

『グレートゴッドパン』と『チャールズデクスターワード』における 異教の神秘主義の分析

バード ポール

*An Analysis of Mysticism in *The Great God Pan* and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward**

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Abstract Late nineteenth-century American and European writers of Gothic literature derived inspiration from a diverse variety of obscure and traditional sources. These sources fell broadly into the esoteric and spiritual traditions of Eastern and Western paganistic mysticism, and Judeo-Christian religious symbolism. This essay focuses on the blending of Western mysticism with elements of Christian nativity, and how those elements are foregrounded in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* and H. P. Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. These examples of Gothic fiction demonstrate both the pagan and religious blending of motifs, and the rejection of modern science's revelations about the natural world as proposed by Charles Darwin and theories of human evolution which entered the public consciousness in the decades following *On the Origin of Species*.

Keywords: Occult, Gothic, Christianity

1. Introduction

In this essay I propose to conduct a comparative analysis of narrative, plot, and character themes concerning the representation of occultism to two examples of nineteenth and early twentieth century Gothic literature: Arthur Machen's horror-fantasy novella *The Great God Pan* (Machen), first serialized in 1890, and H. P. Lovecraft's horror novella *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (Lovecraft), first published in full in 1943. I also propose to discuss how spiritual differences both conflict and blend with beliefs in faith and identity. Finally, I shall examine how the occult reveals itself in Gothic literature, and develop the schism between traditional, pre-Darwinian attitudes and beliefs regarding the natural world, and later transformed by the onset of modernity.

The occult, or occult sciences in full, as a discipline, by and large, consists of the historical occupations of astrology, alchemy, and the practice of magic. Of these, only alchemy, much reformed as modern-day chemistry, has retained its discipline within the sciences. In contrast, astrology and magic, casualties of the Enlightenment and modernization, found themselves reformulated not by the hard sciences but by philosophy: one of the leading proponents of occultism being the esoteric 19th century Russian writer Helena Blavatsky, who published her treatise, *The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, (Blavatsky) in 1888. Blavatsky attempted to blend the perceived wisdom of traditional (spiritual) understanding of the natural world, not with orthodox Christian values, but together with the rigorous principles of post-Enlightenment science, meeting with limited success. Her near-contemporary Charles Darwin, on the other hand,

marched in the vanguard of natural science, and published the well-known *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859 (Darwin), while Blavatsky remains obscure outside her field of interest.

Belief in the occult, and later *occultism*, unlike Darwin's theories of natural selection, is precisely that: a matter of faith; it therefore does not adhere to modern-day scientific methods, including those developed by 17th century French philosopher, Rene Descartes. Instead, this belief appeals to mythology and folklore (as an example of her defence of occultism, Blavatsky states that Isaac Newton – and by extension his gravitational laws – owe their discovery to the mysticism of German philosopher, Jakob Böhme) (Blavatsky), and therefore struggle to be reconciled with the empirical and anatomical studies of the natural world, including most obviously, those which we associate with Charles Darwin. This belief has several consequences of note: in terms of chronology, belief in the occult predates, and yet is not entirely displaced by, modern science, at least in the public consciousness; hence the development of occultism as a philosophy and emerging literary genre. This genre incorporates aspects of religion, paganism, East-Asian mysticism, and Christianity which are then blended into a composite of pseudo-religious spiritual beliefs. Though practice of the occult sciences significantly predates Darwin, studies thereof, as opposed to belief in the occult merely being a branch of philosophy, coincidentally began to emerge in the 19th century around the time Darwin's research was attracting the attention of academia and beginning to enter the public consciousness. Darwinism, broadly, and as a working definition, being the application and understanding of Charles Darwin's

