

The Memory of Christmas Past

The Harmony of Cultural and Religious Christmas and the Realisation of the Past in A
Christmas Carol, The Box of Delights and The Dark Is Rising

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Introduction

Christmas is a unity of pagan and Christian elements. This unity stems from its roots which, most likely, lie in pagan Roman winter festivals that were assimilated by the early Christian church in order to baptise the Roman ceremonies. Due to this mix of older pagan customs and traditions with Christian theology, Christmas is a celebration which predominantly deals with cultural memory. Legendary figures like Father Christmas stem from earlier cultural traditions and archetypes. Literary realisations of Christmas also incorporate this harmonising of cultural and religious components. This thesis analyses Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), John Masefield's *The Box of Delights* (1935), and Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* (1973). The analysis focusses on how these three books embody the afore-mentioned unity. Another aspect which this thesis explores is how these texts make use of memory, both cultural and personal, in relation to Christmas.

Christmas is one of the most popular holidays, with celebrations taking place worldwide and well beyond traditionally Christian countries, such as Sudan (BBC) and Japan ("Christmas" 42-43). Christmas is both a religious celebration, cemented in the nativity story, and a cultural one through the many non-religious traditions attributed to Christmas. In *America's Favorite Holidays: Candid Histories* (2007), David Forbes differentiates between the "Christian Christmas" and the "Cultural Christmas" which have existed side by side from the earliest instances of Christmas (42). The Christian Christmas includes "the activities focused on the birth of Jesus and its meaning, including worship services, special music, prayers, and devotions" ("Christmas" 42). Whereas the Cultural Christmas includes "feasts, parties, gifts, and decorations" ("Christmas" 42), and of which the origins lie most likely in pre-Christian winter festivals. These features are not just tied to one version but can fit both versions as, "the great emphasis in Dickens's *Christmas Carol* on the Christmas spirit of generosity toward the less fortunate certainly can be seen emblematic of Christian love, but people who do not view

themselves as Christians also can be inspired to engage in such generosity at Christmastime” (“Christmas” 42). These two versions of Christmas work together in order to create a union of culture and religion. This union can be exemplified by the Christmas Tree; the tree itself is, most likely, taken from early Pagan tree worship (Van Renterghem 3-15), and it is decorated with religious symbols like angels.

This distinction and merging of these two versions of Christmas can also be found in literature situated at and dealing with Christmas. The most celebrated and famous of these literary works is *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens, which had a key part in the revival of Christmas in England (“Christmas” 29). Dickens not only captures the spirit of Christmas but he also reflects and reinforces his own selective version of the season (“Christmas” 30, *Stations of the Sun* 113, Kelly 9). The influence of *A Christmas Carol* ranges from individual readers behavioural alterations (Glancy xii) to how we now view a Victorian Christmas. Dickens creates a harmony between new Christmas insights; the shift from parties to family based celebrations, a greater focus on Christian charity and care for the poor, and old traditions like the figure of Father Christmas; who is realised in the Spirit of Christmas Present. In addition, the redemption and transformation of Scrooge is what Dickens envisioned for the greater English populace. Scrooge’s re-engagement with his personal memories is used to highlight the cultural memory of the old traditions which should be kept. By connecting to personal memory and cultural memory, the book imagines a redeemable Scrooge, and a renovated Christmas.

A Christmas Carol reinstates Christmas, in England, as a holiday focussed on acts of kindness and charity (“Christmas” 30). Moving it away from the Puritan version in which Christmas was a day of penance and observances were banned, and the pre-Puritan version which included acts of licentious behaviour and drinking (“Christmas” 27). These pre-puritan acts can be traced back to Pagan winter celebrations which occurred around the same time as

Christmas: Yule, the January Kalends and the Saturnalia which were marked by such behaviour (“Christmas” 16, 20-21, *Christmas a Candid History* 7-13). These pagan festivals were most likely absorbed by the early Christian church and elements were incorporated to baptise the pagan Europeans (“Christmas” 22-26, Roll 107-108, 122, Beard, et al. 124), which will be further explored in Chapter 1. During and before the interregnum (1644-1660) the Puritan parliament tried to ban pagan elements, including Christmas (“Christmas” 26-28, Durston). During the reign of Victoria and Albert some pagan elements were reintroduced, Germanic traditions which were rooted in Germanic cultural memory (Lejeune 550, “Christmas” 32-34, *Christmas a Candid History* 63-66).

In John Masefield’s *The Box of Delights* (1935) the Religious and Cultural Christmases are in seemingly peaceful balance. Masefield creates a union between the pagan Herne the Hunter and the Lady of the Oak on one side and the Church on the other. This union is further exemplified in the figure of Cole Hawlings. The past plays an important part as one of the functions of the box is to travel back in time. *The Box of Delights* also shows a greater interest in the pagan origins of Christmas through the inclusion of Roman soldiers, the Roman Winter festivals, and the afore-mentioned Herne, who shares similarities with the Green Man.

The move towards and interest in the pagan origins and elements of Christmas and a move away from the Religious Christmas is finalized in Susan Cooper’s *The Dark Is Rising* (1973). This is in accordance with the emergence of modern pagan organisations during the 1960s and 70s and the development of the New Age milieu (Asprem 47, Von Schnurbein 54). Cooper explores the relation between Christmas and the Wild Hunt through its inclusion in her story, led by Herne the Hunter. Furthermore, in *The Dark Is Rising* Cooper shows the pagan powers to be more potent than Christian belief. However, Cooper still includes aspects like charity and the struggle between light and dark. Within *The Dark Is Rising* various characters draw strength from the past, and the Old Ones; pre-Christian guardians of the Light, who show

a capability to travel through time. Cooper tries to destabilize the union between religion and culture in Christmas only to replace Christianity with a new Pagan religion of the Light.

All three books highlight the relation between Christmas and the past. Christmas is a traditional Western custom which is made up of a sort of residue of past celebrations, personal and societal past. This residue stems from cultural memory, which is defined by Astrid Erll as: “the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts” (2). Culture is therefore always a realisation of the past within the present and is mediated through our contemporary viewpoint. There are two levels on which culture and memory work together namely “the level of the cognitive” or individual, and “the levels of the social and the medial” or the collective (Erll 5). The level of the cognitive works through external triggers. If, for example, during a conversation a memory is brought up, this memory would be classified as a cognitive memory. The collective level works through the construction of a shared past by social groups (Erll 5). These two level continuously interact with each other; “just as socio-cultural contexts shape individual memories, a ‘memory’ which is represented by media and institutions must be actualized by individuals” (Erll 5).

This interplay can be seen in the concepts of mediation and remediation since all media mediates “between us (as readers, viewers, listeners) and past experiences” (Erll and Rigney 3). Furthermore, cultures try to “multiply its media and erase all traces of mediation” (Bolter and Grusin 5), which is the process of ‘remediation’. Remediation is logically double as “the goal is to provide a seemingly transparent window on the past, to make us forget the presence of the medium and instead present us with an unmediated memory” (Erll and Rigney 4). Therefore, cultural memory is mediated and there is a constant process of remediation in order to give the illusion that there never was any mediation. However, at the same time “there is no cultural memory prior to mediation” (Erll and Rigney 4). This ties back into the notion that memory is shaped by media but is at the same time actualized by individuals. This thesis will draw on

these theories of mediation and remediation in order to analyse how cultural memory is used in the three books.

The theory of cultural memory also filters into Carl Jung's theory of the archetypal theory. This theory postulates that there are "‘primordial images’, or archetypes" (Bodkin 1) which are then described as "‘psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type’, experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors" (Bodkin 1). These archetypes function on a subconscious level of thought rather than a conscious and are "a priori determinants of individual experience" (Bodkin 1). The archetypes of Jung can only be recognised if we accept that there is a collective cultural memory which influences our individual memory. However, these memories need to have a place of origin and they are continuously mediated and remediated, to the point that there is no beginning or end. Cultural memory and Jung's archetypes work in the present, but they are both realisations of a past that has been heavily mediated and remediated.

Investigating cultural memory necessarily entails getting to grips with "national memory with its 'invented traditions'" (Erl 2); Christmas is exactly such a memory, a way of framing a sense of society, both in the social present, and also in connection to an imagined past. Christmas falls within both individual and collective levels of cultural memory as every individual has a memory of past Christmases, but Christmas is also an amalgamation of several traditions and cultural memories which are society specific. In the case of English Christmas celebration there are the Christmas pudding, doused in brandy and lit, the Christmas crackers which its silly joke, paper hat and toy inside and the telling of ghost stories, amongst many other cherished Christmas traditions. These all frame a sense of Englishness, just as legends like Herne the Hunter, cultural memories of the Elizabethan era, and perhaps even the Church of England. Some of these traditions and cultural memories walk the fine line between tradition and folklore. T. O. Ranger and E. J. Hobsbawn first introduced the term, "invented tradition",

which “includes both ‘traditions’ actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity” (1). An example of such an ‘invented tradition’ is the introduction of the Christmas tree, which is now heavily associated with Christmas in England, but which was introduced around 1800 and did not become widespread until 1841 (Lejeune 550). Ranger and Hobsbawm note that:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. (1)

The act of establishing continuity is conceived along the lines of remediation as discussed by Erll and Rigney. *A Christmas Carol* especially uses ‘invented tradition’ as it attempts to establish a new way of celebrating Christmas. The other two books also use ‘invented tradition’ in the figure of Herne the Hunter; both books represent Herne as a pre-Christian figure, whilst his origins lie in Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1577-1602).

As already mentioned, traditions and cultural memories sometimes incorporate aspects from folklore. This thesis uses Alan Dundes’ basic methodology for studying folklore in literature and culture – which “provided a foundation for a distinctive modern discipline of folkloristics” (Bronner 67) – in order to locate and analyse the usage of folklore and the uncanny. In the methodology proposed by Dundes there are only two steps: *identification* and *interpretation*. Identification “consists of a search for similarities” and is thus “objective and empirical” (Dundes 70). Interpretation “depends upon the delineation of differences” and a need “to show how it differs from previously reported items – and ... why it differs” which makes this step “subjective and speculative” (Dundes 70). Through his focus on “interpretation”

instead of “explanation” Dundes steers the discussion towards “possibility of meaning, instead of positing causation” (Bronner 68). Neil Grobman followed up on Dundes’ methodology in *A Schema for the Study of the Sources and Literary Simulations of Folkloric Phenomena*, Grobman proposes twelve different literary modes, four categories with three variables in each category. The three variables are used to determine how the author found the material are: through participation in native tradition, through observations of the people the materials are borrowed from, or through the study of literary sources. These variables can then be applied to the four categories. These categories are used to describe the purpose of the material: “to give verisimilitude and local color”, “to make a point or make traditions more universally and popularly understood”, “as models for production of folklore-like material”, or “as a source for metaphorical language or structural symbolism” (Grobman 28-30, qtd. in Sullivan III 144). The variables suggested by Grobman will not be used as this thesis focusses more on ‘interpretation’ instead of ‘explanation’. The categories will be used, in this thesis, as stepping stones for deeper analysis of how the elements from folklore and other folklore-like material are used by the three novelists in their respective works.

