, they won't have time to shop. But how can we keep them home? They want careers now' 'We'll liberate them to have careers at home,' […] 'We'll make home-making creative'. (207)

In other words, by making house-making popular and something women should aspire to, the capitalistic society would continue making money off of them, as "the really important role that women serve as housewives is *to buy more things for the house*" (Friedan 206). Next to this, buying more items kept women from leaving the home to search for a purpose, a career or meaning as "[t]he buying of things drains away those needs which cannot really be satisfied by home and family- the housewives' need for 'something beyond themselves with which to identify'" (225). Identity, thus, was an ambiguous notion for women of that time. Friedan notes that all women needed to do "was devote their lives from earliest girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children" (16). These concepts of consumeristic house-making

and the need to be a mother is clearly illustrated within the character of Rosemary. Next to this, the concept of the Eternal Women as mentioned by Daly is exemplified within Rosemary as

> "the characteristics of the Eternal Woman are opposed to those of a developing, authentic *person*, who will be unique, self-critical, self-creating, active and searching. By contrast to these authentic personal qualities, the Eternal Woman is said to have a vocation to surrender and hiddenness" (*The Church* 149)

Within the narrative Rosemary is depicted to surrender to the needs of those around her, therefore the Eternal Woman is encompassed by Rosemary through the majority if the novel.

Characterisation: The Subordinate Housewife and the Eternal Woman

Rosemary Woodhouse is characterised as the wife of Guy Woodhouse. Although she is jobless, she is responsible for the house-making, such as taking care of the decorations and cooking: "Rosemary looked and made shorthand notes and drew sketches to bring to Guy, and hurried home spilling over with fabric and wallpaper samples in time to catch him on *Another World* and then run out again and shop for dinner" (Levin 24). Here, Rosemary runs back and forth to please Guy and have all of the housework done in time, exemplifying how much of her time and effort she provides in these tasks.

Moreover, the theme of consumerism regarding the subordination of women per Friedan's and Martens' notions is highly present within the novel, especially through the narrative's depiction of Rosemary's thoughts and actions. As Rosemary and Guy are searching for a new apartment, materialistic and consumeristic notions are focalised through Rosemary's character in the narrative and the enumerated description of the apartment:

> The first room on the right was the kitchen, and at the sight of it Rosemary couldn't keep from giggling, for it was as large if not larger than the whole apartment in which they were then living. It had a six-burner gas stove with two ovens, a mammoth

> refrigerator, a monumental sink; it had dozens of cabinets, a window on Seventh Avenue, a high ceiling, and it even had—imagining away Mrs. Gardenia's chrome table and chairs and roped bales of Fortune and Musical America— the perfect place for something like the blue-and-ivory breakfast nook she had clipped from last month's *House Beautiful* (Levin 15)

Here, Rosemary mentions her clippings in *House Beautiful*, a magazine targeted at women, specifically housewives, which connects with Friedan's notion of the housewife and house-making. As Rosemary does not have her own identity or career in which she can satisfy her needs for a more meaningful life, she buries herself in buying things for her house, "[t]hey bought a sofa and a king-size bed, a table for the kitchen and two bentwood chairs. They called Con Ed and the phone company and stores and workmen and the Padded Wagon", and "[t]hey bought an armoire and a dining table and hi-fi components and new dishes and silverware. They were flush" (Levin 26). Later, Rosemary prides herself in the home she has created, and this confirms Friedan's notion that "the product can even fill the housewife's need for identity: 'Suggest that it become truly a part of *you*, reflect *you*'" (209). This signifies the way Rosemary's identity is intertwined with what is expected of her.

As Rosemary has already acquired a husband, her second objective is to have children, something which captures a substantial aspect of her wishes within the narrative as [s]he was twenty-four and they wanted three children two years apart" (Levin 58). However, Guy is still focused on his career therefore, "[Rosemary's] plan was to get pregnant by 'accident'; the pills gave her headaches, she said, and rubber gadgets were repulsive" (Levin 58). These comments not only illustrate that she desired children for some time, but illustrate notions on birth control as well, as she criticises the birth control available to women at that time. Herein lies the ambiguous nature of the novel. On the one hand, through its focus on Rosemary's history with Catholicism, it is critical of the hypocrisy and hierarchy within the Catholic

Church and on the inequality between men and women regarding individual autonomy regarding their own bodies. On the other hand, it is critical of birth control and the state of women's health, which could be explained through conservative Catholic ideas. Furthermore, it becomes clear that Rosemary fools Guy into impregnating her as she is desperate to have a baby, become someone, and find happiness within motherhood. This correlates with Friedan's research into housewives and their identity which found that most women were deeply unsatisfied within their personal lives and sought, for instance, an identity within motherhood: "When I'm pregnant and the babies are little, I'm *somebody,* finally, a mother" (Friedan 236). Thus, Rosemary's desperate wish to become pregnant can be regarded as her attempt to form an identity, and simultaneously conform to societal norms for women to be mothers, as she is not satisfied with her current life.

Rosemary's husband Guy is caught up in the consumerist lifestyle as well. His role therein exemplifies the subordinate nature of consumerism for women within this novel as Rosemary is only able to afford her purchases through his financial means. This ties in with Friedan's notion that consumerism for women was mainly utilised to keep them within their homes. Furthermore, his name, Guy, already alludes to his status as a representative male. Throughout the novel, it becomes apparent that Guy is the head of the household when it comes to making decisions and that he is the sole breadwinner. Next to this, the reader learns that "[i]n 1964 Guy had done a series of Anacin commercials that, shown time and time again, had earned him eighteen thousand dollars and was still producing a sizable income" (Levin 26). Guy is depicted as the epitome of consumerist society as he makes a living by contributing to the advertising industry that seeks to make good consumers of women. Moreover, "not only is his income derived from adverts, his fashion choices are also made as a result of media advertising, as evidenced by his buying the latest shirt that was promoted by the *New Yorker*" (McCarthy 68). He is both the instigator and the maintainer of consumer

capitalism, in particular of the manipulation of consumers in order to make a profit. Guy maintaining this lifestyle is in turn what makes Rosemary able to continue a consumeristic lifestyle.

Additionally, Guy's implicit pact with Roman Castevet to exploit Rosemary as an instrument for the Satanic ritual of birthing the anti-Christ in exchange for furthering his career, is based on monetary gains and success as well. Roman is the head of the Satanic cult that Rosemary ultimately joins. It is ironic that his character, as the head of the Satanic cult, is named Roman, which can be regarded as a direct mockery of the Roman Catholic faith. As Guy agreed to this pact, with the implications it entails, he betrays and hurts Rosemary in order for his lifestyle to be maintained and upheld. This signifies that the narrative is critical on consumerist thoughts and goals, which are ultimately harmful to the autonomy of women per Friedan's notions. It furthermore suggests the connection between Satanism and consumerism, juxtaposing both as they are working together and upholding one another.

Religion: Hypocrisy and Judgement in a Catholic Context

Discussion of religion, especially of Catholicism, is present throughout the novel. The novel implements these critical comments on the Catholic Church, depicting a negative stance toward it. Yet, it can be said that Rosemary's rejection of the Catholic faith is what causes her to become involved with the Satanic cult, which stands at the root of the horrible events in her life. This section explores the novel as an illustration of the critical stance on the Catholic Church, which ultimately concludes with Rosemary's acceptance of her position within the Satanic cult.

When Rosemary and Guy inform Rosemary's family friend Hutch about their move to an apartment in Bramford, he immediately voices his concerns. Rosemary rebuts that "'[i]f there were really something wrong, they would have demolished the building (Levin 24).

However, Hutch replies that the house in London was owned by family whereas Bramford is owned by the church, "'There you are,' Guy said, lighting a cigarette; 'we've got divine protection.' 'It hasn't been working,' Hutch said. […] Rosemary said, 'I didn't know it was owned by a church,' to which he responds that, 'the whole city is, honey'" (Levin 24). This suggests that the manner in which the Church owns and buys property within New York signifies that consumerism, and consequently women subordination, has a hold of the Church as well, and that their image of purity is not entirely justified. Therefore, the Church is shown to be as much involved in materialism and monetary gains any other corporation.

Rosemary has experience with Catholicism, as she was brought up Catholic, "but [is] no longer observing" (Levin 38). Because of this, and because of her "marrying a protestant" and "marrying in only a civil ceremony", Rosemary's family "were all hostile now—parents, brothers, sisters—not forgiving her" (27). This paints a negative picture of Catholics in general, as they would exile family for not following the rules which were set out by the Catholic Church, prioritising not the human connection but that what is illustrated as good and bad within institutionalised religion of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the juxtaposing of Protestantism and Catholicism here is in line with poly-piety within American society as proposed by Marty, and exemplifies the importance of Catholicism within the novel (303). The negative connation of Catholicism is furthermore exemplified through Rosemary's experience with her Catholic school. Rosemary is illustrated to be honest in a competition whereas "otherwise no one would have noticed, and they would have won. It had been right to tell," as "[a] Catholic school shouldn't win by trickery" (Levin 41). This passage exemplifies that the Catholic Sisters would rather win by cheating than in an honest manner. Which again evokes a parallel between Catholicism and the consumerist lifestyle of modern business, where success it the sole objective. Since these examples are the majority of what is

illustrated of Rosemary's religious past, her experiences are that of hypocrisy and judgement, not only within her Catholic school but within her family as well.

Next to being subject to judgement from her family, Rosemary is also mocked by Guy and the Castevets for having been Catholic in the first place. When Rosemary and Guy are visiting the Castevets, they discuss the Pope's imminent visit to New York and relate this to the newspaper strike: "'No Pope ever visits a city where the newspapers are on strike.' […] Guy smiled. 'Well,' he said, 'that's show biz' (Levin 51). They continue relating the Pope to show business, saying: "'It is, you know! That's just what it is; show biz!' 'You can say that again,' Guy said. 'The costumes, the rituals,' Mr. Castevet said; 'every religion, not only Catholicism. Pageants for the ignorant'" (Levin 51). The Church thus, is related to a consumeristic sector once more, exemplifying their similarity to a profiting business.

After this Rosemary explains that she is agnostic: "'And you, Guy?' Mr. Castevet asked. 'Are you an agnostic too?' 'I guess so,' Guy said. 'I don't see how anyone can be anything else. I mean, there's no absolute proof one way or the other, is there?'" (Levin 52). Mrs. Castevet then notes that Rosemary has been looking uncomfortable "when [they] were laughing at Guy's little joke about the Pope" (Levin 52). Rosemary responds that she has "been conditioned to have respect for him and [she] still do[es]" (Levin 52). However, Mr. Castevet rebuts saying that "'you should have no respect for him at all, because he's going around deceiving people and pretending he is holy'" (Levin 52). These instances and comments signify the disdain the Castevets and Guy have for the Catholic Church specifically, as they point out the hypocrisy within the Catholic Church and of the Pope specifically.