theories of natural selection and evolution, which derive their credibility from the Enlightenment convention of the scientific method, thus being observation, and replication of results. This, in turn, can be contrasted with the occult sciences, which lacked the application of method, observation, and crucially the ability to be reproduced by other “experts”. Therefore, the omission of evidence-based discourse precludes Darwinism. To put into historical context, occult sciences were practised by individuals from antiquity until the Enlightenment, which of course including the three cardinal disciplines of alchemy, astrology, and magic, also included prophesy, popularly embodied by the 16th century astronomer, Nostradamus. The deviance of traditional pseudo sciences from contemporary scientific thought, of course, had implications for the development of literary genre of Gothic fiction. By the 1880s several Gothic novels of note had been printed: for instance, Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu published his innovative novel *Uncle Silas* and collection of short stories, *In a Glass Darkly* (Le Fanu) in 1864 and 1872, respectively. Meanwhile in England, Robert Louis Stephenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson), became available in 1886, only four years before Machen’s *The Great God Pan*. These variances in chronology, philosophy, and religion functioned to benefit the development of the Gothic story in as much as they permitted the juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous narratives. To illustrate, with regard to H. P. Lovecraft’s *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, it can be seen that there are two main chronological narratives within the novella: the earliest being an occultist chronicle of the nefarious activities of Charles Dexter Ward’s ancestor, Joseph Curwen, dated from around 1692, and a later, contemporary, post-Darwin narration of the misadventures of the eponymous Charles Dexter Ward, dated around 1928.

2. The Great God Pan

In keeping with the aspirations of Blavatsky, who endeavoured to place occultism on the same plane as modern science as an academic and practical discipline, it is also evident that writers of Gothic narratives, who, employing the occult as a subject of learning, strive to present and establish a tone of scientific objectivity and credibility in their narrative participants. This purpose is often realised through the protagonist, or agent, who may be a medical doctor or obsessive scholar who has familiarized himself with pseudo-medical language and practices (this narrative tactic of employing semi-knowledgeable agents, or rather, what Wayne Booth refers to as *dramatized narrators* (Booth 152), itself conveniently reflects the dilettantism of those who practise occultism). Regarding *The Great God Pan*, Machen’s narrative consists of a combination of a third person omniscient narrator and character actors, amongst these is Dr Raymond who

guides and narrates by exposition the conduct of his experiment on a young woman, Mary. These events are narrated to his acquaintance, Clarke, who, as a foil for the reader, functions to place us within the story as accomplices in an a questionable undertaking, and together with him we become familiar with the initial narrative events (Clark is replaced in this role by his London-based associate, Villiers, later in the story). In order to facilitate a human experiment inspired by his interest in the occult, Dr Raymond acknowledges Clarke’s suspicions that his research may be somewhat less than rigorously scientific, and more pseudo-science, though this scepticism is counterbalanced by his visceral interest in the occult: “I have devoted myself to transcendental medicine for the last twenty years. I have heard myself called quack and charlatan and impostor, but all the while I knew I was on the right path.” remarks Dr Raymond in effusive self-confidence (Machen 31). Equally, and while the alchemist and the physician typically share an experimental interest in their subject matter, the alchemist’s studies are motivated by his interest in the epistemic and philosophical implications of his findings, as opposed to the practical learning and application of modern medicine. In addition to the philosophical contrast in attitudes towards learning, the practitioners of occultism reject the central belief of modern science as being inclusive of all observable natural phenomena. With regards to his discipline, Dr Raymond refuses to elaborate; he remarks unsatisfactorily that the explanation thereof would leave Clarke no more informed than he currently is (evasiveness from which we can infer that Dr Raymond in fact either has a weak grasp of his undertaking or is aware that it is inappropriate). Nevertheless, Dr Raymond cannot resist an appeal to authority in his mentioning of Digby and Browne Faber (presumably a reference to 17th century English courtier Kenelm Digby and his theory of animal generation, and 19th century psychologist James Crichton-Browne’s contribution to the nascent field of psychology – Faber being a publisher of his papers). However, in addition to the subject matter, and the pseudoscience of the occult, the qualifications of the doctor are also a matter to be called into question: the role of sceptic is once again fulfilled by the vicarious occupation of the reader by way of Clarke. Witnessing Dr Raymond’s experiment, it is unclear whether the doctor is a qualified medical practitioner or merely an enthusiast with some peripheral medical knowledge; an impression heightened by the realization that the operation conducted upon Mary would, in modern phraseology, be regarded as misconduct. Dr Raymond demonstrates a knowledge of surgical and anatomical skills: “Yes; a slight lesion in the grey matter, that is all; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells...” (Machen 33), yet the description of his laboratory as narrated by his friend Clarke suggests a man engaged in the experimental theory rather than the