Christmas acts as a union of cultural and religious aspects. The distinction between these aspects has been obscured throughout the years and, thus, this union is always under strain. This amalgamation of aspects originates from the past and therefore conveys a cultural residue; Christmas is a celebration which predominantly deals with the past and cultural memory. The origins of Christmas will be briefly explored in the next chapter in order to come to a better understanding of how the cultural and religious aspects are interwoven and the problems this causes. All three books deal with the Christmas union in their own way. However, each book draws strength from the past and memory, through personal memory, cultural memory or time travel. These two aspects will be further explored per book in chapters two to four. *A Christmas*

Carol, *The Box of Delights* and *The Dark is Rising*, represent the harmony of Christmas and each of them draws on the past and memory; personal or cultural.

Chapter 1. Historical Background

The Christmas harmony which the three novels explore can be traced all the way back to its origins which lie in both pagan winter festivals and early Christian theology. Early Christians did not celebrate Christmas as “the death and resurrection of Jesus were the center of the early Christian message” (*Christmas a Candid History* 17), and therefore Easter held a more important place in early Christian commemorations. The first textual evidence of a celebration of December 25 places it in 336 or 354 (*Christmas a Candid History* 26). The early Eastern Orthodox church knew the feast of Epiphany which falls on January 6th and celebrates “several ways that Jesus was made manifest in the World as the son of God (*Christmas a Candid History* 24). In 567 the Council of Tours proclaimed the days between Christmas and Epiphany to be a sacred and festive season; the Twelve days of Christmas, in addition to establishing Advent fasting in preparation for the feast of Christmas (Hynes 8, Martindale “Christmas”, *Christmas a Candid History* 27). At this point of time Epiphany, in the western Church, had become the celebration of the arrival of the wise men (*Christmas a Candid History* 27).

It is unclear why Christmas falls on December 25th. Roll notes that there are two major hypotheses which place Christ’s birth on the 25th of December. The calculation hypothesis, which focusses on theological arguments for choosing said date; and the history of religions hypothesis, which utilises other pagan religious feasts to come to the same conclusion. According to the Calculation hypothesis the early clerical leaders of the Christian church only allowed perfect whole numbers, as they were more appropriate to God. Therefore great figures lived a whole number of years, which meant that they died on their birthdays or, in the case of Christ, the day of conception due to the “salvific significance of the Word-becoming-flesh in the womb of Mary” (88 Roll). If therefore the passing of Christ took place on the 25th of March his birthdate would then be a perfect nine months later, 25 December (88 Roll). The History of Religions hypothesis on the other hand is based on the “striking series of historical

coincidences” (107 Roll) between Christmas and the roman feast celebrating the birth of the sun; Natalis Solis Invicti. These historical coincidences are, firstly, that the calendar dates of both feasts are the same, 25 December. Secondly, it can be argued that the perceived period during which Christmas could have developed coincides with the height of the Roman state-supported sun worship (roughly 243-366 C.E.). Finally, we may consider the numerous analogies between Christ and the sun in several clerical writings created over the centuries (108 Roll). Early Christians opted to adopt and ‘Christianize’ many of the traditions and practices of the non-Christian cultures in order to absorb and baptize them.

The pagan elements in Christmas can be traced to the Roman winter festivals: Saturnalia; the celebration and veneration of the god Saturn, the Natalis Solis Invicti, and the January Kalends; a Roman version of our current New Year’s Eve which lasted for five days and included the induction into office of the consuls (*Christmas a Candid History* 28). Some of these shared elements are the decorating with greenery; “laurel, green trees, and shrubs” (*Christmas a Candid History* 8), the use of lights and gift giving. These particular elements can also be found in the Germanic winter festival of Yule; now a Christmas folk name (Roll 127) which survives in yule logs, as bonfires and candles were lit and evergreen branches were hung on doorposts to ward off evil spirits. Yule also incorporated the telling of ghost stories: “Viking winter oral traditions contain . . . such tales” (*Christmas a Candid History* 12), a tradition which is continued by Dickens. Two other elements are a general abundance and a feeling of generosity:

Everywhere may be seen carousals and well-laden tables; luxurious abundance is found in the houses of the rich, but also in the houses of the poor better food than usual is put upon the table. The impulse to spend seizes everyone. He who the whole year through has taken pleasure in saving and piling up his pence, becomes suddenly extravagant. . . . People are not only generous towards themselves, but also towards their fellow-men. A

stream of presents pours itself out on all sides . . . The Kalends festival banishes all that is connected with toil, and allows men to give themselves up to undisturbed enjoyment.

(Libanius qtd. in Miles 168)

The tendency to spend more, even amongst the poor, is reflected in both *A Christmas Carol*; through the description of the Cratchit Christmas dinner, and *The Dark Is Rising*; where “Miss Bell . . . put[s] some coins that they knew she could not afford into the collecting box” (122). This generosity is also found in the “Saturnalian Golden Age” as one of its main themes is abundance, with the other being equality (*Christmas a Candid History* 8). Equality also remains a theme in Christmas through the tradition of the mock king: it originates in “*the topsy-turvy world of the Saturnalia*” where the privilege of wining and dining was extended, for one meal, to the household slaves (Beard, et al. 124, *Christmas a Candid History* 9). The mock king most likely influenced similar instances like the boy bishops of medieval France and Switzerland; a boy was chosen to be bishop for a day (*Christmas a Candid History* 9, Mackenzie), the lords of misrule in late medieval and early modern England; who presided over merrymaking during many festival, summer and winter (*Christmas a Candid History* 9, Barber 25-31), and the later king or queen of the bean. The nativity story can be seen as the ultimate instance of misrule as a part of the omnipotent, all-creating God is transferred to a powerless baby. This element of power reversal can also be found in Masfield and Cooper with their child protagonists who are given sources of power. The role reversal can be found in Dickens too, as the impoverished Cratchits are better at keeping the spirit of Christmas than Scrooge. Similarly, in Cooper, Merriman is a butler to the feeble Miss Greythorne. Finally, the idea of “peace on Earth” stems from both the Bible (*Authorized King James Bible*, Luke. 2.14) and from the Saturnalian Golden Age; according to legend Saturn presided over an “era of prosperity, peace and happiness” (*Christmas a Candid History* 7-8), and has become part of popular culture through many Christmas carols and songs. This theme is only truly reflected in *A Christmas Carol* where the

Spirit of Christmas Present acts as a peacemaker, similar to Jesus and Saturn. Masfield and Cooper both reflect on the idea of peace on Earth but, as both their novels deal with a conflict between good and evil, they cannot incorporate it.

This struggle of good against evil, or light against darkness, is found generally throughout the bible but also in Yule; light was used to protect against the dark, and its relation to the Wild Hunt. The Wild Hunt is one of “the great cavalcade[s] of the dead” (*The Fairies* 48) and “the troop typically appeared during the holy twelve nights between Christmas and Epiphany” (Kershaw 21). According to Kris Kershaw the Wild Hunt originates from religious cults surrounding Odin who based it on Odin’s legion of Einherjar’s, which are the spirits of those who had fallen in battle and who had been deemed worthy and heroic enough to join Odin in the afterlife to drink and feast (Kershaw 13-40). Ronald Hutton proposes a different definition of the Wild Hunt as a “modern construction, derived largely from the work of Grimm” (“The Wild Hunt and the Witches’ Sabbath” 175), and that it is only from the eleventh century that there is ‘real’ textual evidence of such processions (“The Wild Hunt and the Witches’ Sabbath” 166). According to Hutton the Wild Hunt is either: a procession of female spirits and privileged humans led by a goddess like figure focussed on beneficial deeds, a lone huntsman, usually portrayed as either demonic, cursed or otherworldly, who hunts down sinners or otherworldly prey, or the human dead who tumultuously wander the land for their sins. The Wild Hunt makes its appearance in the conclusion of *The Dark Is Rising*, but can also be found remediated in the wandering sinners in *A Christmas Carol* of which Marley is a part of. All these various elements have been gathered throughout the history of Christmas and yoked together leading to the unity of Christmas.

This unity of religious and pagan aspects in Christmas was realised by “churchmen [who] variously execrated, amputated, tolerated, allegorised, adapted and incorporated existing customs” (Murray 36), which created a tension between these aspects. This tension can be seen

in early Christians who still adhered to their pagan beliefs: “some Christians bowed to the rising sun before entering the basilica, and he was ‘full of grief and vexation’ at such a remnant of ‘old superstition.’ (Talley 100)” (*Christmas a Candid History* 31). Another instance of these tensions is the puritan attempt to end the celebration of Christmas in England, which reached its peak during the Interregnum (1649-1660) (Durston). The Puritans disliked Christmas because they considered it to be a “popish intrusions” which needed to be discarded, and because Christmas and its twelve days were marked by immoral behaviour (*Christmas a Candid History* 56). One puritan, Joseph Hemming a Presbyterian minister in Staffordshire, argued that Christmas was wrong because of the uncertainty of Christ’s birth, lack of scriptural basis and because it was a “superstitious relic of popery” which was based on the pagan winter festivals (Durston 10). This led to the 1644 Parliament declaration that Christmas was a day of penance instead of feasting and the 1652 proclamation that: “no observance shall be had of the five and twentieth of December, commonly called Christmas day, nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof” (qtd. in *Christmas a Candid History* 57). However, this Puritan attack led to a more aggressive literary, and sometimes physical, defence of the traditions of Christmas (Durston 9). Even nowadays certain groups do not celebrate Christmas, for example the Jehovah’s Witnesses who “believe that Christmas is not approved by God because it is rooted in pagan customs and rites” (“Why Don’t Jehovah’s Witnesses Celebrate Christmas”). The harmony in Christmas is difficult to maintain. As Stephen Nissenbaum argues, Christmas was a compromise by the Church from the beginning and “there were always people for whom Christmas was a time of pious devotion rather than carnival, but such people were always on the minority”, the Church thus holds a rather tenuous hold over Christmas (7-8). This tenuous hold of the Church over Christmas is explored and used by all three works of fiction explored in this thesis, either through the absence of the Church or by making the Church helpless. However, where the afore-mentioned tensions in Christmas are still present in current

debates on Christmas, they are not explored in the novels as they attempt to create a harmonious version of Christmas.

Thus, Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus and the redemption that he brings with him, which incorporates Roman and Germanic winter festival customs and practices. The incorporation of these pagan elements has led to many debates over the validity of Christmas which still rage on today. Therefore, the union of Christmas is always under attack. The three books make use of the religious and pagan themes and elements in Christmas. The two later books also include elements and themes from folklore in general, though these are still tied in to Christmas and winter. The inclusion of both sets of elements by the three books leads to the realisation of the unity of Christmas. However, only Masfield realises this unity as a harmonious one. Cooper focusses on the pagan elements, whereas Dickens focusses on the Christian aspects of charity and kindness.