Rosemary, by contrast, stays quiet on the matter, and the back-and-forth of the ambiguous quality of the criticism stays neutral within her: "Guy said that subconsciously she was still a good Catholic, and she protested enough to support the explanation" (Levin 58).

Later, when the Pope visits New York, Rosemary watches the events closely from her home: “His speech at the UN moved her, and she was sure it would help ease the Vietnam situation. ‘War never again,’ he said; wouldn’t his words give pause to even the most hard-headed statesman?” (Levin 66). When her sister calls, however, and reprimands her for not going there in person, Rosemary says that “‘Religion doesn’t mean as much to me now as it did back home’” (Levin 67). Here, it is exemplified that when she is alone without judgement she is respectful and in awe of the Pope, signifying that she has not yet abandoned her religious roots. However, in the presence of other people, many of whom are explicit anti-Catholics, she is quick to dismiss this and argue against her involvement to avoid shame and conflict, adhering to the idea of the submissive Catholic ideal of the Eternal Woman.

Similarly, during her time of need she quickly reverts back to Catholicism and desires religious help. This is first illustrated when she finally becomes pregnant and yearns for solace within: “If only prayer were still possible!”, she notes (Levin 89). Rosemary continues “[h]ow nice it would be to hold a crucifix again and have God’s ear: ask Him for safe passage through the eight more months ahead […] Eight good months, please, free of accident and illness, full of iron and milk and sunshine” (Levin 89). Unfortunately, these months do not go by smoothly for Rosemary as she falls ill and experiences a great deal pain. Even though she had been alarmed by her friends, she promptly denies that she is ill and keeps on believing that everything is alright, believing the male doctor and therefore accepting his dominance. However, when she leaves her house something changes:

> She [...] found herself looking into a window in which a small crèche was spotlighted, with exquisite porcelain figures of Mary and the Infant and Joseph, the Magi and the shepherds and the animals of the stable. She smiled at the tender scene, laden with meaning and emotion that survived her agnosticism; and then saw in the window glass, like a veil hung before the Nativity, her own reflection smiling, with the skeletal

> cheeks and black-circled eyes that yesterday had alarmed Hutch and now alarmed her. (Levin 108)

The fact that Rosemary finally realises that she is ill is brought on by her standing in front of the store window looking at the religious scene. She is finally alarmed then because of the religious connotations and emotions she feels by looking at the nativity scene. Her ties to her faith make her see herself, and in turn reality, again as she stops relying on listening to those around her and realises the extent of her deteriorating health.

Ultimately, Rosemary is depicted to return to her Catholic faith once more in her time of need when she wants to save her baby. Rosemary exclaims: "Oh Father in heaven, forgive me for doubting! Forgive me for turning from you, Merciful Father, and help me, help me in my hour of need! Oh Jesus, dear Jesus, help me save my innocent baby!" (Levin 168). This return signifies that, "despite her socially-acceptable agnosticism, Rosemary Reilly is a Catholic with indelible marks that, pose as she will, she cannot hide" (Lima 215). However, her return to religion is again ambiguous, as she embraces Catholic elements, but simultaneously and ultimately embraces Satanism in order to care for her baby and achieve autonomy.

Catholic Supernatural: Satanic Rituals and Metaphorical Possession

Rosemary's pregnancy introduces the Catholic Supernatural as a significant component in relation to feminist theory. Within the narrative, the supernatural is often related to Satanism. Satanism and satanic practices present themselves early on in the novel when Hutch discusses the events which occurred in the building of Rosemary's new apartment: "'Adrian Marcato practiced witchcraft,' he said. 'He made quite a splash in the eighteen-nineties by announcing that he had succeeded in conjuring up the living Satan. He showed off a handful of hair and some claw-parings…'" (Levin 21). Within the novel, Satanism is often referred to as an alternative religion: "'It's a religion,' she said. 'It's an early religion that

got— pushed into the corner'" (Levin 135). Furthermore, Rosemary says that there are "people who do believe, even if we don't; just the way my family believes that God hears their prayers and that the wafer is the actual body of Jesus", she continues that, "Minnie and Roman believe their religion, believe it and practice it" (Levin 136). Here, the novel relates Satanism to Catholicism, and Christianity in general, exemplifying that their essence, namely the adoration and vernation of a biblical figure, is not crucially different from one another. Multiple Satanic rituals occur within the novel as well. One of the first rituals witnessed by Rosemary is Satanic chanting: "the same flat unmusical singing she had heard the last time, almost like religious chanting, and the same flute or clarinet weaving in and around and underneath it" (Levin 63). This refers to the chanting during mass within the Christian context, exemplifying the exact opposite nature of Satanism in relation to Catholicism. Later, Rosemary herself is taking part in the Satanic ritual to impregnate her with the anti-Christ:

> With a thin black wand, he was drawing designs on her body, dipping the wand's point in a cup of red held for him by a sun-browned man with a white moustache. The point moved back and forth across her stomach and down ticklingly to the insides of her thighs. The naked people were chanting—flat, unmusical, foreign-tongued syllables—and a flute or clarinet accompanied them. (Levin 72)

As Roman is the leader of the Satanic cult herein, he represents Satanism and "the 'white' Bishop of Rome has been replaced in Rosemary's life by the 'black' bishop of Satanism" (Lima 217). This signifies that the narrative characterises both the black bishop and the bishop of Rome as the same but carried out on a different manner. This is in line with Rosemary's comments calling Satanism an alternate religion, exemplifying that Catholicism and Satanism are not that different from one another. Thus, exemplifying Van Luijk's argument that Satanism inverts Christian rituals (43).

Although the novel does not depict a possession in the conventional sense of the concept, Rosemary is in fact possessed through her pregnancy in two different ways. Firstly, Rosemary's signifies that she is now owned by being a wife to her husband, and therefore his possession, and by being a mother. As Friedan points out, the problem which lies herein is "always being the children's mommy, or the minister's wife and never being myself" (28). By being pregnant, Rosemary is restricted to be her own person and is therefore the possession of those around her.

Secondly, Rosemary is depicted as the vessel of Satanic offspring. Even though her mind and will are not possessed by the Satanic entity, her body is, and she is unaware and unable to do anything about it until after the birth of the baby. Lima proposes that "[h]er soul, former temple of the Holy Spirit during her days as a Catholic, has lost the faith; her body, defiled in the orgiastic rite celebrated by the demonolaters, is now host to Satan's seed" (217). The possession of Rosemary is furthermore exemplified through the way in which her body deteriorates, as Hutch notes, "You look as if you've been drained by a vampire. Are you sure there aren't any puncture marks?" (Levin 152), relating her illness to another form of horror and supernatural aspect. According to Valerius, *"*in *Rosemary's Baby* it is the unborn that maliciously feed off the living" (131). Therefore, Rosemary's possession is accomplished from within as she is carrying Satan's child instead of the infestation of the usual Satanic demon spirit. This deterioration of the body as well as the becoming of a Satanic child can witnessed within the possession of *The Exorcist* as well which will be explored further within the following chapter.

After the baby is born, Rosemary notes that his eyes were " all golden-yellow, with neither whites nor irises; all golden-yellow, with vertical black-slit pupils. She looked at him. He looked at her, golden-yellowy, and then at the swaying upside-down crucifix" (Levin 173). Rosemary realises when looking at her baby that the only way for her to have influence

on his life and agency of her own, would be to join the cult and care for her child personally. She chooses to become a Satanist because of her drive for autonomy and choice to care for her baby, not necessarily for the ideology pursued by the cult. Satanism, thus, is a means to an end for Rosemary within the androcentric society she lives in. This representation ties in with the societal issues of women in the 60s, as they struggle to pursue autonomy but were faced with adversity.

Male-Female Relationships: Ownership and Autonomy

Regarding the hierarchy within relationships between the male and female characters, ownership of Rosemary is illustrated in more ways than one. The way the satanic ritual was performed and how Rosemary reacts shows that she is not in control of her own body. Rosemary notes that she "feel[s] funny about your doing it that way, with me unconscious'" (Levin 75). Guy then tries to reassure her that his motives were pure and tries to caress her, however Rosemary "squirmed away from it. 'It's supposed to be shared, not one awake and one asleep,' she said" (75). The ritual involving the taking of Rosemary's body and Guy's justification of doing this, signifies the way in which Rosemary is not perceived as a person but rather a vessel and an object which they could use without repercussions. This exemplifies Rosemary as the possession of her husband and the degeneration of her as the wife, which is in line with Friedan's analysis of the housewife (28). Later, Rosemary exemplifies this further by saying that "Guy had taken her without her knowledge, had made love to her as a mindless body ('kind of fun in a necrophile sort of way') rather than as the complete mind-and-body person she was" (75). Even though Guy tried to justify his actions,

> "she wished that no motive and no number of drinks could have enabled him to take her that way, taking only her 'body without her soul or self or she-ness—whatever it was he presumably loved" (Levin 75).

Guy's treatment of Rosemary is in line with the notions Daly illustrated regarding the relationships of husband and wives. Daly notes that women often have "an impression of non-existence" (*The Church* 174). This impression is brought on by their husbands "for whom the person in the wife is non-existent. These men know the wife as a possession and the mother of their children." (*The Church* 174). Ultimately, Guy's actions cause Rosemary to put some distance between her and her relationship with Guy. Therefore, she goes to a cabin to think things over. This is the first step Rosemary takes to increase her autonomy and to distance herself from Guy, and subsequently distances herself from the way she is regarded as weak and without identity. Rosemary distances herself from that what is expected of her, and this is in line with Friedan's plea for women to break away from the Feminine Mystique (54), and thus can clearly be regarded within the character arc of Rosemary.