practice of medicine. We can but speculate how, exactly, the doctor funds his research, but the story does indicate that most of the dramatized characters are funded, at least in part, by their social class as members of the landed gentry. Indeed, Raymond's purported competence lies in alchemy or chemistry rather than as a physician or psychologist, the two modern two disciplines he is keen to dismiss in the persons of Digby and Crichton-Browne. Dr Raymond's experiment in brain surgery upon his compliant, orphaned subject, Mary, unsurprisingly results in brain damage, though we are left to speculate whether this unfortunate consequence may be attributed to supernatural happenings and not, more plausibly, Dr Raymond's dilettantism. The doctor is thus depicted as a man who remains both figuratively and in fact an outsider; he acts beyond received medical wisdom, and furthermore isolates himself from the practice of medicine while nevertheless indulging himself in the theory. He is a relative recluse who pursues knowledge through revelation rather than empirical study and shares his findings only with Clarke, who confides within a close circle of urban friends who also indulge in immoral pursuits, including gambling, drinking, and patronizing prostitutes. As such, all these characters and narrators are accomplices who conspire to keep secrets which they gradually reveal to each other – and therefore the reader – since the development of the narrative structure permits these actors to take turns in recounting events to us. Each of the characters is synonymous with subsequent narration, analogous to London based co-conspirator Villiers' metaphorical "Chinese box", and of course, the mysterious Mrs. Beaumont (Helen Vaughan) who features later in the story. The clandestine behaviour of the rural Dr Raymond and Clarke, and their metropolitan associates, Villiers and Austin, represents a rejection of mainstream cultural and moral values, which include scientific methodology and also acceptable behaviour in polite society. In addition to this rejection, the narrative also implies that the occult is inextricably tied to temptation and immorality, such as sexual deviancy, (i.e. prostitution, the reluctant career of impoverished women), and where the morally righteous middle classes are tempted into such immorality by the debased working classes.

The doctor of the occult, as opposed to medicine, can be likened to the inventor; he is boastful, yet constantly paranoid, and is fearful that his invention, or creation or discovery, will be perfected by someone else, hence Dr Raymond's disparaging remarks concerning his fellow researchers. These other competing actors, a source of antagonism, will have used, or potentially exploit the doctor's published research as a basis for his own success at the expense of the author. This can be witnessed in the story of *The Great God Pan* by Dr Raymond's and Clarke's dialogue concerning prior research leading up to the experiment

which Raymond wishes to conduct in Clarke's presence during the coming evening. As observer and narrator, Clarke himself is depicted as a contradictory figure. Despite showing an almost obsessive enthusiasm towards the occult – as evidenced by his dedication to writing his *Memoirs to prove the Existence of the Devil*, which he keeps on his Japanese bureau – he nevertheless prides himself in being able to act the advocate when presented with seemingly incredulous stories. Clarke is initially portrayed as the embodiment of stoic British middle-class values "...he thought of the unusual and the eccentric with undisguised aversion..." yet nevertheless finds himself curiously attracted to that which he ostensibly wishes to avoid "...there was a wide-eyed inquisitiveness with respect to all the more recondite and esoteric elements in the nature of men." (Machen 43). In this instance, attitudes towards the study of the occult are presented to the reader through the eyes of a hobbyist or enthusiast narrator (Clarke), who, although serious in terms of dedication to his subject matter, is not depicted as studious or academically learned. Only the doctor-cum-researcher is truly represented as being committed to uncovering the esoteric aspects of mystical discoveries, and, furthermore, this is a manifestation or sign of hubris, mental decay or madness because there is the ever-present risk of being destroyed while in the pursuit of one's interests, or in the case of Helen Vaughan's suitors, their proclivities. Though obsessive, Dr Raymond has not entirely abandoned rational thought, and being generous, he represents a medical entrepreneur; neither entirely belonging to the tradition of the occult, such as a mage or other practitioner of magic, but as a parodic figure who fails to accept the methods of contemporary science. Dr Raymond is the reactionary explorer of natural science during the 19th century Darwinian period, who in his pursuit of knowledge and recognition, unleashes a power or force that he has no control over; a literary motif originating some decades earlier in *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus* (Shelley) and has become a reality in the atomic age. Thus, this motif, of man's hubris, his belief that he can act with impunity and without fear of consequence, is as pronounced at the beginning of the twenty-first century as it was at the end of the nineteenth.