2: *A Christmas Carol*

A Christmas Carol (1843) by Charles Dickens is one of, if not the, most well-known tales set in the Christmas period. It has influenced how we now perceive a Victorian Christmas. Furthermore, it has influenced the way how we now celebrate Christmas itself. This is part of what Phillip Collins calls the *Carol's* 'institutional status' in Western culture (148). According to popular belief the English Christmas was single-handedly invented by Dickens. However, as Michael Slater notes "the case is rather that he was hugely influential, primarily as a result of the *Carol's* tremendous and enduring popularity" ("introduction" xii). Another way in which the tale is still influential is through its many stage, film and television adaptations.

A Christmas Carol endorses a return to 'merry England', though this return includes what were in fact some innovations in the idea of Christmas. It unites, seasonal traditions like Father Christmas and Christmas as a celebration for adults, with the Victorian ideal of the family as cornerstone of the society. Dickens further incorporates aspects of charity and care for the poor. *A Christmas Carol* thus attempts to remediate the cultural memory of Christmas and revitalise it as a Victorian celebration. As Walder notes: "Dickens wishes to convert his readers ... to [a worldview] in which love, charity and hope are dominant" not through "theological or institutional features of Christmas" but instead through Christian charity and "that 'nobler power' which reveals ... how ultimately the hard heart may be softened through childhood memories" (121-122). *A Christmas Carol* does not just draw on cultural memory, it also explores the individual's relationship personal memory; Scrooge is set on his path of redemption through his recollections of his past experiences. Memories are also imparted into everyday objects – such as the knocker of Scrooge's front door – in order to create what James E. Marlow calls: "the expressive symbol" (23). The use of these 'expressive symbols' highlights Dickens' use of fancy, the marvellous and the uncanny in *A Christmas Carol*; this is an aspect of the text further highlighted by it being a ghost tale. *A Christmas Carol*, with its interest in

the marvellous and uncanny, also follows a greater interest in the pagan aspects of English cultural memory. Many writers of the time – such as Felicia Hemans, Thomas Keightley, Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Crofton Croker in Ireland – show an interest in the pre-Christian cultural heritage and the fantastical aspects of this heritage. This interest manifests itself also in translations of European fairy-tales and works focussed on folklore and legend; such as the works of Grimm, Andersen and Perrault.

A Christmas Carol therefore deals predominantly with redemption and memory; Dickens utilises Scrooge's personal memories to eventually redeem him. Scrooge is set on the path towards redemption through his encounter with the Spirit of Christmas Past. James E. Marlow notes that: "the Spirit of Christmas Past [is a] personification of Dickens's belief in Romance" (23). Romance here denotes the influence of the Romantic poets like Wordsworth who "felt that Nature had a beneficial influence on the spirit" (Marlow 22), a feeling which Dickens shared. Many characters – Tom Pinch, Eugene Wrayburn and David Copperfield – in Dickens's novels are softened or humanized through their engagement with nature (Marlow 22). However, as Marlow also notes: "Dickens ... came to realize that if he were to reconcile the human heart to the world he must somehow do it among the [works of man] that Wordsworth had disdained" (23). Dickens infuses London and everyday objects with fancy and spirit: "the unusual and unexpected could again expand the boundaries of a finite, temporal reality" (Marlow 23), thereby becoming 'expressive symbols'. This is shown in *A Christmas Carol* through, for example, the knocker on Scrooge's front door. The first time that Scrooge sees it, it has taken the shape of Marley's face: "... Scrooge ... saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face" ("*A Christmas Carol*" 42). After the spirits have visited Scrooge, he sees the knocker again: "'I shall love it, as long as I live!' cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. 'I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker!'" (113),

Scrooge has come to associate the knocker with the start of his change. Therefore, the knocker has become more than just a simple knocker which Scrooge hardly ever looked at; rather, it has become a reminder of his journey to being a better man with an honest expression on his face. The use of 'expressive symbols', such as the knocker, is an attempt by Dickens to "reconcile mankind (and, undoubtedly, himself) to the world" (Marlow 21), by associating everyday worldly objects with a greater sense of life and memory. To this end Dickens uses memory, both cultural and personal, as: "to have memories of any kind is to be softened, for an awareness of the past dissolves the tyranny of the present, creates a reality that is more vital and rich in interconnections than that which fits only this instant of time" (Marlow 23). Apart from being a personification of romance, the Spirit of Christmas past is also a personification of memory. The Spirit, in response to the question which past, tells Scrooge: "Your past" (55), Scrooge's memories. In addition, at the end of the Stave the Spirit physically takes on Scrooge's memories: "He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him" ("*A Christmas Carol*" 69-70). This is further shown through the Spirit's initial description:

It was a strange figure – like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But

the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap. (“*A Christmas Carol*” 54-55)

The description of the spirit is both concrete and vague, giving it an unsettling effect. The character is both young; “like a child”, and old; “like an old man” (54-55), which has as effect that it becomes impossible to create a clear image of the character. It may be thought that it is similarly impossible to create a clear and concrete image of a memory. The depiction of the Spirit as both young and old also highlights the notion that memories are present remembrances of the past; the old Scrooge relives parts of his own youth. According to Ernst Van Alphen, memories “are representations of the past” which have a narrative form that connects them to the formations of an identity and that, moreover, they “have a constructive effect” (36). This constructive effect can be seen in Scrooge’s reaction when he is shown his memory of his school time: “‘I wish,’ Scrooge muttered ... ‘Nothing,’ said Scrooge. ‘Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something; that’s all.’” (59). The sight of his past self being alone on Christmas causes him to feel “pity for his former self” (59) and reminds him of the boy singing carols who he chased away. This memory; “with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character” (59), causes Scrooge to merge his past self and the boy singing carols, and sets him on his path of redemption. According to Arthur P. Patterson: “memory, not moralism, is the motive for Scrooge’s charitable impulses” (173), as can be seen in his recollection of the carol singer who Scrooge now wants to give some money. Furthermore, Patterson notes that the uncapping of the Spirit of Christmas Past is indicative of Scrooge’s memories now being ‘forced’ upon him, as “Scrooge attempted to repress his recollection of the past, especially the feelings of his past” (173). Scrooge “had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered”

(56), in order to hide his own memories. As Patterson notes: “The *Carol* implies that Scrooge’s present insensitivity is the result of stifling the memory of his own early suffering and his experience of simple human joys” (173), and that the Spirit of Christmas Past through showing Scrooge his memories is causing Scrooge’s heart to melt and mend. However, Scrooge is eventually successful in putting the cap back on his memories as: “he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head” (70). Though this does not negate the effect that the Spirit had on Scrooge, as: “[Scrooge] could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in a unbroken flood upon the ground” (70). Scrooge attempts to repress his own memories, but is unsuccessful in doing so: “remembering is an act of vulnerability and courage” (Patterson 173). By allowing the Spirit in for the first time Scrooge has made himself vulnerable to the emotions and memories he repressed so long ago. *A Christmas Carol* uses Scrooge’s own memories in addition to ‘expressive symbols’ to set him on his path of redemption.

Scrooge’s redemption is part of a greater redemption that Dickens had in mind for English Christmas celebrations. *A Christmas Carol* is not just a representation of a Victorian English Christmas, it is also an attempt to re-create Christmas: “Dickens was an advocate in the controversies of his day, encouraging the revival or reinvention of Christmas traditions, persuading businesses to close for the holiday, and promoting acts of kindness and charity as an appropriate focus” (“Christmas” 30). One of these Christmas traditions which Dickens reinvents is the figure of Father Christmas. During the Puritan rule of the Interregnum Father Christmas had been dubbed a propagator of immoral behaviour: He “from time to time, abused the people of this Commonwealth, drawing and inticing them to Drunkenness, Gluttony, and unlawful Gaming, Wantonness, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Cursing, Swearing, Abuse of the Creatures, some to one Vice, some to another; all the Idleness” (Hearn qtd. in *Christmas: A Candid History*). Father Christmas is remediated by Dickens in *The Spirit of Christmas Present*; Jacqueline Simpson and Stephen Rood, in their definition of Father Christmas, state that: “one

famous image [of Father Christmas] was John Leech's illustration for Dickens's *Christmas Carol* (1843), where the gigantic Ghost of Christmas Present, sitting among piled-up food and drink, wears exactly the kind of fur-trimmed loose gown of the modern Father Christmas" (120). Father Christmas, as argued by Simpson and Rood, was often depicted as an instigator and advocator of merriment and drinking (119-120), and in the 1840s he is shown "variously as a reveller in Elizabethan costume grasping a tankard, a wild, holly-crowned giant pouring wine, or a lean figure striding along carrying a wassail bowl and a log" (Simpson 120). The similarities between the two characters are made clear when taking Dickens' description of the Spirit into account:

It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free: free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust. (*"A Christmas Carol"* 74)

The "holly-crowned giant" and advocator of merriment, as given by Simpson and Rood, are clearly echoed in this description. However, where the Puritans deemed Father Christmas to be immoral Dickens creates a character who unites the former aspects of merriment and abundance; shown through his demeanour and the many descriptions of food in the chapter, with a Christian sense of peace-making and charity.

Food takes a prominent place in Christmas celebrations with the many dishes only eaten during or associated with Christmas time. There are many depictions and lists of food

throughout *A Christmas Carol*, but most of these are within “Stave Three”. The throne of food on which the Spirit of Christmas Present sits springs to mind most easily. When the Spirit takes Scrooge out into the street they are greeted by: “great round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentleman, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence” (“*A Christmas Carol*”, 75). After that, descriptions follow of pears, apples, grapes, filberts and many more, which highlights the gluttony the Puritans so despised. There is also an acknowledgement of the wantonness that was attributed to Christmas by the Puritans: “There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars; and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glance demurely at the hung-up mistletoe” (75). The onions both wink in wanton slyness at girls to attract their (sexual) attention but also look demurely at the mistletoe (and Christmas). By comparing the onions to Spanish Friars Dickens perhaps subtly comments on the Puritan accusation that Christmas is a popish festival. These similes highlight the old ‘Elizabethan’ way of celebrating Christmas. The almost page long description of just food-based items is followed by: “But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came” (“*A Christmas Carol*” 76-77). The people going to Church is followed by: “at the same time there merged from scores of bye streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers’ shops” (77), which are the poor who go to warm their dinners. The Spirit sprinkles incense on their dinners, which is best applied “to a poor one” as “it needs it most” (77). The Spirit is showcasing his capability to be charitable, which the poor need the most. Dickens uses these two passages to highlight his union of old traditions: the almost gluttonous consumption of food, and the new ideas about Christmas: the charity showcased by the Spirit. Dickens also ridicules the Puritan complaints by using food items to showcase the problems; a slothful chestnut or wanton onion are still just a chestnut and onion at the end of the day.