This newfound autonomy is cut short rather quickly, however, as Rosemary finds out she is pregnant. Her pregnancy drives her to go back to Guy and this simultaneously entails that she is now intertwined with the dangers of carrying a baby and again not having her own identity and autonomy. She notes that "there were so many dangers to worry about in the months ahead", especially "dangers that had never been dangers before but were dangers now, now that Andrew-or-Susan was begun and living" (Levin 89). Now, Rosemary once again cannot prioritise herself, but instead devotes her life to that of her baby as "she would give up her occasional cigarette, of course. And check with Dr. Sapirstein about cocktails" (Levin 89). Although she was finally able to make more decisions for herself, she is now again put in her place as a mother and in a position where the people around her, such as the masculine Dr. Sapirstein, to decide what is best for her. This is in line with Friedan's theory of the feminine mystique and Daly's concept of the Eternal Woman, characteristics which Rosemary adapts perfectly into her personality. Rosemary has now reverted to a woman that "has no identity except as a wife and mother. She does not know who she is herself" (Friedan 29). Rosemary

being reduced continues for most of her pregnancy as she allows for the people around her to make all of her decisions for her. However, near the end of her pregnancy Rosemary is starting to regain her need for autonomy. This is illustrated through the way in which Rosemary does away of the daily milkshake Mrs. Castevet brings her, "Rosemary closed the door. She went into the kitchen and stood for a moment with the glass in her hand, and then went to the sink and tipped out the drink in a pale green spire drilling straight down into the drain" (Levin 115). Defying the wishes of the Castevets is the first step for Rosemary to regain her sense of self. Later, she mentions to Guy that she wants to see another doctor; however, Guy dismisses Rosemary's wish saying that "'It's out of the question.' [...] 'I won't let you,' Guy said" (Levin 122). At first, Guy overrules Rosemary and decides for her that her wish is not going to happen. The manner in which he does not listen to her request implies Guy's possession over Rosemary and that their marriage is intertwined with the hierarchy of patriarchal ideas. However, Rosemary defies him and refers back to her own interest by responding "'[w]hat are you talking about? What about what's fair to me?'" (Levin 122). Signifying that she is not afraid anymore to think of herself. Her growing autonomy thus eventually comes to a succession when she becomes her own saviour after the birth of her son: "She had learned her lesson with Dr. Hill. This time she would turn to no one, would expect no one to believe her and be her savior" (Levin 167). Rosemary continuous that "[t]his time she would do it alone, would go in there and get him herself, with her longest sharpest kitchen knife to fend away those maniacs" (167). After Rosemary makes this choice, she becomes more vocal and stands up for herself. Therefore, the usual narrative of the male saviour is countered by Rosemary handling the situation herself. This change in attitude seems to be picked up by the people around her as well as they come to her defence: "'You shut up,' Helen Wees said, coming to Rosemary and putting a dampened handkerchief in her hand. 'Rosemary is His mother, no matter how she behaves,' she said. 'You remember that

and show some respect'" (Levin 175). Rosemary is hostile towards the men who treated her as inferior during her pregnancy as well: "'Go away,' she said, 'or I'm going to spit in your face.' 'Go away, Abe,' Roman said, and Dr. Sapirstein nodded and went away" (Levin 178). Next to this, Rosemary's relationship with Guy is severely damaged as well and she distances herself from him: "'They promised me you wouldn't be hurt,' he said. 'And you haven't been, really. I mean, suppose you'd had a baby and lost it; wouldn't it be the same? […] As hard as she could she spat at him" (Levin 179). Guy here trivialises that what he has done to Rosemary in order to justify his action. He also speaks of all that they were getting in return (179), implying that Rosemary has benefitted from the pact as well. However, it only benefitted Guy's career. This exemplifies that Guy does not see Rosemary as an individual or regard her personal happiness as important, just his own.

Eventually, the ultimate example of Rosemary's becoming her own person is exemplified through the acceptance of her son and his renaming. Here she claims her own identity and consequently is finally heard by those around her. As Rosemary has now made the choice to care for her son, she is respected and honoured: "'Hail Rosemary," Helen Wees said. The others took it up. "'Hail Rosemary.' 'Hail Rosemary' […]. 'Hail Rosemary, mother of Adrian!' Roman said'" (Levin 178). This signifies how her acceptance of her baby, the son of Satan, enforces respect for Rosemary. This is clear as well when Rosemary, defies the baby's name and calls out Roman:

> 'I understand why you'd like to call him that, but I'm sorry; you can't. His name is Andrew John. He's my child, not yours, and this is one point that I'm not even going to argue about. This and the clothes. He can't wear black all the time.' Roman opened his mouth but Minnie said 'Hail Andrew' in a loud voice, looking right at him. Everyone else said 'Hail Andrew' and 'Hail Rosemary, mother of Andrew' and 'Hail Satan.' (Levin 179)

Therefore, through the birth of her son and her choice to embrace Satanism, she finds her own identity and her autonomy as per Faxneld's notion: "When Rosemary chooses to mother, she binds her identity to her son, but not at the expense of her own, instead choosing a hybrid identity, a dual selfhood" (Hicks 304). With the birth of her son, Rosemary experiences a rebirth as well through Satanism. Therefore, she has found the identity and the strength to be her own person instead of being oppressed through the Catholic religion. Choosing Satanism thus provides her with the autonomy. She is finally respected and heard by those around her as an individual, which is contrast to her expected subordination within the Catholic faith she grew up in. By deploying Satanism as an instrument for Rosemary to reach her own autonomy, Satanism is utilised ironically to illustrate the difficulties women have to face to be liberated from a patriarchal, androcentric society of the 1960s.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how the character development of Rosemary is depicted within Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby.* It has become clear that Rosemary is depicted as the epitome of Betty Friedan's notions of the housewife and the Catholic image of the "Eternal Woman" (Daly, *The Church* 149). Therefore, she represents the conflicted woman in light of second-wave feminism and lack of personal identity of the 60s. Rosemary does not have any independence for herself as she flees within consumerism and house-making. Her only desire within this lifestyle is becoming a mother. Something which, according to Friedan, is often a way for unsatisfied women to escape in an identity. Rosemary is impregnated through the Satanic ritual, which causes her to be the human vessel of the anti-Christ. Thus, the Catholic Supernatural possesses her and signifies the critical stance of the anti-feminist ideas within society and within the Catholic Church. Because of the ambiguous portrayal of religion throughout the novel, Levin's implications are not clear as the novel can be read in both ways. However, this chapter argues that Rosemary in the end has been reborn through the birth of

the anti-Christ as the narrative ultimately places Rosemary in an influential and autonomous position. By partaking in the Satanic ritual and subsequently being possessed by the Satanic entity, Rosemary has become her own saviour and has a newfound sense of identity and autonomy.

Chapter 3: Feminist Critique and Cultural Exorcism within Blatty's *The Exorcist*

The Exorcist (1971) has had a significant influence on popular culture. The movie adaption of the novel was such a success that it inspired two sequels and a parody. As a consequence, the majority of scholars critically exploring Blatty's narrative have focused on the movie adaptation. These observations mainly noted that it suggests "that threats to the societal norms can result in an admonition to your humanly existence" (Cooley 3). Furthermore, the cinematic adaptation "seeks to maintain the heteronormative status quo" (Olney 561). This chapter, however, will focus solely on the novel. William Peter Blatty was a well-known and openly Catholic screenwriter and Blatty was "[b]y his own account, […] deeply disturbed by the rising nihilism of secularized Western culture in the mid-twentieth century" (Cardin 358). This chapter will examine Blatty's depiction of the female protagonist Chris MacNeil, specifically regarding her Hollywood career, her religious views and her family life. Furthermore, it will illustrate how this depiction and the possession of MacNeil's daughter, Regan, utilises the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural, through the manifestations of possession and exorcisms, to guide Chris, and, consequently the readers of *The Exorcist*, back to traditional religious values and patriarchal institutions.

Critical lens: Opposing the Eternal Woman

It is rather significant to read *The Exorcist* from a feminist perspective, due to its author being a vocal conservative Catholic. In *Rosemary's Baby*, it is clear that the female main character adhered to the characteristics of the "Eternal Woman" as proposed by Daly (*The Church* 149). According to Daly, the Eternal Woman is "self-less, she achieves not individual realization but merely generic fulfilment in motherhood, physical or spiritual (the wife is always a 'mother to her husband' as well as to her children)" (*The Church* 149). Therefore, those women who do not embody these characteristics defy the image of the Eternal Woman. Consequently "the Eternal Woman is the enemy of the individual woman

looking for self-realization and creative expansion of her own unique personhood" (*The Church* 150). The Catholic Church then, would need to abolish these women and "theologian Harvey Cox has described with logic and power the need for the Church to fulfil its role as cultural exorcist" (*The Church* 169). The woman who has claimed her own autonomy within the context of women's liberation then needs to be exorcised by the Catholic Church. Furthermore, Daly states the way for the Catholic Church to do this is that "[f]or conservative Catholic theologians and journalists, the 'good girl', who is the Eternal Woman, is the only answer to the challenge of the 'bad girl', who is The Girl of the world of James Bond, of Playboy, of advertising" (170). In *The Exorcist*, Chris MacNeil is regarded as the "bad girl," if only for her involvement with Hollywood. The image of the Catholic male saviour is then what could exorcise the bad girls and reinstate the Eternal Woman within Chris as "[i]n the mentality of conservative Roman Catholicism, […] the Eternal Woman- the Madonna of the imagination- is not dead" (170). Within this concept Daly's notion that "a unique male saviour may be seen as one more legitimation of male superiority" is implored (*Beyond God* 71). Next to this, it is significant that Karras' mother is the embodiment of the impact of immigrants on religion in the United States, as noted by Marty (305). Karras' mother has brought her Catholic faith to the United States and therefore adds to the established Catholicism both directly and indirectly by having a Catholic priest as a son (Blatty 51). The impact of immigration on Catholicism in American society as proposed by Marty, is thus exemplified through the depiction of Karras' mother. The concept of the metaphysical possession as proposed by Young and Goodman then is the utilisation of the Catholic Supernatural within this narrative.

Characterisation: Career and Consumerism

The novel revolves around actress Chris MacNeil and her daughter Regan. Regan's health deteriorates throughout the novel, and the narrative focusses on the manner in which

Chris handles her daughter's health problems and exactly where her priorities lie with respect to her career. The novel introduces Chris MacNeil in the first chapter, when she is reading the script for the next day (Blatty 9). Chris is a wealthy and rather privileged, divorced actress who is able to live her life quite autonomously, which suggests she has benefited from the women's movement of the 1960s. This is mostly illustrated through the fact that she left her husband and that she is successful in her career as an actress, both of which could be attributed to more freedom given to women, specifically women such as Chris, which would be the opposite of Daly's illustration of the "Eternal Woman" as desired by the Catholic Church (*The Church* 149).