Puritans also accused Christmas of being a season when: “more mischief is that time committed than in all the year besides, what masking and mumming, whereby robbery whoredom, murder and what not is committed” (Stubbes qtd. in Durston 8). Dickens uses the Spirit of Christmas Present to alter the idea that Christmas is, if we can believe Philip Stubbes, a time of fighting. The Spirit of Christmas Present is a peace-bringer: “it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly” (77). Jesus Christ is denoted as the messiah, which also indicates Christ to be a peace-bringer. Dickens creates a comparison between the two characters by having the Spirit bring peace. Unbeknownst Dickens also creates a comparison with Saturn who decreed that in the Saturnalia “no one may be ill-tempered or cross or threaten anybody” (Lucian qtd. in *Christmas: A Candid History* 8). By presenting the Spirit as a peace-bringer Dickens takes Christmas back to its pagan Roman roots in the Saturnalia. There is a possibility that Dickens would have known about the idea of the Saturnalia as the precursor of Christmas, as the Puritans used this argument to have Christmas banned. For example, Joseph Hemming, in 1648, argued that: “Christmas had begun as a Christian version of the Roman mid-winter feast of the Saturnalia” (qtd. in Durston 10). The Cornucopia which the Spirit holds is another mention of the origins of Christmas. The horn is: “fabled to be the horn of the goat Amalthea by which the infant Zeus was suckled; the symbol of fruitfulness and plenty” (“cornucopia, n. Etymology”), but the Spirit “sprinkled incense ... from his torch” (“*A Christmas Carol*” 77). Through this harmony between Greek and Roman mythology and Christian application Dickens creates a harmony between the two origins of Christmas. The Spirit of Christmas Present is thus a union between the old traditions surrounding Christmas and the Victorian ideals of charity, mixed with Christian and Saturnalian notions of peace.

The cultural memory of Merry England is also shown through the parties given by Fezziwig and Scrooge's nephew Fred. These two realizations of Christmas are cultural memories as they follow the custom of pre-Victorian Christmas where the focus lay on adult revelries:

many Christmas festivities were adult activities, such as feasting and drinking at the village tavern, attending seasonal plays, and gathering at the parish church. Servants reversed roles with those in positions of power, and young men went from house to house, wassailing and often coercing rewards. Early, medieval, and Reformation era Christmases were more about masses at church and festivities in the village, with involvement mostly by adults, and the home was not the overwhelming focus.

(Christmas: A Candid History 65)

Fezziwig's Christmas party is only for the adults: "In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business" (62). There is mention of both a boy and girl who try to enter but the boy is: "trying to hide himself" and the girl "had her ears pulled by her Mistress", which signals that neither of them should really be there. Fred's Christmas party is also particularly devoid of any children. These two Christmas celebrations thus can be seen as connected to the Elizabethan and medieval celebration of Christmas.

The Christmas celebration shown through the Cratchits is the family-based Christmas which became more popular during the Victorian era. When Bob Cratchit is told that Martha is not coming, he reacts: "'Not Coming!' said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; ... 'Not coming upon Christmas Day!'" (79). The idea that his daughter would miss Christmas with the family is shattering to Bob, and it shows that such an act was socially unacceptable within the Victorian ideal of the family. The increasingly important role of family in Christmas can be traced to a more general tendency in the 19th century. Jeffrey Weeks notes about the 19th

century that: “the family, not the individual, was regarded as the basic unit of society and increasingly a substitute for lost faith” (24). This a change from “the cohesive solidarity of the medieval kin”, which included not just parents and direct offspring but the broader familial unit of cousins and more distant familial relations. According to Weeks this shift in ideology was:

a product both of political crisis – the fear of social disintegration for which the breakdown of familial and sexual order became a striking metaphor – and of the self-development of an increasingly dominant class. One important element can be traced to the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century which laid the foundations of Victorian domesticity and challenged ruling-class immorality. (27)

The Oxford Movement, also called the Tractarians, had by the later 1830s begun taking an interest in the worship and devotion of the medieval Church. This reflected a more “general revival of interest in the Middle Ages as well as the early Church that was also finding expression in Romantic literature, especially the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott” (Brown and Nockles 2). In addition: “Some Tractarians went beyond a traditional high church insistence on observance of the rubrics and called for ... the marking of saints’ days and festivals of the Christian Year” (Brown and Nockles 2), which includes Christmas. The Oxford Movement was also:

A response to the predominant evangelical ethos ... with its emphases on individual piety, the conversion experience, justification by faith and personal bible study and its sense that the Ordinances of the Church were relatively unimportant when compared to the religion of the heart. (Turner qtd. in Brown and Nockles 1)

The evangelical influence on the Victorian era is highlighted by its influence on the growing importance of the family as demonstrated by Weeks. *The Spirit of Christmas Present* shows that family is more than just direct offspring. From the miner’s family: “An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children’s children, and another generation beyond that”

(85), to the two men in the lighthouse and the people on the ship, they all share a bond like or as a family and all celebrate Christmas together. Dickens shows that both versions of Christmas; adult-centred party and familial celebration, can be united through incorporating both versions and having them take place next to each other in harmony. Dickens, thereby, steps away from either the Oxford Movement or the Evangelical movement. By using all forms of celebration – family, small gathering of friends and large community – *A Christmas Carol* does not propagate a single form of Christmas celebration.

However, the importance of a form of family or community is still important, and it is echoed by Scrooge's reactions to family in the book. Scrooge is moved by seeing himself sitting alone during Christmas: he "wept to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be" (58). Also acknowledging that he sees himself as removed from his forgotten self, though he still is socially alone. Christmas is, from the Victorian era on, a time to spend with family and Scrooge has none. He has rejected Fred's Christmas invitation thereby rejecting his only family. Furthermore, Scrooge becomes especially emotional after seeing the family Belle now has, a family which he could have had: "when he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed" (68). A sense of family and a loss of family, which Scrooge has keenly felt, are also reasons why he is so moved by Tiny Tim's situation: "'Spirit,' said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, 'tell me if Tiny Tim will live.'" (82). The idea that the happy Cratchit family will be disturbed by the death of their youngest son causes Scrooge to feel remorse for his earlier remarks about the surplus. When he and the Spirit leave the Cratchits "Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last" (84). In addition to his personal memories, the ideal of family is used by Dickens to prompt Scrooge's redemption, thereby also reflecting upon its importance in Victorian society.

A Christmas Carol is among other things a ghost story as the full title, *A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*, indicates. The act of reading ghost stories at Christmas can be traced all the way back to pagan Viking customs of Yule. Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* during a period when the marvellous and uncanny became more prominent as seen in the increase of interest in folklore and fairy tales. Felicia Hemans wrote her poem *The Wild Huntsman* in 1823, which records the legend of the Wild Hunt and its links to the Rhine area. Thomas Keightley wrote his *Fairy Mythology* in 1828, which is a work “central to Victorian fairy lore” (Silver 29) in which Keightley does what the Grimm Brothers had done earlier in Germany. Crucially the Victorians were not just interested in their own writings on folklore but also in the Germanic writings; the most notable of these is of course the work of the Grimm brothers, with a selection of their fairy tales being translated by Edgar Taylor in 1823, and the *Deutsche Mythologie*, which was eventually translated into English by James Steven Stallybrass in 1880. Opera was another way of showcasing the Germanic myths with *Der Freischütz* (The Marksman or The Freeshooter) being the most interesting, as this opera by Carl Maria von Weber has an appearance of the Wild Hunt through the character of Samiel the ‘Black Huntsman’ and which was performed four times in London in 1824. The prominent Danish fairy-tale writer Hans Christian Andersen also wrote his work during the 19th century. His *Wonderful Stories for Children* was published in 1845 and *Danish Fairy Tales and Legends* was published in 1846. Charles Perrault’s fairy-tales had been translated by Robert Samber in 1729, but during the 19th century his work was revisited by the brothers Grimm in 1812 and by Andrew Lang in 1888. The Victorian era thus shows a greater interest in fairy-tales and other forms of folklore.

Dickens himself was also interested in fairy-tales and the marvellous, which is shown in *A Christmas Carol* through the inclusion of Ali Baba. The appearance of Ali Baba in *A Christmas Carol*, though puzzling at first, is explained through the fact that “all his life Dickens

retained a great love of [*The Arabian Nights*]” (“Appendix III” 269). This love for *The Arabian Nights* signals a love for the marvellous in general. This is echoed by the following passage written by Dickens from *Household Words*:

In an utilitarian age, of all other times, it is a matter of grave importance that Fairy tales should be respected. Our English red tape is too magnificently red ever to be employed in the tying up of such trifles, but every one who has considered the subject knows full well that a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun. (“Frauds on the Fairies” 97)

Dickens continues by creating a version of Cinderella in which all elements one could deem unwanted are edited, so it turns into a didactic tale. He concludes by saying: “the world is too much with us, early and late. Leave this precious old escape from it, alone” (“Frauds on the Fairies” 100), a plea to leave the fanciful as it is and not subvert it. Some contemporary critics accuse Dickens of: “mere pictorial allegory without any pretence or belief in supernatural power, Grace, or anything like that” (House qtd. in Walder 124) and a “mixed mockery of German diablerie, and fairies, and Socinianism” (Horne qtd. in Walder 124). The use of the fancy can be traced to the greater interest - in folklore, fairy-tales and even Gothic elements like the Wild Hunt - of the 19th century.

The Marley scene, for example, highlights Dickens’ use of the uncanny. Jacob Marley, through his depiction and demeanour, is associated with Herne the Hunter from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597-1601):

There is an old tale goes, that Herne the Hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragged horns,
And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,

And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain

In a most hideous and dreadful manner.

You have heard of such a spirit (Shakespeare 4.4. 24-31)

The ghost of Marley shows similar behaviour: “The Ghost ... set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night” (48-49). Thereby, Marley becomes another tribute to the Elizabethan era. The troop of ghostly sinners to which Marley belongs accentuates the Gothic elements in *A Christmas Carol*. They are also reminiscent of one of the versions of the Wild Hunt: the human dead who tumultuously wander the land for their sins (“The Wild Hunt and the Witches’ Sabbath” 166). Marley acknowledges to Scrooge that “[he] cannot rest, [he] cannot stay, [he] cannot linger anywhere. ... weary journeys lie before [him]” (“*A Christmas Carol*” 48). Which is consistent with the “sinful human huntsman, condemned to roam without rest as a penance” (“The Wild Hunt and the Witches’ Sabbath” 164) found in the many variants of the Wild Hunt. Marley continues by saying: “‘at this time of the rolling year,’ ... ‘I suffer most’” (“*A Christmas Carol*” 49). At first glance this appears as merely punishment for his greed in life, but if the above mentioned aspect of the Wild Hunt, in addition to the time of the year in which the Wild Hunt appeared, is taken into account it strengthens the allusion to the Wild Hunt in this passage. When Marley leaves Scrooge he joins the other sinners in the night: “the air filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley’s Ghost ... none were free” (“*A Christmas Carol*” 52), the allusion which can be drawn from this is that Marley belongs to a Wild Hunt like host of other dead sinners forced to wander the land. Furthermore, Marley warns Scrooge not to come too close: “when they were within two paces of each other, Marley’s Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer” (“*A Christmas Carol*” 50), which is reminiscent of the belief that people seeing the Wild Hunt led to their death or abduction (*An Encyclopedia of Fairies* 233). Marley and the ghosts in the night thus unite ghostly figures like

Herne and the members of the Wild Hunt. Though not part of Christmas, Dickens' use of the uncanny, gothic and fantastical highlights both the greater interest in folklore of the 19th century and the associations between winter and the outside dark which must be warded off by light.

The greater interest in Christmas traditions, of which *A Christmas Carol* is a product, is related to: "The growth of a taste for the picturesque as well as to Tory nostalgia for the 'good old days' of a more settled state of society, acceptance of hierarchy and supposed class harmony" (Slater xiii), it was also: "Inspired by zeal for promoting the exercise of Christian charity" (Slater xiii). *A Christmas Carol* thus follows a more general tendency in Victorian society: on the one hand there is a resurgence of and interest in cultural memory; the Elizabethan era and the medieval, but on the other hand there is also a shift away from these times with a focus on Christian charity and the family as basic unit of society. *A Christmas Carol* thus acts as a union between the two old and new ways of Christmas by merging and having them act out alongside each other. It further uses memory to highlight the power of this particular medium, both cultural and personal, to enkindle a change in Britain's celebration of Christmas. Dickens thus uses cultural memory, and Christmas archetypes like Father Christmas, to create a familiar Christmas. This familiar Christmas is used to highlight the Victorian ideal of family and the need for Christian charity.

Chapter Three: John Masefield's *The Box of Delights*

John Masefield's *The Box of Delights* (1935) is the loose sequel to *The Midnight Folk* (1927) and deals with the question: "Would it be possible to stop a cathedral service – and, by extension, Christmas – from happening?" (Torday). The book is a true Christmas tale as David Barnett asks: "can there be a more Christmassy book, this side of old Ebenezer's adventures with his trio of spirits, than *The Box of Delights* by John Masefield", thus placing it in the same realm as *A Christmas Carol*. Masefield unites pagan and Christian elements in a harmony where both are equally important. The tale follows the adventures of young Kay Harker during Christmas in his efforts to keep a magic box, given to him by Cole Hawlings, from the dark forces of the evil magician Abner Brown. During his adventures Kay ends up rescuing his friends and saving Christmas. On his adventures, both in the real world and the fantastical world entered through the box, Kay meets Herne the Hunter and the mysterious Lady of the Oak who end up helping him. The box not only allows the owner to experience the many wonders inside of it, it also allows them to shrink ("go small"), fly swiftly to wherever they want to go ("go fast") and to travel to the past. According to Piers Torday, "Masefield took the Victorian and Edwardian fantasy of Christmas ... and reminded us of the midwinter feast's true origins", highlighting the connection the book makes between Christmas and its pagan origins. Torday continues by saying that: "[Masefield] made the feast of the nativity as much a time to celebrate the legend of Herne the Hunter, Arthurian legend and Roman myth, as the son of God". Masefield mixes Christian Christmas practices with the many pagan legends and feasts which were assimilated into Christmas. Torday notes the many similarities *The Box of Delights* has with several well-known fantasy novels steeped in pagan legend and custom – such as *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) and *The Dark Is Rising* – and that Masefield was one of the first who "allowed the darkness and mystery of old magic to seep into the modern light".

This chapter focusses on how *The Box of Delights* attempts to create a harmony between Christianity and Paganism in Christmas. There are many references to the pagan legend; from the inclusion of Herne the Hunter to the mysterious Lady of the Oak. Masfield takes the figure of Herne the Hunter and depicts him more as a Green Man. The harmony of Christmas is realised in the character of Cole Hawlings, a Punch and Judy man who later turns out to be the medieval Spanish philosopher Ramon Llull. Through its use of pagan legends and English history Masfield steepens his work in cultural memory. Personal memory also plays an important part as, the entire adventure might have played out in Kay's dreams and is based on his personal memories from his previous adventure. Masfield thus creates an almost perfect harmony between Christianity and paganism in Christmas. Masfield uses cultural memory, personal memory and the Green Man archetype in order to realise this harmony.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Herne the Hunter originates in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where he is envisaged as a spirit who haunts Windsor forest, takes cattle and makes dairy cows produce blood instead of milk. Masfield creates a Herne who is more like a Green Man than the wailing spirit who haunts Shakespeare's play. The Green Man is: "a wonderful and mysterious being who wears many disguises – vegetative, animal, human, and suprahuman" (Matthews 6). He is both an embodiment of the "unfolding cycle of greenness and growth", and a mythological archetype who represents nature's spiritual intelligence, the cycle of the agricultural year and a demand to regain our connection with the natural world (Matthews 6). John Matthews states that Herne the Hunter is: "A character who forms an important link between the vegetative, animal, and human aspects of the Green Man" (114). Masfield uses this link to the archetype of the Green Man in order to create his version of Herne. Herne in *The Box of Delights* is a benevolent woodland spirit who assists Kay on his quest and saves him multiple times from predators when Kay first visits him in his fairyland realm:

While Kay was enjoying the water Herne asked, “Did you see the wolves in the wood?”

“No,” Kay said.

“Well, they were there,” Herne said; “that was why I moved. Did you see the hawks in the air?”

“No,” Kay said.

“Well, they were there,” Herne said; “and that was why I plunged. And do you see the pike in the weeds?”

“No,” Kay said.

“He is there,” Herne said. “Look.”

Looking ahead up the stream Kay saw a darkness of weeds wavering in the water, and presently a part of the darkness wavered into a shape with eyes that gleamed and hooky teeth that showed. Kay saw that the eyes were fixed upon himself and suddenly the dark shadow leaped swiftly forward with a swirl of water. But Kay and Herne were out of the water (Masefield “Chapter IV”).

The benevolent spirit envisaged by Masefield is seemingly far removed from the Herne from the legends. Herne transforms himself and Kay into deer, wild ducks, fish and men wearing antlers, thereby showing the same capabilities as the Green Man. Furthermore, the chapter in which Herne is introduced is called: “What is this Secret? Who can learn The Wild Wood better than from Herne?” (Masefield). This echoes the idea that: “by honouring the natural energy [the Green Man] personifies, we may yet find a way to reintegrate ourselves into our natural environment” (Matthews 119).

There are several similarities between the Herne from Shakespeare and the one from Masefield: the wearing of antlers, the association with the oak tree and the noise making. Herne wears “great ragged horns” (Shakespeare 4.4. 27) in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* which

Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen note resemble “the dead beast’s [stag] antlers [which] were tied to his head” (143 n.24). Herne in *The Box of Delights* is described as a man wearing antlers; “At first he thought that the figure was one of those giant red deer, long since extinct: it bore enormous antlers. Then he saw that it was a great man, antlered at the brow, dressed in deerskin and moving with the silent, slow grace of a stag” (“Chapter IV”). Furthermore, Herne can transform into a stag thus taking the association one step further to incorporation. The second aspect shared by both versions of Herne is the association with the oak, as in the original Shakespearean version Herne “walk round about an oak” (4.4. 27), which has led to the association with one specific oak in Windsor Park. Masefield’s Herne turns into an oak at the end of chapter IV; “somehow, the figure of Herne, which had been so stag-like, became like the oak-tree and merged into the oak-tree till Kay could see nothing but the tree” (“Chapter IV”). Masefield’s Herne, again, is not just associated with the oak tree but one of his forms is an actual oak, thereby taking the association between tree and figure further than the original legend does. This is one of the clearest links between Herne and the Green Man in the book. Finally, both versions of Herne make noise through chains. Shakespeare’s Herne “shakes a chain / In a most hideous and dreadful manner” (4.4. 29-30), whereas Herne in *The Box of Delights* is “hung about with little silver chains and bells” which produce a sound like that “of little chains chinking” (“Chapter IV”). Where the original Herne’s sound are dreadful and meant to terrify, the later version’s sound is more peaceful and used to indicate the link between Herne and the “strange rider who had passed [Kay] in the street” (“Chapter IV”). The use of ringing bells is also reminiscent of the entrance of the Green Knight in King Arthur’s court: “and twisted then on top was a tight-knitted knot / on which many burnished bells of bright gold jingled” (Tolkien 19). The Green Knight is also a manifestation of the Green Man, whose story also takes place during Christmastime (Matthews 86). Therefore, the link between the Green Man – and his relation to nature’s cyclical life – and Christmas is manifested in both Masefield’s

Herne and the medieval Green Knight. Masfield also uses the Wild Hunt, as when Kay travels to the past his shadow (or spirit) is pulled out of his sleeping body; “Kay felt that he became two Kays, one asleep at Seekings, the other beside Herne” (“Chapter X”). This resembles the common-held belief that people’s spirits could be pulled out of their sleeping bodies and forced to join the Wild Hunt (*The Pagan Religions* 307), an aspect that is only found in descriptions of the Wild Hunt and not in Shakespeare. Herne in *The Box of Delights* is thus a peaceful and benevolent manifestation of the Green Man archetype, modelled on Herne from the Wild Hunt and Shakespeare.

One of the most mysterious figures in *The Box of Delights* is most definitely the Lady of the Oak. When Kay first meets her he believes her to be “a White Lady who ‘walked’ out Duke’s Brook way” (“Chapter VI”) but she turns out to be the old lady who was standing outside of the shop in “Chapter I”. The Lady of the Oak appears to become younger every time Kay meets her: “the woman was now grown young before his eyes” (“Chapter VI”) and later “out of the Castle, to meet him, came the Lady who had feasted him in the oak-tree. ... She seemed to be about twenty now” (“Chapter IX”). Among popular modern pagan belief there is another goddess who takes on several ages namely Hecate, one example of this in Michael Scott’s *The Alchemyst* (2007) in which Hecate ages in a day. However, there is no evidence in Greek antiquity for this popular belief which, most likely, stems from either Hecate’s association with the moon or her association with other goddesses. The association with the oak is also mirrored in Hecate as Daniel Ogden notes that in the *Root-cutters*, a lost play by Sophocles, “Hecate is crowned with an oak branch and snakes” (83).