The novel is conveyed by a third-person omniscient narrator, meaning that the narrator has the ability to know and express the thoughts and inner feelings of all of the characters. Chris's experiences and feelings are not only expressed through the narrator's expression of her own thoughts but are focalised through other characters and commentary by the omniscient narrator as well. The omniscient narrator within *The Exorcist* however, is not objective but rather seems to voice critique from a Catholic perspective. The negative character of these focalisations and commentaries suggest that the subjectivity that is conveyed to, for example, Chris's occupations through the omniscient narrator should be read as veiled criticism. This happens, for example, as the narrator describes Chris walking to the set "toward ghastly charade and the straw stuffed, antic imitation of dust" (Blatty 16). The narrator here describes her work as an actress are noticeably negative and convey a critical attitude towards her chosen career path in Hollywood. Furthermore, because of the way she handles her wealth, Chris is depicted as materialistic and consumerist. In one scene she describes her current problems and mentions "the most important" concern, which was "the failure of two financial ventures" (62). Although these seem to be significant losses which harm Chris financially, she is still depicted focussing on lavish materialistic aspects: "At last,

she decided on a course of action that the manager thought wise. He nodded approval. But he frowned when she brought up the subject of buying a Ferrari" (62). Next to this, at the house party where a guest, a Jesuit priest, mentions that he has vowed a life of poverty, Chris responds with "so have I" (67). That she sees a connection between the priest who has no money and herself because she is not able to buy a Ferrari signifies that she is disconnected from normal life. Next to this, is depicts and how being a wealthy woman has made her materialistic and this signified in the narrative here trough irony. These notions are further portrayed through the apparent abundance of items she buys when searching for Regan's dress "Chris picked it up. The purchase tags were still on it." (29). This illustrates that she owns too many, and she can hardly keep track of, or wear, them all. Here consumerism with regards to the position of women is illustrated within Chris' autonomy. In other words, the fact that she is able to care for herself financially can be regarded to be beneficial to her autonomous life and is in line with Howard's notion that consumerism can be pleasurable and "liberatory" (138). Furthermore, Howards notes that

> [e]merging from a strand of 1970s feminist discourse […] 'consumer feminism' or 'commodity feminism,' focused narrowly on the financial independence of middle-class, most often white women, to the exclusion of other, more challenging and community-oriented goals. (138)

Therefore, the negative depiction of Chris' materialism can be accounted for through the anti-feminist theme within the novel as well as the fact that she is in privileged position to have this option.

The developments in Chris's career are an important aspect of the novel with regard to her relationship with her daughter. When Sharon, Chris' personal secretary, tells Chris that her colleague wants her to direct a movie segment instead of acting in it, Chris is elated. In reaction to this, "Chris flung up her arms, letting loose a hoarse, shrill cry of joy" (25). She

recalls the conversation she had wherein she conveyed her interest in directing: "'Directing!' 'Ah, yes.' 'Then you've done something, something that's yours; I mean, something that lives!'" (25). This is striking in light of the fact that Chris has given birth to a daughter. This signifies Blatty's anti-feminist stance on women who have their own careers next to being a mother, as Chris does not regard her daughter as important when it is in contrast to her career. Therefore, within the context of second-wave feminism and the societal change of women venturing towards their own careers, the criticism on Chris can be brought back to these changes and the negative stance towards them.

Chris's inability to acknowledge the role her daughter plays in her life illustrates her obliviousness to her role as a mother. By prioritising her career, the novel suggests Chris is not a good woman. The conversation about Chris' desire to direct a movie is also directly contrasted with Regan calling for her mother "'Mom, I can't find the dress!' Regan called from the landing" (25). The novel often contrasts Chris's career and her role as a mother throughout the novel. The contrasting opponent is often mentioned directly after she has been working, or contrastingly, when she is with Regan. These instances of contrast suggest that Chris sets her career above the care of her daughter, as the two are illustrated to be mutually exclusive: "'I sure do love you,' she whispered, then returned to her room and her bed and her script" (11). Later, the two are contrasted again as Regan "made a dash for the basement playroom, eager to finish the sculpture for her mother. Chris headed for the kitchen to pick up the script" (28). Through these depictions of contrast in priorities in both mother and daughter, it is signified that Chris finds her career more important than her daughter, while her daughter is eager to please and connect to her often absent mother. Later, when Regan becomes ill and needs more care, Chris' lack of care for her daughter is exemplified again: "'It's a problem? 'No. No problem.' She sighed. 'I just lost Hope, that's all'" (138). As Chris's directing segment would be named Hope, the segment's title signifies Blatty's ironic

representation of the situation, as for Chris the problem refers to her career, instead of Regan's health. This illustrates Blatty's criticism of Chris's life choices, her preference to work, to focus on her career instead of her role as Regan's mother.

The majority of Regan's time is spent alone in the downstairs playroom: "'Where's Rags?' 'Down in playroom. I call her?' 'Yeah, it's bedtime." (38), and later when it is stated "[Regan] went downstairs to the basement playroom, where she remained until time for bed" (48). Instead of looking after Regan herself Chris orders her personal secretary Sharon to do so: "'You know, maybe you should start to keep your typewriter there; don't you think? I mean, that way you can watch her when you're typing. Okay? I don't like her being alone so much'" (64). Despite acknowledging that Regan is often alone, Chris is not concerned about this and does not seek to change it. Later, when Regan's health becomes worse, Chris mentions "She was also preoccupied with a number of other concerns. One was arrangements for the dinner party. Another had to do with the script" (61). This passage signifies yet again that Chris's main focus is on her work and networking, instead of on Regan's well-being.

Chris also orders Sharon to read a book given to Chris to help with Regan's illness, again handing over the care of her daughter to her secretary: "Chris slid the books across the table to Sharon. 'Here read it and tell me what happens'" (Blatty 111). The fact that she does not read the book herself signifies that she much rather delegates both the care of Regan and the effort to find a cure. The novel thus deems Chris's successful career and her motherhood mutually exclusive, as Chris her career does not comply with the image of the Eternal Woman desired by the Catholic Church as proposed by Daly (*The Church* 150). Chris is not able to combine her career with motherhood, which suggests the criticism that the growing movement advocating for women's autonomy regarding careers is harmful for family life. This then conveys the perception that traditional family values, such as those of the Church, should be retained.

Religion: Atheism and Family Structures

Chris's stance on religion is made explicit when she is described as an atheist living a secular lifestyle. Chris can thus be regarded as the product of the feminist movement of the 1960's and is depicted as such. When Regan asks Chris about religion, "[s]he was puzzled. Disturbed. An atheist, she had never taught Regan religion. She thought it dishonest" (Blatty 47). She hereby portrays the dishonesty she feels with regard to the existence of God, annoyed with Sharon, she talks to her and asks what happened. Sharon responds, "Well a little; that's all I mean, it's hard to avoid. Chris, she asks so many questions, and- well . . ." She gave a helpless little shrug. 'It's just hard. I mean, how do I answer without telling what I think is a great big lie?'" (Blatty 61). Sharon here refers to Chris's belief that God does not exist, which Sharon perceives as a lie. This is striking as Sharon thus embodies both a caretaker and a believer, as opposed to Chris who does not take care of her child and represents secularism. This suggests the novel's criticism on secularism results in being too individualistic and self-centred. Later in the novel, when Chris is out of options regarding Regan's health, Chris asks Father Karras for help to cure her daughter. Karras in turn asks Chris of her beliefs, when Chris confesses to her atheism, Karras responds "'None' Karras stared at her speculatively 'Why did you come to me, then?'" (Blatty 227). The fact that this is made explicit whilst exhausting her last option regarding her daughter's health illustrates that God is presented in the narrative as the ultimate, and perhaps only, saviour.

The main dramatic conflict of the novel revolves around Regan's illness, which at first is diagnosed as a mental illness brought on by the divorce of her parents. Chris contemplates that "Regan had loved her father deeply yet had never shown the slightest reaction to her parents' divorce" (40). Chris continues to mention her fear "that one day the dam would break, and her emotions might one day erupt in some unknowable and harmful form" (40). This notion of something erupting in a harmful form foreshadows the novels impending

possession and is clearly linked to Chris' divorce. Regarding the divorce, Chris notes that Regan's father was the instigator and that there was "[e]rosion of ego as the husband of a superstar. He'd found someone else." (43). This signifies that the divorce between Regan's father and Chris found its roots within Chris's career. Since Regan's health is linked to the divorce, it can in turn be attributed to Chris's career and her notions regarding family life and its values as well. The connection between Regan being sick and Chris' divorce is furthermore noted by the doctors examining Regan. The doctors initially associate her sudden behaviour to guilt, causing Chris to ask what would cause this, "the psychiatrist responded, -'might be the divorce. Children often feel they are the ones rejected and assume the full responsibility for the departure of one of their parents'" (Blatty 136). Furthermore, the psychiatrist states that "[i]n children, you'll find it accompanied by guilt formation that's related to family stress, very often fear of the loss of a parent'" (136). This ties in heavily with Chris' near abandonment of Regan by not caring for her, which unintentionally causes Chris to confirm Regan's guilt. Later in the novel this is signified again: "'Well, there's a strong probability that Regan's disorder is rooted in a guilt over-' "Guilt over what?' Chris squalled, her eyes wild. 'It could-' 'Over the divorce? All that psychiatric bullshit?'" (278). The repetition of this notion is striking and suggests that it is one of the main reasons for Regan's illness. It is furthermore significant, when connecting the divorce to secularism, that Regan's father now lives in Rome, Italy (47). As Rome is the Catholic capitol of the world, Regan's father's presence there emphasises the division between Chris and her faith, and the diminution of the Catholic family values that Chris now no longer upholds.

Additionally, within the book, the demon itself invites Chris to look at the possession, as she is the one who had caused it: "'It is you who have done it! Yes, you with your career before anything; your career before your husband, before her...'" (Blatty 343). Here, the blame for Regan's guilt and her subsequent illness is placed solely on Chris, as the demon

almost assumes the role of a substitute (male) parent, which becomes even more apparent when Regan names the spirit after her father Howard: “A fantasy playmate. It didn't sound healthy. Why ‘Howdy’? For Howard? Her father? Pretty close” (34). Unconsciously, Regan finds in the demon that which she misses within her family. Williams notes that “being separated from her father by the divorce, the text implies that she converts the unconscious trauma of paternal loss into a demon which occupies her body and compels its deterioration” (221). Therefore, the argument that Regan attempts to subconsciously fill a void for the paternal figure is strengthened. This attempt then, is brought on by Chris’s single motherhood and subsequent abandonment of Regan.

Chris’s involvement and blame for her daughter’s illness are evident as well within the ideas of Catholic Father Merrin on possession and Satan. He suggests that husbands and wives whom separate easily evoke punishment, and he then exemplifies occurrences in daily lives which defy religious morality and says “‘[e]nough of these,’ Merrin whispered, ‘and we have no need of Satan to manage our wars; these we manage for ourselves... for ourselves....’” (346). Father Merrin’s description of how humanity lets Satan in is in line with the way in which Chris has handled her marriage, and he subsequently suggests that it is the cause of Regan’s illness. The cultural exorcism mentioned by Daly is exemplified as well within Merrin’s speech, as he states that “‘[p]erhaps evil is the crucible of goodness," he brooded. ‘And perhaps even Satan--- Satan, in spite of himself--- somehow serves to work out the will of God’” (346). In other words, the satanic possession of Regan is necessary for Chris to be able to return to the Catholic Church and serves as Gods will.

Catholic Supernatural: Possession and the Negative Numinous

Ultimately, as Regan’s condition worsens, and the medical staff exhausts their options, Chris finally accepts the supernatural reality of her daughter’s possession. This is where the role of the Catholic Supernatural comes to play a pivotal role in the novel’s conservative

gender politics. Chris turns towards spiritual guidance in the form of Father Karras, who can here be regarded as a doctor of the soul. The soul itself is a metaphysical concept as proposed by Elkins; “The soul resists our western need for abstract, operational definitions. We are reminded that there is another world, a world far deeper and more primordial than our logical processes. Soul is the door to this ancient imaginal world” (37). Thus, the soul is connected and intertwined with an invisible realm, and therefore a manifestation of the metaphysical. Furthermore, Elkins argues that “the soul is associated with the true self and impels us towards radical individuality”, whereas the Catholic Church places the focus on a life lived in subordination to God (57).

Throughout the novel, Regan’s possession progresses gradually. For instance, the rapping occurring in the first scene are being attributed to mice (Blatty 14). However, later Karl confirms that there are no mice or rats who are able to make such noises (43). This signifies the initial presence of a spirit. Next to this, sudden drops in temperature and bad smells occur; “reports of a foul, unpleasant ‘smell’ in Regan's bedroom. At Regan's insistence, Chris took a whiff one day and smelled nothing” (61). With regard to the temperature, “[s]he felt oddly relieved. And then noticed the cold. The room. It was icy. She padded to the window. Checked it. Closed. She touched the radiator. Hot” (11). In both instances, Chris and Regan feel or smell something which the other does not; this would be the metaphysical manifestation of the demonic spirit and their physical emotion to this. These instances can be explained through physical reactions to a numinous experience proposed by Otto. According to Varnado, these reactions are connected to fear. However, the fear suggested by Otto is defined by “a quite specific kind of emotional response, wholly distinct from that of being afraid” (Otto 16). These emotional responses thus manifest themselves through physical reactions within the moment of numinous consciousness and are “as ‘unnatural’ as the emotion itself, exemplified through such phrases as “‘my blood ran icy cold,’ and ‘my flesh

crept'" (Varnado 10). Otto described that "the distinction between such a dread and natural fear is not simply one of degree and intensity. The awe or dread may indeed be so overwhelmingly great that it seems to penetrate to the very marrow, making the man's hair bristle and his limbs quake" (16). During the exorcism, this awe or dread is regarded within Father Karras: "Karras stared. At the back of his neck, he felt hands. Icy cold. Lightly touching. And then gone. Caused by fear, he concluded. Fear." (Blatty 253). Therefore, the distinction between natural fear and negative numinous fear is the unnatural physical manifestation of the emotion, which Karras describes here as his fear, even though he feels a physical manifestation of this.

This metaphysical manifestation of the Catholic Supernatural is found in the demonic as well, as explained by Varnado: "the daemonic is associated with such qualities as energy, fury, implacable hatred, and a general 'overpoweringness'" (104). This hatred and power are found in the description of the demon which has power over Regan. Father Karras mentions that "[a]s he approached, it was watching with mocking eyes. Full of cunning. Full of hate. Full of power" (Blatty 252). Goethe, as paraphrased by Otto, describes the powers of a demon, which Otto connects with the negative numinous, stating that demons within "are not always the most remarkable men, either in spiritual quality or natural talents" (Otto 156). However, more importantly, "an incredible force goes forth from them, and they exercise incredible power over all creatures, nay, perhaps even over the elements. And who can say how far such an influence may extend?" (Otto 156). This idea of strength is illustrated within Regan when, during her examination, Chris says: "'But something just occurred to me, doc, you know that? There's a great big heavy bureau in her room made out of teakwood. It must weigh half a ton. I mean, how could she have moved that?' 'Extraordinary strength is pretty common in pathology'" (Blatty 101). Regan's strength is directly linked to Satan and the demonic later on by detective Kinderman as he states that "there is... Satanism involved in

this illness, it happens, plus... strength... yes, incredible strength" (359). The metaphysical here does not merely portray an invisible spirit in philosophical sense, but rather the unmistakable presence of evil, or Satan, in a theological sense, as in Catholic doctrine as well. Therefore, the possession and the demon within *The Exorcist* can be regarded as the negative numinous as it refers to the unnatural feeling and demonic as explained by Otto and Varnado. Since the possession of Regan is linked to her guilt over her mother's family values, and sin of being secular, divorced and career-oriented, Chris is being punished for her sin by the metaphysical manifestation of the possession.

Male-Female Relationships: The Male Saviour

Consequently, the division of the roles of victim, instigator and saviour call for an examination of the male and female relationships in the novel with regard to the traditionally male-dominant society. The most prominent male in *The Exorcist* is Father Damien Karras, the Catholic Jesuit priest who ultimately saves the MacNeil family. At first, Karras is portrayed as doubtful, psychologically unstable and lacking in confidence, especially regarding his own faith. Eventually, Chris asks him for help after Regan has been examined by every medical facility, "having exhausted the extent of medical technology Chris turns to Father Karras as an act of total desperation," which gives Karras a theological and personal purpose (Crouch 214). The fact that Karras is approached implies that the only thing that can help Chris out of this situation is her belief in a Catholic male figure. Although Karras does have a character arc within the novel, which mostly consists of his struggle with his faith and the death of his mother, he is most prominent within the context of Regan's illness. Once he has been asked to help solve Regan's mystery, the focus of the novel, as well as the focalisation of the narrative, switches towards Father Karras: "once Chris turns Regan's case over to Karras her importance to the plot is severely diminished, and she becomes more of a background character" (Crouch 214). This switch signifies that Chris is only present as

placeholder, until the male character of the novel is introduced to act as a saviour for the helpless victim, portrayed by Regan, and to absolve the ignorant female instigator, portrayed by Chris, of her sins.

In the end, the solution is embodied by the most dominant male character in the novel, "a non-secular, universal form of transcendent […] – namely Father Damien Karras" (Frentz and Farrel 44). By placing Father Karras, with aid of Father Merrin, as the saviour, the narrative re-establishes the masculine, religious and patriarchal tradition. This is furthermore found in the way Chris reacts to Father Merrin, the Catholic priest who helps Karras perform the exorcism as he has the knowledge and power to face the demon; "He put his hand on her shoulder and as he squeezed it lightly and reassuringly, Chris felt a warmth and a power flowing into her, as well as a feeling of peace and an odd sense of something that felt like – what? Safety?" (Blatty 329). Chris eventually succumbs to the patriarchal hierarchy and accepts the male saviours, suggesting the novel's stance on the male-female status quo of the 1960s, as eventually her life can only be saved by this hierarchy. This suggests that adhering to traditional Catholic values and Chris' perceived Christian natural place as a woman within the family would have prevented Regan's illness from setting in, and only the return of these values, embodied by Father Karras, can offer salvation.

While Regan has fallen ill as a consequence of her mother's sin, namely through the deviation of the image of the Eternal Woman and her individualistic Hollywood career, she is ultimately saved by the conservative tradition of Catholicism. The Catholic Church is thus able to culturally exorcise the demons that accompany Chris' sins. Therefore, the Catholic Church serves as a "cultural exorcist", which suggests that "the Church has the duty of exorcising the 'demons' which are born of the projection-introjection mechanism" (Daly, *The Church* 169). In other words, the Catholic Church's perspective on proper morality is projected onto the narrative and the MacNeil family. The introjection learned from this,

therefore, is that Catholic beliefs should be to in order to combat the progressive changes within society that go against Catholic tradition.

This notion is strengthened by the fact that Regan's exorcism is successful. Focalised through Father Dryer, another dominant male figure within the Catholic Church, Karras's "eyes filled with peace" (Blatty 368). Furthermore, there was a "mysterious look of joy in Karras' eyes", and most notably "a fiercely shining glint of what? He did not know; but he thought it was something like victory. Like triumph" (375). Father Karras triumphantly saves the MacNeil family from the demonic entity, and implicitly saves them from appropriating values that differ from those of the Catholic Church. Moreover, Karras is successful in restoring the faith in himself as a religious figure and thus conveys to the reader the difference between wrong and right. Williams illustrates this by stating that "[i]f read as a supernatural narrative of possession, not despite but because of its demonic content, *The Exorcist* is a profoundly religious tale with a relatively happy ending which reassures its readership by restoring order through the triumph of good over evil" (232). The reader, therefore, will find inner peace, in the notion that when being true to God and religious values, no evil entity will be coming their way.

Similarly, the exorcism proves to Chris the existence of the transcendental God as well, and she suddenly accepts the Catholic faith through accepting Father's Dreyer's religious token, a "holy medal and chain" of Saint Christopher (Blatty 375). Initially, Chris hesitates: "For long, silent moments Chris stared down at the medal thoughtfully, her brow lightly furrowed as if debating some decision; then, slowly, she reached out a hand, took the medal" (375). Ultimately, by accepting the medallion she makes the choice to accept the Catholic Church and their values. As Quinlan points out, the novel here encourages its readers to do the same, as they

> learn that they too can cast out their sixties demons and absolve themselves of their sinful guilt. For instance, the exorcism cured Karras's own doubt. Chris marvels how she'd never "seen such faith" and Catholic tradition moves her "deeply and strangely." (324)

Adhering to Catholic faith and the values of the Church, thus, ensures inner peace as well as mental and physical safety.

Conclusion

Within *The Exorcist* the conflict between the progressive values of the women's movement and the secularisation of society and the conservative religious values are juxtaposed. The progressive Chris MacNeil is autonomous and focussed on her career. However, these aspects are depicted as wrong and harmful to her care for Regan, and they furthermore uphold her materialistic views. This suggests that women should be mindful of the repercussions of their autonomous decisions. Ultimately, the choice which Chris has to make is that between the agency of her own life and career and being a good mother. She receives the help of non-secular male priest saviours as the medical world cannot help her. The religious males eventually save her and her family with the help of the Catholic faith, and thus signify the power of Catholicism. As Chris, in the end, is more accepting of faith and rethinking her atheist beliefs, the cultural exorcism has been successful in bringing her back to the 'right' path of the patriarchal status quo. Therefore, in *The Exorcist,* Blatty's critical stance on the growing changes of the 1960s is signified through a metaphysical entity which is not physically present. In doing so, the negative numinous is embodied by the possession of Regan, which is exorcised by the Catholic Church, juxtaposing evil and good. Hereby, the novel exemplifies the righteousness of the patriarchal status quo of the Catholic priests and the evil of the progressive social changes of the 1960s adhered to by Chris.

Chapter 4: The Inversion of the Male Saviour & Criticism on Catholicism in Hall's *Dark Debts*

The following chapter will discuss the inversion of the male saviour in Karen Hall's debut novel *Dark Debts* (1997), which, similar to *The Exorcist,* revolves around a Catholic priest who is caught up in a demonic plot. However, *Dark Debts* moves toward a different, more progressive, direction than Blatty's narrative. Like Blatty, Hall worked as a screenwriter for television productions in Los Angeles. Such productions include, *M*A*S*H, Judging Amy* and *The Good Wife.* Hall published a revised version of the novel in 2016, in which she has significantly rewritten the criticism on Catholicism found in the novel. The rewrite came to be as she converted to Catholicism upon marrying her husband and did not agree with the original's contents anymore. This chapter will discuss the version published in 1997, as herein Hall's writing is less nuanced in its criticism. The 1997 version has proven to be scarce in numbers and hard to obtain after its rewrite was published, despite its initial success.