The Lady of the Oak is also another manifestation of the Green Man archetype. Matthews notes that: “divinities and spirits who represent the generative powers of the universe appear as complementary energies, masculine and feminine ... Gods and archetypes, whether male or female, influence both genders and cannot be restricted to one or the other (8). Herne

is the masculine manifestation of the Green Man, The Lady of the Oak is the feminine manifestation. As mentioned earlier Herne transforms into an Oak tree, the Lady of the Oak takes Kay into an oak: “The oak-tree opened behind Kay, the woman stepped within it drawing Kay with her. Instantly they were within the quiet of the tree” (“Chapter VI”). The association with nature, through the oak, highlights the: “harmonious combining of the dynamic energy of human life and the powerful life force of nature” (Matthews 8), which can be found in the Green Man. Furthermore, the regression of age can be seen as a subversion of the natural cycle of nature – nature dies during winter whereas the Lady becomes younger. Just like with Herne, Masfield appears to have taken aspects from several figures and archetypes in order to create the Lady of the Oak. She represents the feminine manifestation of magic and nature.

Herne the Hunter and the Lady of the Oak represent the winter partnership of the Green Man which stand for the aspects of that particular season (Matthews 134). The winter version of the Green Man represents: “the power of death that leads to renewed life” (88). Christmas, in a way, also incorporates this power: Firstly, through the associations with the Winter Solstice as the sun is ‘reborn’ around this time. Secondly, through the nativity story where Christ the redeemer is born on Earth only to die for our sins at Easter. It celebrates the birth of the one who has the power of death that will lead to renewed, sinless, life. Another aspect which the duo of Green Man like figure in *The Box of Delights* represents is the link with nature. Matthews notes: the winter version of the Green Man “entails reestablishing our connectedness with all life – animal and vegetable as well as human” (134). This re-establishing of our connectedness with life is shown through Herne’s and the Lady’s acts of connecting Kay with nature. These two figures thus represent the link between life, rebirth and nature and Christmas.

Cole Hawlings at the start of the book is a character heavily associated with the Pagan elements in the text. In *Seekings* he is a conjurer who creates a magical and wonderful show through the Box. Furthermore, it is the Box that enables Kay to visit Herne and the Lady of the

Oak. During the show at Seekings he produces magical acts and summons “a band of soldiers headed by a drum-major. There must have been at least a hundred of them” followed by conjuring up butterflies and finally a “little play, which many an ancient queen has watched, in her palace by the banks of the Nile” (Masefield “Chapter II”). Crucially his show is immediately followed by Carol-singers; “two key bugles and an oboe struck up the tune of ‘O come, all ye Faithful.’ Some twenty singers outside in the snow broke into the hymn” (“Chapter II”), just as in the origins of Christmas, Christianity follows paganism. This highlights the position that Cole Hawlings, or Ramon Llull as he turns out to be, fills; that of mediator between paganism and Christianity in Christmas. Cole Hawlings in *The Box of Delights* is both a conjurer of magical shows and an ally of both Herne the Hunter and the Lady of the Oak, who are both steeped in pagan ideas, but also a singer of carols; “Cole Hawlings, ... began to sing this carol” (“Chapter XII”) and an ally of the Church. Furthermore, Cole Hawlings is a mediator between pagan magic and Christian theology through his actual name Ramon Llull; G. R. Evans notes that Llull started out in court and that he became a man of the cloth after “a vision of Christ” (142). Llull argued that “there is a fundamental accord between philosophy and theology [as] philosophy is the effectus of the First Cause, who is God himself” (Evans 142). However, he is also attributed with alchemy and even magic and, although, this is highly disputed as there is no evidence for this, the legends themselves appear to have been used by Masefield as a form of evidence. The works on alchemy and magic with which Llull was linked have been since proven not to have been written by him (Evans 143). However, the mysticism surrounding Ramon Llull remains and this is most likely the reason why Masefield chose to include him in his book as mediator between Christianity and Paganism.

Manifestations of the Green Man also return in Cole Hawlings – through his association with the Punch and Judy show:

‘Will you please tell me,’ Kay said, ‘if you are a Punch and Judy man?’

‘I am, so to speak, a showman,’ the old man said, ‘and my Barney Dog is, as it were, my Toby Dog, when chance does call.’ (“Chapter I”).

The reader is first introduced to Cole Hawlings through the association between him and the Punch and Judy shows. Punch and Judy is a puppet show featuring Mr. Punch and his wife Judy and consists of various short comical scenes. These scenes usually follow a similar plot where Punch has an interaction with another character and ends with Punch beating the other character over the head with his slapstick. Punch is a representation of the figure of the fool. One English version of the fool is the Lord of Misrule. This figure stems from the Elizabethan era:

“Merry England” was merry chiefly by virtue of its community observances of periodic sports and feast days. Mirth took form in morris-dances, sword-dances, wassailings, mock ceremonies of summer kings and queen and of lords of misrule, mummings, disguisings, masques ... Such pastimes were a regular part of the celebration of [amongst other moments] Candlemas, Hocktide, Midsummer Eve, Halloween, and the twelve days of the Christmas season ending with Twelfth Night (Barber 3-4).

Through the Lord of Misrule, the archetype of the fool is a dominant figure in many Elizabethan holidays. The figure of the fool is related to the Green Man, as “the Fool represented an outlawed wildness we will encounter again in the next chapter” (Matthews 99). Through Hawlings’ association with Punch and Judy shows he can also be associated with the Green Man. Since Hawlings also made the elixir of life, he is another representation of the cycle of nature. Just as the Lady of the Oak, he subverts this cycle and like the Green Man is eternal.

Cole Hawlings also acts as a mediator between the present and the past. Hawlings is a time traveller, as he tells the children at Seekings, declaring that he has “been a long time on the roads” and that when answering how long: “first there were pagan times; then there were

in-between times; then there were Christian times; then there was another in-between time; then there was Oliver's time; and then there was pudding time" ("Chapter II"), where Oliver's time is the interbellum of Oliver Cromwell and pudding time can be seen as the time of Dickens. Hawlings is presented as a traveller through cultural memory and an embodiment of this memory. What is intriguing is that this could be taken as Hawlings stemming from Pagan times. However, this is problematic because Ramon Llull was born in the 13th century when Christianity was well incorporated into Western culture. This passage should instead be read as Hawlings travelling through time and visiting many different places in order to learn. Cole Hawlings is thus the manifestation of the harmony in Christmas. Furthermore, through his associations with the Green Man and cultural memory, Hawlings becomes an eternal being focussed on protection of the harmony of Christmas.

The novel concludes with Caroline Louisa waking Kay up and asking: "Have you had a nice dream?" ("Chapter XII"). The ending "makes the whole story a dream [which] is consistent with the theme of dream and fantasy being more real than waking reality; ... at a whole text level, the putative boundaries between sleep and waking, dream and reality are transgressed" (Bramwell 127). Eugen Tarnos proposes that: "dreams are ever-present excitational responses to perturbations of perceptions and thought, during waking life as well as sleep, which only become conscious when the executive function of waking life ceases" (177). The book travels between waking and dreaming, and his dreams influence the real life and vice versa. Peter Hollindale notes: "Kay lives in a richly peopled world of truth and dream" where "there is a clear line drawn between sleep and waking" (194). Whilst travelling on the train towards Seekings, Kay notes that: Chesters Camp "must be a Roman camp" ("Chapter I"). In "Chapter VI", during a dream, Kay joins "the smartest squad in the finest cohort in the star wing of the crack Legion of the whole Imperial Roman Army". Kay's knowledge and memory of the Roman ruins near Seekings has influenced his dreams.

Personal memory also plays an important part in the family unit in which he celebrates Christmas. Hollindale notes about Kay that: “his best companions belong to fantasy: Caroline Louisa, the beloved guardian of *The Box of Delights*, came first in dream in *The Midnight Folk*. The children who share his Christmas in *The Box of Delights* ..., are four of the ‘guards’ from *The Midnight Folk*” (194). Kay uses his personal memory of his companions from his earlier adventure to create a family-like group with whom he can celebrate Christmas. As established in Chapter Two, from the Victorian era on family becomes an important element of Christmas celebrations. Furthermore, the children with whom Kay is celebrating Christmas are: “Kay’s lost childhood toys which were packed away because ‘they will only remind him of the past’” (Hollindale 194). The children, therefore, become manifestations of Kay’s lost past realised in his dreams. Since dreams are based on perceptions and memories of the waking life, Kay’s remembrance of his guardian and children in his dreams highlights the influence and power of memory. In that light, Seekings, perhaps, stands for the fact that Kay is searching for a family with whom he can celebrate Christmas. A search which appears to become reality as Kay is woken by his guardian Caroline Louisa. Personal memory is used by Masfield both as a reminder of the prequel and as an influential factor on Kay’s adventures and dreams.

In conclusion, Masfield successfully constructs a harmony between pagan elements and the Christian theological origins of Christmas. This harmony is manifested through the figure of Cole Hawlings who acts as a mediator between both sides of the harmony. Hawlings also acts as a mediating factor between the past and the present, and becomes a manifestation of cultural memory and the effect it has on the present. Personal memory and dreams are also important factors in the tale. Masfield, just like Dickens, uses personal memory to highlight the need of a family in Christmas. Lastly, the archetype of the Green Man is used in multiple characters in order to create a link with the natural world; Dickens used techniques from the

Romantics similarly in order to establish this link. *The Box of Delights* is thus a harmonious tale of pagan archetypes, Christian elements and memory.

Chapter 4. *The Dark Is Rising*

Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* is set in a small English village in Buckinghamshire. Cooper takes the reader down pagan 'Old ways' and introduces them to Arthurian legends and the Wild Hunt led by none other than Herne the Hunter. Whilst the familiar comfort and joy of Christmas is threatened by the Dark. Of the three novels which this thesis analyses Cooper's is most steeped in pagan legend and customs. Cooper was heavily inspired in her youth by *The Box of Delights* by John Masefield which Cooper called, "The enchanted room that I could go into and shut the door" (Silvey 24). She further read Dickens which Cooper dubbed "very good for my sense of story" (Silvey 24). In her academical life she was inspired by "lectures by C. S. Lewis on Renaissance literature, and Tolkien on *Beowulf*" (Silvey 24) and because of the dominance of these two lecturers "there was a huge emphasis [in Cooper's studies] on early works by Spenser, Chaucer, Sir Gawain, the mystery plays, Malory and all his sources, [and] above all Shakespeare" (Silvey 24). The influence of these sources and the two lecturers and writers is evident throughout the novel, as one critic wrote: "with a cosmic struggle between good and evil as her subject, Susan Cooper invites comparisons with Tolkien, and survives the comparison remarkably well" (qtd. in Plante 37). However, with her snowy Christmas setting there is more of Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* in *The Dark Is Rising* than any links to Tolkien, whilst also reacting against their Christianity.