Dark Debts was influenced by Blatty's *The Exorcist* and intertextual references are depicted. Furthermore, the narrative appropriates aspects of *The Exorcist* to transform them and Hall's novel clearly moves in a different direction. Despite fitting well into the mould of the religious Gothic Fictions examined by scholars such as Edward J. Ingebretsen and Diane Long Hoeveler, there is no academic discussion regarding *Dark Debts*. However, it is a crucial novel to address within the feminist and historical context, because it is a woman's rewrite of an anti-feminist novel within a male-dominated genre. As it was published after the radical changes of the 60s, the influence of these changes can be noticed within the novel. Although this thesis focusses mainly on the portrayal of female characters, this chapter will also analyse the male character of Michael Kinney and his choices and behaviour in relation to women. By examining Michael Kinney, in particular his stance on religion, the portrayal of the religious metaphysical and the male-female relationships within the novel, this chapter

illustrates that the narrative inverts the male saviour as the female characters become the saviours of the Catholic priest and prove to be crucial for the exorcism of Jack Landry.

Critical lens: Sexual Politics and the Exploration of the Soul

This novel was written after the most engaging and popular movements of the second-wave had already dissolved. However, "[o]n the brink of the twentieth century, the second wave was alive and well- broader, more deeply rooted, and more diverse than it had ever been" (Davis 491). According to Flora Davis, "[w]omen had become more savvy about the obstacles they faced, and they were also more ambitious" (493). These notions are important to consider when examining the women in this novel, as they would be depicted as more confident assured and successful given the progress that had already been made. However, the struggles women faced earlier in the decade are still clearly present within the novel, especially regarding issues of body politics regarding birth-control. Furthermore, the power structure of the Catholic Church becomes apparent in the sexual politics of women. This power structure regarding gendered hierarchy within the Church is precisely the critique that Daly and the feminist movement have on the institution. The Catholic Church fears the loss of power. According to Daly, that what the Church opposes is not the order of the natural which they hide behind, but rather the loss of power and control of the women and of their following as these women begin to make their own decisions (113). Furthermore, as Gordon argues,

> birth control represented the single most important factor in the material basis of women's emancipation in the course of the past hundred years—that contraception promised the final elimination of women's only significant biological disadvantage. (The capacity to reproduce is not a disadvantage, but lack of control over it is). (2)

The Church thus rejected the idea of birth control in order to keep the control on women and their relationship to bodies and their sexuality themselves. Next to this, the context of the metaphysical within the Catholic Supernatural is found within this narrative, especially

regarding the soul. The importance of the metaphysical of the soul is exemplified in the works of Sluhovksy and Goodman as well. Sluhovsky elaborates on the history of the soul within Catholic religion, contending that "[a]n ever-growing body of literature on the anatomy of the soul was being written in an attempt to create boundaries between the divine and the demonic, truth and deception, the licit and the illicit, the natural and the supernatural" (173). Moreover, Elkins defines the soul as part of the imaginal world "[s]o, if we wish to know the soul, we must lay aside out rational ways of knowing and open ourselves to the world of imagination" (37). Thus, the soul must be regarded as part of the metaphysical.

Regarding the Catholic Supernatural and religious metaphysical of possession and exorcism, Goodman writes: "I am honestly convinced that it is important to the understanding of possession and exorcism, as for that matter of any religious experience, to realize that humans react as total beings, body and soul" (Goodman xvi). Therefore, Goodman suggests, possessions, which are a religious aspect, are experienced both physically, through the body, and metaphysically, through the soul, thus confirming the presence of the religious metaphysical.

Characterisation: Anti-Catholicism and Priesthood

Although this chapter will focus mainly on the character development of Michael, it is important to set out the other characters and their stance on religion briefly to be able to contextualise their influence on his views and beliefs. The novel's most prominent characters are Michael Kinney, Tess McLaren, Randa Phillips and Jack Landry. Like *The Exorcist*, the novel is divided into three different sections. The first section revolves mostly around the characters of Randa and Jack. The second section builds upon Michael's storyline as well as on the character of Tess, introduced in the prologue. The final section brings these storylines together and resolves the overarching conflict of the narrative, namely, the exorcism of Jack Landry and Michael's wavering Catholic faith.

Randa is introduced as a journalist living in LA, her storyline revolves around the death of her ex-boyfriend. Randa is an autonomous, progressive and secular woman. Her criticism of Catholicism and its God become apparent as she notes: "'It's simple. God is a sadist'" (116). Later in the novel, her criticism becomes even more explicit as Randa notes that by saying that "[e]vil has to exist in order for us to appreciate the good" (353). Randa notes that the Catholic Church ignores the pain that humans have to live through by casting it off as God's plan, while humans have to live with the negative experiences, not the greater scheme of things (353). This exemplifies that Randa is critical of the Catholic Church and can be regarded as secular.

Jack is introduced to be the only living member of the Landry family. The narration explains that "Jack rarely had the emotional energy to hate someone on sight, but he'd make an exception for Father" (34). He ultimately walks over to the priest sitting across from him: "'Look,' he said in his calmest voice, 'I don't know whether you are trying to save me or fuck me, but either way the answer is no'" (34). Later, the reader learns this priest was Michael Kinney. The narrative thus already hints at its usage of the concept of the saviour, specifically regarding religious saving. Jack's attitude towards God becomes apparent as well at the end of the first section within the book: "The fact that the train was packed was a mocking irony – a cruel wink from a vindictive God. Wherever Jack was headed, he was going alone" (132). Jack is thus rather secular and critical on the Church.

Tess Maclaren is introduced to the reader in the prologue of the novel. She is a successful editor for the *New York Times* and wants to write an article with Michael after he had testified in court. She tries to convince him to explain his side of the trial, and "[i]n truth [Michael] liked the idea of writing the article. A lot. Almost as much as he liked having a drink with her" (11). Ultimately, he decides to write the article, and because of this is exiled from his Church in New York to a church in a small town near Georgia. Tess is secular as

well: “And then there were people like Tess, who were convinced that Jesus’s entire existence was a fabrication” (236). It is clear when examining the characters that they all share their secular and or critical stance on religion and the Church, with the exception of Michael. This causes a juxtaposition between every character and Michael within the novel, which is crucial for a critical reading of the novel.

Although these characters all have their own storyline within the novel, the most important and prominent is the storyline of Michael Kinney. Michael is introduced as a Jesuit priest. However, contrary to Father Karras in *The Exorcist*, Michael never refers to himself or is referred to as Father Kinney or Father Michael. Therefore, he retains a certain kind of distance between him and the Catholic Church. In addition, Michael rarely wears his collar, and regarding this he notes that “[h]e almost never wore the collar for exactly this reason: it made people so solicitous he wanted to strangle them” (155). When talking about his work as a priest, he mentions that “[h]e didn’t like the work at all. In fact, it was hard to think of what he did as work: marrying nineteen-year olds who had no business being married but weren’t about to be told so” (157). Next to this, he mentions that “the bureaucracy controlled him; where he lived, what he did, what he was allowed to write. They could keep him from telling people the truth” (236). This critical attitude on the Catholic Church and his work as a priest becomes apparent throughout the entire novel. He writes a critical article on institutionalised religion in the *New York Times*, which has placed him in a precarious position, since the Church cannot know if he would criticise them on more delicate issues, such as “birth control, mandatory celibacy, the exclusion of women from the power structure, or any other sacred cows with which he took issue” as well (158). Furthermore, as a Catholic priest with a critical perspective on the institution itself, Michael “had developed something of a cult following among disenfranchised Catholics” (158). This suggests that Michael is not alone in his critique and that there is a broader resentment towards the Catholic Church, which is

emphasised by his openly voiced criticism and the fact that this created a following for secularised Catholics.

His wavering faith becomes more apparent after his grandfather and caretaker Vincent passes away, and Michael feels more watched and vulnerable. Vincent guided Michael towards priesthood, but with Vincent gone, Michael has lost his main motivation for staying true to his faith. Michael mentions that protection in the world for him came from "Vincent and the Church. One gone, the other teetering on the brink (209). This signifies that his connection to his faith is diminishing, as it seems to be a connected to his religious grandfather than to the Church itself. Eventually, Michael learns that his grandfather was a Satanist before converting to Catholicism to redeem his sins (278).

Michael mentions what he thinks is the largest problem of the Church several times. He says that "[t]he first seed of doubt had been planted in his mind in 1967" (233). This date, not coincidentally, correlates with the social changes of the 60s and his doubt seems to have been influenced by the growing women's movement, the progressive changes in society and the stance on the Church with regard to women and women's rights. This is in line with his statements regarding women's reproductive rights, as Michael notes that his stance on religion was severely impacted by the Church's decisions regarding birth control, mainly by the "Humanae vitea- Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control" (234). Even though Michael tried to accept the Church's perspective, he "could not come to terms with the idea of a God who would tell half the world's population that they could not have control over their bodies – meaning, in turn, their lives, their destinies, their hearts" (234). Michael's stance on gender and sexual politics, thus, differs heavily from the Church's, which in turn fuels his doubts about the Church's credibility and empathy towards its female piety.

Later in the novel, during the exorcism of Jack, Michael asks Randa to help him cite from the Bible. Randa responds by saying that she "'can't say a bunch of God stuff. I don't

even know what I believe.' 'That's okay,' Michael said, 'Neither do I'" (346). This implies once more Michaels failing belief in God and the Catholic Church, as well as Randa's critical notions. His feelings towards God and religion are ultimately summarised when he describes it as something which has "No answers. Never any answers to the pain. Never any answers to anything. Just orders" (372). Therefore, this passage clearly exemplifies Michael's desperation and animosity towards priesthood. Subsequently, the novel foregrounds the incompatibility of its gender ideology with the modern world.

Religion: Criticism and Sexuality Within Priesthood

Michael is often overtly critical of the Catholic Church, and he is illustrated as a priest who does not follow the rules given to him by the Church. He had been exiled for writing on matters of the Church in the *New York Times*. However, "[h]e just couldn't help writing about things that bothered him, and nothing bothered him more than the current state of the Catholic Church in America" (159). This suggests that he is not merely critical on the state of the Church but also doubts how to continue being a part of it.

Additionally, Michael has a relationship Tess, which is forbidden for priests and Jesuits. Upon meeting Tess, he already mentions her appearance in an overtly sexual manner, implying sinful thoughts: "legs that were a near occasion of sin without help from his imagination" (10). Regarding his relationship with her he says: "I'm a priest and I've fallen in love with a woman. (That last part being, in fact, the problem. If I'd fallen in love with another priest or a twelve-year-old boy, the Church would be much less horrified – but I'm digressing)" (232). With this, he immediately connects his own sin to the problem of paedophilia within the Catholic Church. This exemplifies the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church which is supposed to be purer and more sacred than the rest of society wherein these issues occur as well. This, of course, is a remarkably explicit criticism of the Church and their stance regarding the sexual sins of priests. Such a scene emphasises the critical perspective of

the novel towards the institution of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, Michael mentions that "[t]hanks to all the publicity that the Church had not been able to fend off, buy off, or lie its way out of, paedophilia had become a problem to every priest in the country, guilty or not" (235). This suggests he believes that the Church does not regard paedophilia as the issue. Instead, they rue the fact that the world found out about its occurrence within the Church. Regarding his sin of being with Tess it is illustrated that they fought about his loyalty and issues towards the Church as they "were clearly punishing him for telling the truth" and "why he felt guilty about his relationship with [Tess]" as "celibacy was a stupid and antiquated concept that was destroying the Church" (160). Their fights and Michael's growing frustrations are key in the novel and in the choices he makes and the notion "why he couldn't accomplish anything he wanted just as easily in a secular context" (160). Next to this, it also signifies his shame and guilt for not following the rules that were prescribed to him by the Church and by being with someone as progressive as Tess.

Michael's difficult relationship with sex and celibacy within the Church is clearly depicted throughout the novel.[5] Michael cannot control his lust most of the time, when he and Tess have an argument about their opposing beliefs. Instead of continuing the discussion he notes that "[s]he was standing so that the opening in the skirt exposed the top of her thigh – just enough to fuel his imagination, and he suddenly lost interest in anything else" (334). The discussion stops here as he goes on to seduce her and ultimately have sex with her. The narrator describes Michael's feelings during the act: "his soul cradled in the arms of someone who loved him, someone he could touch, could cling to; someone who could reassure him that they both existed, and that it mattered" (335). This signifies that Michael flees within the act

[5] Recently there has been discussion within the Roman Catholic Church to allow priests to marry and lifting the celibacy requirements. Pope Francis, in prepared remarks "appeared to hint at the appeal for married priests. In them, he said that setting off from shore meant being open to 'new things'" (D'Emelio). Similarly, German bishops have urged "abandoning the celibacy requirement for priests and vaulting women into leadership roles that are now off-limits" (Harlan). These instances prove the relevance of these topics within today's society and how there appears to be options of progressiveness within the Catholic Church.

and within Tess to restrain his doubts about his faith. Tess is there for him when God is not. He does not find solace in his faith, but instead escapes his faith by indulging in carnal desire as his faith keeps him unsure and unwanted.

Furthermore, the novel integrates issues that women within the twentieth century had to deal with regarding birth control, sexuality and the Church through the character of Donna. The reader learns that Michael had a girlfriend in high school. During the exorcism of Jack, the demon notifies that the reason Donna was upset when Michael broke up with her was because she got pregnant (360). The demon says:

> 'Poor Donna. Your first victim. Believed everything you told her […] If Michael Kinney said it wasn't a sin, then by God, it wasn't a sin. Let's see … first it wasn't a sin to jerk you off, because that wasn't really sex. Then it wasn't a sin for her to suck your cock, because it wasn't a sin unless she could get pregnant from it. And then my favourite part. 'We might as well go all the way because if God's going to be mad at us, He is already Mad.' (360)

Michael exploits his status as conservative Catholic to convince Donna that what they are doing was not a sin. Therefore, she goes along with what Michael wanted. The demon declares that "[Michael] used it. You used her", referring to his status as a Catholic and his Catholic faith (360). Here, Donna is presented as the embodiment of the victims of the sexual politics of the Catholic Church regarding birth control as she becomes pregnant, as birth control was opposed by the Catholic Church. Eventually, this leads to an illegal abortion, which is forbidden by both the law and the Church, which exemplifies how the Church and politics are intertwined and therefore influential within multiple aspects of society. The demon recalls Donna's abortion, saying "[s]he spent a lot of time calling on His Majesty about it, but I guess He was too busy to listen. He didn't seem to be around when she almost bled to death from a botched back-alley abortion" (360). This signifies that women were

forced to take potentially deadly risks as there was no safe and legal alternative, especially not one that was supported by the Church. However, through Michael's sins, he also hurts the Church itself, as they are linked: "Once a Catholic, always a Catholic. Once a priest, always a priest. In the Catholic tradition, the priest is more than merely a preacher of the word. He is a sacrament" (Greeley 147). As he is the sacrament, his thoughts and behaviour defile the Church. Therefore, not only does he defy the Church by openly criticising them; he damages them from within as well.

The struggles of birth control in connection to religion and the position of women are noted by Daly as well. She proposes that these struggles "must be seen within the context of sexually hierarchical society" (*Beyond* 106). Daly claims these struggles are interconnected with issues as "birth control, divorce, the subordination of women in marriage and in convents, and the exclusion of women form the ranks of the clergy" (Daly 106). Therefore, the hierarchical relationship between Michael and Donna have caused Donna to be the antagonist in the eyes of the Church, while Michael's behaviour is allowed to continue without punishment. Additionally, Michael questions the way the rules of the Church are based on notions which are not related to religious piety: "And there was the small matter of the corrupt history of mandatory celibacy, which had absolutely nothing to do with anything holy, and (like most else) everything to do with the distribution of wealth and power. And that was the truth" (235). Therefore, the victim of this distribution is illustrated through the character of Donna as she falls victim to the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and the fault in denying birth control.

Michael thus focalises and embodies the negative aspects of the Church, inverting the narrative of *the Exorcist* in which the Church is the ultimate saviour and epitome of good. The character of Michael exemplifies these notions to be false as he (a Jesuit priest devoting his life to the clergy) is critical of the corrupt and power structures of the Church. Therefore,

Michael illustrates from within the Catholic Church the faults of the Church, and how men of the cloth can be sinful as well.

Catholic Supernatural: Exorcisms, Gender, and the Soul

Next to this, the Catholic Supernatural is an important theme within the novel. The novel itself shows an interplay of the meaning of the supernatural and metaphysical within the Catholic Church. Michael explains that

> [t]here is the literal and there is the metaphor, and the truth is neither, and the truth is not somewhere in the middle. The truth is beyond the metaphor. What people don't understand is that the metaphor isn't just a way to illustrate the literal. […] Metaphors, symbols, parables – they speak to another level of consciousness, to the subconscious, which I believe is the meeting ground for life on this plane and life on the next. (201)

Michael makes a clear distinction between the planes in which people live and the plane on which the manifestation of the demon exists. He mentions that "'it was all very abstract,' Michael said. Furthermore, he explains: "'If there is this entire unseen reality coexisting with us … its entirely unknown to us, and we are so … concrete.'" (345). Here, the unseen reality can be connected to the imaginative world of the soul as proposed by Elkins, especially in contrast to the concrete physicality of the body, juxtaposing the physical with the metaphysical (37). When explaining to Jack what is needed for his exorcism he asks: ""How?' Jack asked. 'By magic?' 'I guess so from your point of view. It's a metaphysical problem, we have to fight it where it lives'" (345). Here, Michael distinctly defines the difference between our realm in which we live and the one in which the demon is living, even explicitly naming the demon and the possessions a metaphysical problem, exemplifying the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural as proposed by Hansen (5).

Within *Dark Debts*, there are two exorcisms. One involves Danny Ingram, Michael's first exorcism that failed, and one performed on Jack. The exorcism on Jack is ultimately

successful because of Randa's physical and psychological involvement in the exorcism, suggesting the power of female involvement and the consequences of equality.

The explanation of a possession, and subsequently an exorcism, is linked to the idea of the soul within the novel. According to the theory on possession that Father Bob, the priest who helps Michael with the exorcism of Danny Ingram, proposes, the soul transcends the will and the body: it is not seen like the body, but it encompasses the unseeable will (Hall 188). A possessing demon, therefore, takes over the soul, the body and the mind (188). Thus, by drawing up her own theory on possession through Father Bob, Hall plays with the notions of the history of the metaphysical idea as proposed by Sluhovsky and Goodman of the soul within the Catholic Church.

As in *The Exorcist,* Varnado and Otto's definitions of the instances that occur when experiencing a religious experience, whether it is numinous or negative numinous, are depicted in *Dark Debts* as well. During Michael's first exorcism, this is illustrated through his inability to breathe properly: "Michael couldn't breathe. The invisible pressure had intensified until he felt he might suffocate" (197). During the exorcism of Jack, this occurs again, and, as in *The Exorcist,* the descriptions of an "icy cold" and an odd smell return (243). This sensation is linked to Otto's idea of the manifestation of the negative numinous: "He shivered then realized that the room was cold. Not ordinary cold. Icy, but stuffy at the same time. He was having trouble breathing. The air was too thick. There was an odd smell, like a smoldering candle" (243). These descriptions then signify the metaphysical manifestation of the negative numinous as described by Otto and Varnado (10).

Another instance of the Catholic Supernatural is the usage of holy water within the exorcisms. According to Regina Hansen,

> Catholics carry sacred objects such as blessed crucifixes and medals and perform everyday ritual gestures like the sign of the cross. Use of these objects and gestures

> creates a small spectacle in its own right, since both invoke unseeable, potentially marvelous spiritual protection. (6)

Hall employs the Catholic Supernatural within the novel in exactly this manner. Before Jack's exorcism, Michael readies the holy water, and he notes that "He blessed the water, all the while thinking how stupid and childish a gesture it was" (373). Later during the exorcisms, he tries to use the holy water as a test of the power of God:

> If he chose the glass instead of the gun, he'd be offering his own life as a show of faith. As proof to God. As proof to himself. A complete, conscious choice. With all the strength he could summon- physically, emotionally, spiritually- Michael picked up the glass and threw the water at Jack. In Michael's mind Jack reacted as if he'd been hit in the face with battery acid. In reality, Jack reacted as if he'd been hit in the face with a glass of water. (383)

The holy water's failure illustrates that the proof that Michael sought for himself remained absent and, therefore, God has let him down. Consequently, this diminishes Michael's faith further. Michael realises that there is no power or protection in the ritual and, therefore, no power in his beliefs. It also signifies the critical stance on the futility of the idea of the supernatural nature of these gestures. Furthermore, with regard to exorcisms, Sluhovsky mentions that "[t]he history of possession, discernment of spirits, and female mysticism in early modern Europe, then, is a history of the changing relation between the psychic and the physical" (8). He adds that the history of possessions is "a history of bodies and souls" and something which is "inevitably a gendered history" (8). This suggests the impact of gender on the depiction of possessions, and Sluhovsky elaborates that "more women than men were possessed by demons and treated by exorcists" due to notions of inferiority as "medieval teachings viewed women as mentally and physically weak and more prone to diabolic attacks and temptations (8). This suggests that women were more often the subject of exorcism within

the Catholic Church, as it was thought that they were easily possessed. It is significant to note then, that both of the possessions within *Dark Debts* occur in men. This strengthens the criticism presented through the juxtaposition and inversion of the religious conservative, such as *Dark Debts* has done with *The Exorcist*. By creating this inversion, Hall contrasts the two opposing views on the patriarchal hierarchy within the Catholic Church. The intertextuality with Blatty's novel is found as well in the depiction of Danny Ingram's possession. Hall mentions that "[t]hey put Danny through weeks of psychological tests, interviews and various forms of torment" (183). This is, of course, linked to the numerous medical tests regarding Regan's possession in Blatty's novel.