The Dark Is Rising details Will Stanton's struggle against the Dark in order to save his family, and later the world, but also Christmas. In this struggle he is helped by Merriman Lyon, who, in later novels, turns out to be Merlin, and the mysterious 'Old Lady'. In explaining why she wrote the novel eight years after the prequel, Cooper tells that during skiing she "suddenly wanted to write a book set in snow like that, but in England, about an 11-year-old boy who wakes up one day and finds he can work magic" (Silvey 24) and that

“every inch of *The Dark Is Rising* is where I grew up Snowy Buckinghamshire” (Silvey 25). The tale is, fundamentally, about Christmas and the subsequent Twelve Days of Christmas. Where most “critics have focused on Cooper’s reworking of Celtic and Arthurian Legends (Drout 231), with Michael Drout himself focussing on the Anglo-Saxon sources, this chapter will focus on the use of Christmas lore. An example of this are some of the chapter headings, these are named: “Midwinter’s Eve”, “Christmas Eve” and “Christmas Day”. Another indication that we are dealing with a Christmas tale are the various references to pagan customs surrounding this time like holly protecting against evil and the Wild Hunt led by Herne the Hunter. However, there is also carolling, a Christmas mass and Christian charity present in the text. Another aspect of the text which is important is the place it has taken in new pagan culture:

Each year around the world on Midwinter Eve, thousands of people – young and old – begin an annual re-read of *The Dark Is Rising*. It is to them a ritual of winter as much as Christmas – a means of marking the shortest day, the turn of the year’s tide and the beginning of light’s slow flow back. (McFarlane x)

This can be seen as cementing *The Dark Is Rising*’s place amongst literature like *A Christmas Carol*, *The Snowman* (1978) and *The Night Before Christmas* (1823). Of the three core texts explored in this thesis it most explicitly deals with the pagan ‘origins’ of Christmas. However, in the end it also creates a harmony between the cultural and religious aspects of Christmas, although it leans towards the cultural aspects. Cooper creates ambiguity within aspects of Christmas which we tend to categorize as either religious or cultural. By creating this ambiguity Cooper forces the reader to question the origins of Christmas traditions and objects and gives the reader the opportunity to interpret it in whichever way they want. To this end Cooper attempts to create a distinction between religious and cultural aspects, but in the end creates a strained union between these aspects.

Throughout the novel Cooper takes items and symbols which are thought of as religious and renders them ambiguous in their meaning. When Will and his family come to collect the Christmas tree and Yule log from Farmer Dawson they are given a bunch of holly sprigs which are “a good protection against the Dark” (111). The idea that holly protects from evil stems from druidic practices as they believed that “leaves of holly offered protection against evil spirits” (Mosteller 86-87), though holly is also said to represent Jesus (Mosteller 86-87, 89). In this case Cooper most likely used it as indicative of druidic belief, as it is given to Will by George, one of the ‘Old Ones’. However, a religious reading in which the holly, as representative of Christ and his power, protects against the dark is still possible. The Christmas tree is decorated with, amongst other objects, “a beautiful filigree cross” (113) which could indicate either a Christian cross made out of filigree or a sun cross. The ambiguity Cooper creates in this passage is indicative of the Christmas that she evokes; instead of a Christmas based on religious practices and ideals combined with folk traditions and customs Cooper forces the reader to think about how to interpret certain Christmas traditions. This highlights the connection people have to the past, both personal and cultural, and uncovers the process of remediation involved in Christmas. Cooper, in a way, tries to undo the remediation by, ironically, remediating these customs and traditions. If this filigree cross had been mentioned in *A Christmas Carol* than it would be difficult to argue that it might be a pagan symbol, but due to Cooper’s constant referencing to paganism there is a case to argue that the cross can be interpreted both ways. Another instance of this ambiguity is “the golden-haired figure for the top of the tree” (113), which could be an angel or just a golden-haired figure. Due to Cooper’s description the reader can interpret it whichever way they want to, religious or pagan. Cooper creates a harmony in these items and symbols through not forcing the reader down one interpretative path but by leaving it open.

Another aspect of Christmas, which is usually attributed to Christianity, that becomes somewhat ambiguous in the novel is the practice of charity. The *OED* gives two definitions of charity which are worth considering in the case of this novel: “the Christian love of one’s fellow human beings” (“Charity, n.1.c.”), and “without any specially Christian associations: Love, kindness, affection, natural affection: now esp. with some notion of generous or spontaneous goodness” (“Charity, n.2.a.”). There are multiple charitable acts in the novel: the acts of charity by the villagers; the charity shown to the Walker by the Stantons; and the opening of the mansion to all the villagers by Miss Hawthorne. The first of these acts - “he watched everyone file beaming out of the church, smiling and nodding to each other ... He saw jolly Mr Hutton ... enveloping tiny Miss Bell ... in the warm offer of a ride home; and behind him jolly Mrs Hutton ... doing the same with limp Mrs Pettigrew” (203-204) - becomes Christian charity due to its occurring after the church service. Furthermore, when “Miss Bell ... put[s] some coins that they knew she could not afford into the collecting box”, it may seem as if she is following the Roman notion of Kalends that “people are not only generous towards themselves, but also towards their fellow-men” (qtd. in Miles 168). However, the money collected goes towards the “aid of Huntercombe’s small, ancient, famous and rapidly crumbling Saxon church” (121), thus the charity shown by Miss Bell is towards a religious cause and therefore giving it a religious nature. The second act deals with the taking in of the Walker, though Will does not realize this at first: “Paul! Come quick! There’s a man in the snow!” (218). Will, the Old One, does not want to take in the walker: “But we can’t take him with us! Not the Walker!” (219). But the rector tells him: “Don’t worry, Will, your mother won’t mind – a poor man *in extremis*” (220) as Will’s “good mother is a Samaritan, I know” (219). This juxtaposition of Christian charity and pagan knowledge is ended in favour of Christian charity due to the presence of both the Rector and Paul, who is arguably one of the more religious characters in the novel. The last major act of charity in the

novel occurs when Miss Greythorne opens up her mansion to the villagers in order to shelter against the cold and storm and is uttered by Merriman:

‘... There’s to be a fuel and food drop in the manor grounds, as the place most easily visible from the air in this snow. And Miss Greythorne is asking if everyone in the village would not like to move into the manor, for the emergency. It will be crowded, of course, but warm. And comforting, perhaps. And Dr Armstrong will be there – he is already on his way, I believe’. (240)

At first glance this act appears to come from Christian charity as well. However, this act of charity is performed by Miss Greythorne and Merriman, who are both ‘Old Ones’ and therefore belong to paganism and not Christianity. Furthermore, Merriman focusses on more practical reasons to move to the manor highlighting the food and fuel drop, the warmth and the presence of Dr Armstrong. He touches briefly upon a more Christian notion by stating that it is comforting, though this instantly called into question with a follow up of ‘perhaps’. Thus, the act of charity, a Christian act throughout most of the novel, becomes ambiguous in the final and most substantial act. Cooper leaves it open to interpretation whether the sheltering of the villagers stems from Christian charity or a more practical charity.

Family plays an important role in *The Dark Is Rising* through the importance attributed to it by Will. Family is especially important to Will during Christmas:

He managed to turn his thoughts away from all these things, even from the two invading, threatening figures of the Dark. For this was Christmas, which had always been a time of magic, to him and to all the world. This was a brightness, a shining festival, and while its enchantment was on the world the charmed circle of his family and home would be protected against any invasion from outside. (179)

Whether this protection is pagan or Christian, or something entirely different, remains ambiguous, thus further adding to the ambiguity of Christmas in the novel. Just as in Dickens

and Masfield, Christmas is depicted as a peaceful time to spend with family, which is why Will is so outraged that the Dark would seek to violate it. When the Dark Rider enters the Stanton household on Christmas morning he is angrily rebuked by Will: “How dare you! At Christmas, on Christmas morning! Get out!” (192), since Christmas was Will’s “most precious family ritual” (192). When Will tries to destroy the Dark Rider with “the words of destruction with which ... an Old One might break the power of the Dark” he refrains from doing so only after the Rider tells him “You cannot use weapons of that kind here, not unless you wish to blast your whole family out beyond time” (193). This initiates a theme, as throughout the novel Will continues with his battle against the Dark in order to save his family, a cornerstone of not just his life but also his notion of Christmas. At the beginning of the novel, when Will is confronted with the Dark and the snowy forest for the first time “he made himself go on without looking back over his shoulder, because he knew that when he looked, he would find that the house was gone” (31) and with it his family and the security that it brings with it, especially during Christmas. When Merriman tells Will to extinguish a candle with his mind he asks him:

‘... is that a possible thing for any normal boy to do?’

‘No,’ Will said unhappily.

‘Do it,’ Merriman said. ‘Now.’. (58)

Instead Will extinguishes the fire in the hearth because he does not want to accept that he is gifted: “He thought desperately: *I’ll get out of it, I’ll think of ... something that couldn’t be put out except by some tremendous impossible magic*” (59). According to Victor Watson this is because “Will is simply distressed” and due to “his disbelieving powers” (101). However, it is more than simple distress and disbelief, Will understands that by having this gift he would have to give up his current life and his family. Heidi Hansson and Catherine Norberg note: “to accept this role means that he[Will] has to set himself apart from friends and family and

sacrifice his childhood, but he reacts without emotion” (68). However, just like Watson’s, this notion is a too one dimensional reading of the situation. Yes, Will appears to accept the situation; yet he is not without emotion nor sadness at his probable loss of family, a thought he shares with Merriman. Merriman calls the gift “a burden” as “any great gift of power of talent is a burden” (61) and when he shows Will a picture from his mind Will notes that “it’s a sad picture. You miss it, you’re homesick for wherever it is” (56), indicating that Merriman is keenly aware of the loss with which Will is faced. Furthermore, When Will notices that the flood has taken objects from his house, George tells him that there is no danger, however: “Will knew he was right, but again he longed to see for himself” (293). There is a constant longing present in Will to go back to his old life and be part of his family. After his first battle with the powers of the Dark Will realises that “his home no longer seemed quite the unassailable fortress it had always been” (79). Family sometimes takes precedence over the quest as at the end of the novel Will almost forgets his quest due to the kidnapping of Mary:

‘The Hunt? What Hunt? George, I must find Mary, they’ve got Mary, somewhere.

And I lost sight of Paul.’

‘We go to raise the Hunt,’ the voice at his back said steadily. ‘I have seen Paul, he is safe on his way home by now. Mary you will find in due course. It is time for the Hunter, Will, the white horse must come to the Hunter, and you must take her there.

This is the ordering of things, you have forgotten. (291)

Will is so preoccupied with saving his family that he almost forgets to raise Herne the Hunter. George has to remind him that he has a part to play and turns him back on the right path to finish the quest. However, when Will is given the choice to either save Mary or hold onto the signs he picks the signs: “I have your sister. And you cannot save her except by giving me the signs” (307), “‘yes’, Will said. ‘I know. But I will not give you the Signs.’” (308). At this point in the novel Will has so much faith in the Light that he intuitively knows that Mary will

be saved by the Light, which also happens. The threatening of home and family is a familiar theme in literature and Cooper highlights this theme due to it being Christmas, a time so associated with family. The constant longing to return to his family in combination with Will's preoccupation with protecting his family highlights the theme of family in the book and in Christmas.