Within Hall's novel, the concept of the Catholic Supernatural regarding God and Satan, and good versus evil is represented as well. The distinction that the novel makes is namely based on the idea that if there is a God, then there must be an evil spirit as well. The existence of God implies the existence of Satan. Michael explains the possibility of Satan, he notes that there is "more than one level of evil", specifically "the evil of man himself, and something larger" (200). Michael then goes on to explain that evil "parallels the hierarchy of Heaven. God, saints, angels – Satan, demons, lesser demons – they are all beings. I know that" (200). Michael thus subjects God to being part of balance, in which God represents the Good and Satan represents Evil. Furthermore, the novel denounces the way Satan is referred to as non-existent for some, with the argument that "[t]he fact that people in every culture, in every time, have believed in the Devil can't be written off as myth" (201). The narrative conveys that the belief that "If there really is a devil, one of two things has to be true: (1) God is not all-powerful or (2) God is not all-good" (204). With this Michael recognises these notions to be true, which in turn shatters the image he always had of God, as God "can't protect me from me", referring to his own sins and darkness (204). The importance of the metaphysical within the narrative thus is the juxtaposition of God and Satan and that what is

good and what is evil. These notions are hard to define and blur the lines of what is right and what is wrong, and furthermore destroy the Catholic idea of an all-powerful God.

Male-Female Relationships: The Female Saviour

Moreover, one of the most important aspects regarding the inversion of the male saviour is the way in which the male-female relationships are defined in *Dark Debts*, which juxtaposes it with *The Exorcist* as well. Within *The Exorcist*, the male figure, Father Karras, proved to be the ultimate saviour within the MacNeil family. Within *Dark Debts*, it is depicted that the male priest is not sufficient as the saviour. As mentioned earlier, the exorcism of Danny Ingram, performed by two Catholic priests failed, whereas Jack's exorcism succeeded. It is striking that at the former, no women were present, while at the latter there are. This implies that the role female characters play in ensuring the success of an exorcism is in fact rather crucial, and that the male saviour thus cannot succeed without the aid of a woman. This can in turn be connected to the progress and progressive notions of second-wave feminism noticeable within the 90s as the patriarchal and androcentric society has come into question.

The exorcism of Jack is performed by both Michael and Randa. Although Randa is not religious, and even critical of the Church, she is the one who ultimately saves Jack from the demon. During the exorcism of Jack, Michael is struggling to overpower the demon and contemplates what could save Jack and "what would make him want to live" (388). In the end, Randa saves Jack as she moves towards him and tells him to fight: "Suddenly Jack seemed to gain strength and break through the barrier. He grabbed Randa's hand. Michael knew what it meant. Jack's choice was made too" (388). After Jack chooses life and subsequently chooses Randa, the demon leaves Jack and the exorcism has been a success. Michael was unable to perform a successful exorcism on his own and needed the female character of Randa to save Jack. This signifies that Michael is not the sole saviour within the

narrative, and that although he is male and a Jesuit, this does not entail that he is the saviour of man. This defies the patriarchal standards of the Catholic hierarchy and the importance of men and priests, which is in line with feminist theory towards the path to equality.

Furthermore, Tess ultimately saves Michael. She is often explicit in her criticism of the Church and the way they treat women. Michael mentions that "[t]hey had spent a lot of time arguing over Catholicism" and that he knew "[she was] opposed to organized religion and rabidly down on the Catholic Church" (220). During their argument on their opposing beliefs, Tess makes several remarks on Michael's hypocritical behaviour: "'What Michael? God is going to be even more disappointed when He finds out you're sleeping with an agnostic?'" (220). Michael tries to rebut her critique by mentioning the positives of the Church. However, Tess responds that "[i]t's that attitude. 'Yeah, they treat women like shit, but look at all the good they've done!'" (221). Tess embodies the progressive secularisation of society, especially regarding the position of women, which is in line with the feminist critique of Daly on the Catholic Church. Michael having to choose between the priesthood and Tess, thus, represents the choice between the conservative Church and the progressive thoughts which were brought on by the radical social change from the 60s. Michael is forced to make a choice, and he admits that he has postponed the choice for way too long as "[t]here were a lot of things that had been bothering him for years" (233). He tried to subdue his issues and doubts. However, "[l]ately, he'd been aware of it as a bundle on the 'Tess' side of the scales. The Priesthood vs. Tess-and-P.S.-All-This-Other-Stuff-That's-Been-Bothering-Me-Anyway" (233). His choice is quite literally juxtaposed through a balance of good and evil. The choice he makes, however, relies on which one of the two is good and which one is bad. The description of the scales also refers to lady justice's scales that decides who is wrong in the court of law (Buker 85). Michael then, like lady justice, needs to be the judge of what is right

and what is wrong within the discussion of conservative ideals and the progressive left and the feminist movement.

Ultimately, Michael's doubts and negative thoughts on the Church come to more of a succession and conclusion as the narrative progresses. For example, when sleeping at Tess's house he notes that "Tess lay beside him, breathing peacefully. No hollowed convictions tormenting her. No enigmatic messiah haunting her sleep" (324). Here, it is illustrated that because Tess is secular she does not feel the guilt or shame Michael feels by being with Tess and defying the regulations he was made to adhere. Furthermore, in the closing chapter of the novel, Michael argues that "[he] wanted to serve God, but [he] wanted to do it on [his] own terms. That's now how it works" (398). He leaves the priesthood and chooses to be with Tess as the negative aspects of institutionalised religion are too great. Therefore, Tess, who adheres to feminist and secular lifestyle, saves Michael from a life of guilt and shame within the priesthood, and with this defies the notion of the religious male saviour.

Conclusion

Within *The Exorcist*, Chris MacNeil is saved by the religious non-secular Father Karras, which brought her closer to the Church. However, within *Dark Debts*, the non-secular Father Michael is led away from the Church by the secular and progressive Tess. With this, the novel inverts the idea of the male saviour, which ties in with the progress of the second-wave feminism that had already been made. Furthermore, the novel is critical on the Catholic Church and their stance on women's rights, which is signified through Father Michael's issues with his own sins and the problems of the Catholic Church, Donna's issues with birth control and the overall perception of the Church on sexual and gender relations. Ultimately, the exorcism of Jack is successful because of Randa's involvement and the exorcism of the Church within Michael's life is done due to his love for Tess. Therefore, the progressive movements of the 60s are victorious as Michael chooses Tess over the Church. This then

signifies an inversion as the woman represented by Tess and Randa. Ultimately, the female character become the saviours of men, as opposed to the priests and clergy being the saviour of women and society.

Conclusion

This thesis examined how the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural manifested itself within Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*, Blatty's *The Exorcist*, and Hall's *Dark Debts*. It explored how these novels were influenced by the changing role of women due to the women's liberation movement, and the rise of secularism in the United States of the 1960s. It contextualised the academic discussion of these social changes regarding the women's movement, second-wave feminism and the growing secularisation of that time. Furthermore, it defined the hierarchy and historical treatment of women within the Catholic Church as well as the concept of Catholic Supernatural, depicted through possessions, exorcisms and Satanism.

In *Rosemary's Baby*, the concept of Satanism plays a significant role. Initially, Rosemary acts as the epitome of the 1960s housewife. By submitting to the dominant gender ideology Rosemary lacks her own identity and autonomy, as per Friedan's theory regarding the subordinate identity of housewives. Through a Satanic ritual, she is once more stripped of her autonomy as she becomes pregnant of, and therefore partly possessed by, the anti-Christ. However, in his birth, Rosemary finds her identity and is liberated through because she is finally respected and heard. Furthermore, she reclaims her identity by personally choosing Satanism as a means to regain her agency and control of her baby. Rosemary thus becomes autonomous when she chooses to be the heroine in her own life. Through the birth of her son, she is reborn and becomes autonomous.

Within *The Exorcist*, Blatty is critical of the way progressive women moved away from the institutionalised, patriarchal hierarchy of the Catholic Church by embracing their individuality and autonomy. Through the character of Chris MacNeil and Regan's demonic possession, the narrative opens up the position of the ultimate male saviour; Father Karras. Through his sacrifice, the MacNeil family is saved, and Chris eventually moves towards

religion again. Thus, by reinstating the patriarchal ideas, Chris and her daughter are saved and subsequently embrace the values of the Catholic Church as the correct way of life. Subsequently, the novel's conservative notions on gender and religion and modern society come to light.

Lastly, *Dark Debts* places critical notions such as hypocrisy, sexism, paedophilia, and suppression found within the Catholic Church on the foreground of the narrative as Jesuit priest Michael struggles with his faith. In the novel, the depicted saviours within this narrative are women, emphasised through their crucial role in the novel's exorcisms. Father Michael ultimately leaves priesthood due to the problematic instances of the Catholic Church and, most importantly, he does so in order to be with the secular and progressive Tess. Therefore, the novel is an inversion of *The Exorcist*'s concept of the male saviour, where the main character is not meant to return to the patriarchal standard of the Church but rather to move away from the Church due to being saved and influenced by progressive women. The role of possession and exorcisms within this novel thus, is to undermine the androcentric society by proving the importance of women within the exorcism.

It becomes clear, then, that, through the manifestations of the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural, such as possessions, exorcisms and the presence of demons and Satan, the characters and the narratives voice their critique on the societal changes of the 1960s. In the end, both *Rosemary's Baby* and *Dark Debts* support the rise of second-wave feminism by letting their female characters reach autonomy and using these characters to criticise how the Catholic Church has been treating women. *The Exorcist*, however, shows disdain for the progressive female rights movement and secularisation, by presenting the patriarchal Catholic Church as the only saviour against mankind's sins. Mainly, the treatment of women within religious context is critiqued by Levin and Hall and reinstated by Blatty as a reaction to the rise of radical feminism.

Although this thesis examined the genre of Catholic Horror within its historical context, the genre has not stopped expanding throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century. Movies such as *The Conjuring* series (2013-2018), including popular spin offs such as *The Nun* (2018), exemplify that the genre is still highly popular amongst the general public. Next to this, William Friedkin, who directed the cinematic adaption of *The Exorcist*, has explored the topic of Catholic Horror further within the documentary *The Devil and Father Amorth* (2017), which illustrates the topic's lucrative nature. Catholic Horror and the metaphysical aspect of the Catholic Supernatural are thus topics which have not been stagnant, and in which further research is certainly recommended within the framework of (current) feminist theory.

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