In *The Dark Is Rising* paganism triumphs over Christianity in being the more effective force in the fight against the Dark. After the church service the Dark attempts to defeat Will, which is done with so much force that even the Rector and Paul can hear it: "the voice of the Dark was so loud that even humans could sense its power" (205-206). Rector Beaumont tries to fight the Dark with the powers of God:

... leaning forward slightly made a sweeping sign of the Cross. He stammered out, 'Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries...'. (206)

However, his attempts are futile as John Smith remarks: "this battle is not for his fighting" (206). It is in the end the power of the signs which drives the Dark back. Cooper gives the Church the possibility to defend itself from the Dark, but she makes the Church fail. Cooper demotes the Church and Christianity as a whole to a place on the side-lines whilst the pagan powers present in the novel eventually triumph over the Dark. According to *The Dark Is Rising* paganism is a more powerful form of magic in the world than Christianity.

There are two major moments in the novel in which appropriation occurs. The first occurs at the end of the battle in the Church:

[the rector] too looked at the Signs on Will's belt, and lance up again, smiling suddenly, an almost childish smile of relief and delight. 'That did the work, didn't it? The cross. Not of the church, but a Christian cross, nonetheless.'. (214)

Rector Beaumont immediately attempts to appropriate the Signs as Christian items of power, which they are not. The Rector cannot believe in a world where the powers of God can be trumped by any other source. This explains his “childish smile of relief and delight” (214), as he has found a way to make the world make sense again. Old George tries to rectify him: ““Made a long time before Christianity. Long before God”” (214), which he says “unexpectedly, firm and clear” (214). Old George’s firmness is understandable as the Church has a habit to appropriate things. However, the Rector counters him by stating: “but not before God” (214). According to Blake Adams: “displacing one faith with another, ... may serve as an analogy for the Christian appropriation of pagan piety”, which is exactly what Rector Beaumont tries to do. He has to create a world where God is the ultimate power just as the early Christian Church did. When Cooper has the Old Ones react in silence it is not because of forfeit but “there was no answer that would not have offended him” (214). Cooper has the pagans silence themselves out of respect for the other party, thereby having them take moral high ground.

The second appropriation occurs when Will sees the ship of the Anglo-Saxon king for the first time: “in the centre was a kind of deckhouse that made the ship look almost like a Noah’s Ark” (311). It is puzzling as to why Cooper has Will reflect on this as at this point in the novel Will has become a full-fledged Old One and therefore any religious comparisons seem out of place. There are two possible reasons for this: Cooper uses a well-known example of Western culture in order to paint a picture in the reader’s mind, or Cooper deliberately has Will show his Christian roots in order to flip ‘the Myth of Christmas’ on its head. The first is possible though not very probable as Cooper uses symbols and figures which are not part of common Western culture like Herne the Hunter. The second reason also holds merit when taking Will’s development into account.

Will is the protagonist in the novel, but he is more than just that. Will is a reverse mirroring of the development of Christmas. As discussed in Chapter 1 Christmas, most likely, developed from a series of pagan midwinter festivals into the Christian festival we now know. Will develops from a Christian person - he sings in a church choir and goes to church services - into a pagan Old One. However, just as Christmas cannot shake its pagan roots, Will cannot forget his Christian roots. Which is why in a moment when he has to make a comparison to an impressive ship he uses the most famous ship from the Bible. Cooper has put the Christmas unity between religion and culture in Will.

Herne the Hunter takes a prominent position in *The Dark Is Rising* as he forces the Dark away and chases it out of the area. Unlike Herne from *The Box of Delights* this Herne is tied to Windsor Castle and Herne's Oak: "where Herne the Hunter is supposed to ride on the eve of Twelfth Night" (Cooper 320), thereby adhering to the original version Shakespeare uses. Herne is not only tied to Windsor Park, he is also the leader of the Wild Hunt which rides on Twelfth Night, as attested by Kershaw (21). His head is described in detail:

The head from which the branching antlers sprang was shaped like the head of a stag, but the ears beside the horns were those of a dog or a wolf. And the face beneath the horns was a human face – but with the round feather-edged eyes of a bird. ... There was not much else that was purely human about the thing at all. ... It was a thing made to call out deep responses from the mind. (188-189)

Carolyne Larrington notes about Herne that "his kinship [lies] with the animal kingdom" (106) and that he "is an ancient, non-aligned power" (106). The alignment with the animal kingdom is shown through his face and because he is not joined by undead spirits but by white hounds. The Yell Hounds have their origin in Celtic myth (Larrington 105) and are similar to versions of the Wild Hunt like Dando and his dogs. Another aspect of the Wild Hunt which Cooper uses is that "in Lancashire the wild geese flying overhead are supposed

to be the Wild Hunt” (Briggs 49); Mary asks Will: ““did you hear the wild geese last night”” (353). Instead of hearing Herne and the Yell Hounds drive away the Dark the Stanton family heard wild geese. Cooper creates a medley of various aspects of the Wild Hunt in her version and harmonizes these.

Throughout *The Dark Is Rising*, Cooper subverts the unity of pagan and religious elements. She constructs a unity where paganism, instead of Christianity, is shown to be the more potent magical power. Cooper takes Christian themes and aspects – such as angels, charity and the struggle between good and evil – and makes their interpretation ambiguous. *The Dark Is Rising* is situated in cultural memory - both through its use of English legends and traditions, and the place it takes in seasonal reading traditions – thereby adhering to the literary convention in Christmas literature. Personal memory is less used by Cooper but it still filters through, in moments like Merriman’s memories, in order to highlight the loss of family which the ‘Old Ones’ suffer. Cooper subverts the Christmas unity in order to show the process of remediation, which Christmas traditions have undergone, and remediates Christmas as a more pagan celebration. Cultural memory plays a key part in this remediation, as Cooper uses familiar legends to construct her version of a Christmas tale.

Conclusion

A Christmas Carol, *The Box of Delights* and *The Dark Is Rising* all represent the varying attempts to harmonize Christmas in relation to its religious and cultural aspects. Each text variously does so through the use of the past, cultural memory, and personal memories. The harmony stems from the origins of Christmas which have been remediated over time. Early Christian theology only venerated Easter as it at that point largely was a religion based around resurrection (*Christmas: A Candid History* 17). Customs and tradition which can be found in Roman and Germanic winter festivals were assimilated into Christmas, and through the process of mediation and remediation these origins have faded from cultural memory. The uniting of these pagan traditions into the religious celebration has caused various religious groups to shun or abolish Christmas. The use of the past is explained through the notion that Christmas is a celebration based on traditions and customs. Therefore, Christmas is located in cultural memory and the three books, through their incorporation of Christmas traditions, utilise cultural memory to reflect upon the syncretic unity of the pagan and the Christian.

A Christmas Carol incorporates a message of charity and redemption without overt religious sentiments: it acts as a “mixture of Christian humanism and agnostic enchantment, offering a hopeful ethics and a genuine uncanniness” (Taft 671). Dickens unites the Victorian ideal of the family (Weeks) and a greater emphasis on Christian charity with nostalgia for the ‘good old days’ (Slater xiii) and the revived interest in folklore and medieval traditions. The Spirit of Christmas Present represents this harmony as he incorporates aspects from Christian theology; bringing peace and blessing through incense, harking back to Elizabethan and Medieval traditions; the appearance which he shares with Father Christmas and the references to the Puritan attack on Christmas. As explained in Chapter 2, the Spirit also highlights the Roman influences on Christmas through his use of the cornucopia and the analogy with

Saturn. Dickens uses the cultural memory and Christmas archetypes like Father Christmas to create a familiar Christmas celebration.

Furthermore, Dickens uses Scrooge's personal memories to set him on the path to redemption. This is further enhanced by Scrooge's own lack of a family. Scrooge does not adhere to the Victorian ideal of the family and the Spirits confront him with his isolation in order to redeem him, and bring him into connection with others. Dickens' interest in the past and cultural memory is also shown through his interest in the fairy-tale and folklore. This interest is showcased by his use of the marvellous and Gothic, particularly evident in the representation of Marley and the spectral sinners. *A Christmas Carol* is thus a harmony between the cultural memory of Christmas and folklore, and between the Victorian 'invented tradition' of family and notion of Christian charity.

Masefield presents the truest harmony between the religious and cultural aspects. In *The Box of Delights* the pagan figures; Herne and the Lady of the Oak, work together with the Church. This harmony is made flesh in the person of Cole Hawlings, who is based on a famous theologian who was rumoured to have worked on alchemical and 'pagan' texts. Hawlings unites pagan sorcery with an innate knowledge of Christian hymns and carols. Furthermore, the symbol which all three pagan characters wear is a ring with a cross. This cross symbolises the harmony between religious and pagan elements as it has been used by both pagan religions (and Christianity).

Cultural memory of Christmas does not play as big a part in *The Box of Delights* as it does in the other two books. However, Masefield does use the archetype of the Green Man in his version of Herne the Hunter and in the Lady of the Oak. These two figures represent the link between Christmas (and winter in general) and nature. The past plays an important part in the book as the box gives the power to travel through time. However, this power lies more in the fantastical than it does in memory. There are moments, like the appearance of the Roman

soldiers and their camp, which signal the use of the Roman origins of Christmas. Like Dickens, Masfield presents his protagonist without a conventional family unit. Instead he uses characters from *The Midnight Folk* to create a family for Kay Harker, thereby adhering to the Victorian Christmas tradition of family celebrations. *The Box of Delights* on the one hand represents a true harmony between religious and pagan forces but also uses the cultural memory of Christmas the least.

The Dark Is Rising is the book that most focuses on the Pagan. Throughout the book Christianity is shown to be inferior in strength to pagan magic. Cooper follows the trend of a diminishing Church in Western culture and a related growth of interest in the pre-Christian religions and cultures. Although Christianity is on the backfoot in *The Dark Is Rising* it still exists in harmony next to the pagan magic of the 'Old Ones'. Furthermore, just like Christianity, the plot follows a great struggle between forces of light and darkness. Cooper also incorporates traditions that stem from Christianity, such as angels and charity, only to subvert and question them.

Cooper's book is steeped in cultural memory; from the Victorian Christmas party to the use of Herne the Hunter. *The Dark Is Rising* stands as an amalgamation of Arthurian legend, Christmas traditions, Shakespearean figures, and Welsh and Germanic mythology. This leads to a strange unity of overt pagan elements and more covert religious aspects. In this way, Cooper subverts the traditional view on Christmas and highlights the effect remediation has had on the pagan origins of Christmas.

All three books use the harmony between religious and cultural aspects in Christmas. This can be done so as to create a new Christmas, as *A Christmas Carol* does; or to present a harmonious unity against the dark, as in *The Box of Delights*; or to subvert and question it, as with *The Dark is Rising*. The use of cultural memory is also shared by all three books as Christmas is so ingrained into memory and culture. This thesis shows that *A Christmas Carol*,

The Box of Delights and *The Dark Is Rising* represent the harmony of Christmas and each of them draws on the past and memory, whether personal or cultural.

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