In literature, representations of the occult vary considerably. *The Great God Pan* represents an aspect of the occult from Greek mythological tradition; as the eponymous title of the novella iterates, the imagery evokes Pan, the Arcadian god of the wild (hence Clarke's articulation of his potion vapour induced trance, in which he was cast back to a long held, though modified memory of himself immersed in nature where he is left with an impression that he encounters Pan). Other motifs suggestive of the occultism include *demonianism*, or demoniac possession (notable in Christianity and associated with exorcism), experimentation

with obscure chemical properties (alchemy), and sorcery (as implied by Helen Vaughan's uncanny ability to allure and enrapture her male victims). Other Gothic devices evident in the story include mysterious and un- or partially explained deaths, and supernatural powers including therianthropy – the ability to change physical form – or even to disappear. Academic and writer on the topic of witchcraft and the occult, C. L'Estrange Ewen, observed, when referring to demonianism, that: "A most widespread and yet enduring belief is that discarnate spirits enter into living fleshy bodies, animating and controlling them." (L'Estrange 98-99). L'Estrange is correct in the sense that the belief has endured, principally by way of its historical links to Christianity. Demonic possession is manifested in the character of Helen Vaughan, employed as a prototypical "demon child", and the product of Dr Raymond's experiment with Mary and her resulting, though implied, conjugal union with Pan. Helen's birth is a consequence of Dr Raymond's malpractice and of Mary's induced trance, vision, and union with the satyr. In addition to pagan, there are parallels with Christianity: firstly; the superficial similarity to the circumstances surrounding the birth of baby Jesus; and secondly, the immaculate conception and allusion to the virgin birth in the name of Helen's mother, Mary. It would therefore be effortless to conclude that Dr Raymond, who adopted Mary as a child, elected upon the name "Mary" because of the Christian symbolism and resemblance to Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary (it is implied in the story that Mary is a mistress of Dr Raymond and therefore not chaste, and thus the experiment will not be successful). The mythological choice of female names extends even towards the forename of the resulting daughter, Helen, a name also shared with the wife of the Mycenaean king Menelaus, and, furthermore, who was remarkable for her great beauty. Interestingly, Machen's juxtaposition of Greek mythology and Christianity could suggest that the religion is itself a constituent of the occult, and that contrary to orthodox Christian belief, God is not perfect, nor benevolent, and that he is capable of producing evil (the Devil) as the, perhaps necessary, binary counterpart to goodness. Charles Darwin, living contemporary to Machen, published *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* (Darwin) in 1859, and the impact of his research upon our understanding of the natural world cannot be underestimated. Much in the vein that the Luddites had rejected the mechanization of the labour market some fifty to seventy years beforehand, is then, Machen exploring the implications of Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection had on faith and belief in divine creation amongst Christians latter decades of the nineteenth century? If Darwin succeeded in discrediting the biblical faith in heavenly creation, then Machen's own mythological representation itself fails to proffer comfort given the paganistic ritual of Dr Raymond's experimentation. This

alternative understanding of the origins of human life which was presented in the latter nineteenth century suggested that biblical creation is a fallacy, or even that if goodness and virtue can be born, so can evil and vice, thus indicating a pessimistic appraisal of the persuasiveness of faith in understanding the human condition. Whether *The Great God Pan* represents a tussle with his own faith on the part of the author, Machen, with the revelations of modernity cannot be presumed, nevertheless, at the time of his writing of the novella, Darwin's theories were paramount in challenging the received views of orthodox Christians in Victorian Britain.

The character of Helen Vaughan, while masquerading under several pseudonyms and likewise her physical form capable of changing in addition to her name, represents another figure of Gothic fiction and indeed, the occult: the sorceress. It should be noted that Helen does not outwardly resemble the contemporary figure of the witch (popularised in part by English occultist Aleister Crowley in the early 20th century) equipped with a broomstick and a pointed hat, neither does she resemble the Macbethian crone, herself an alchemist, stirring her cauldron. Instead she is an agent of corruption, attractive, seductive, and yet malevolent: a succubus. Machen seemingly finds influence in the Bible once more: Helen, resembling, figuratively speaking, Delilah, debaser of men, or, in keeping with the evocative pastoral theme in the novella, a wicked alter ego to Eve, born corrupted into purity. The bucolic Eden-like hallucinations (narrative flashbacks) Clarke experiences while awaiting Dr Raymond to complete his preparations for his experiment on Mary seem to evoke the carefree innocence and gentle seduction of the pastoral: "...there came to his nostrils the scent of summer, the smell of flowers mingled... the scent of the good earth, lying as it were with arms stretched forth, and smiling lips, overpowered all." (Machen 38). Evidently, Machen's sources are far more available to the contemporary reader than the allusion to the occult would suggest. *The Great God Pan* sees Machen make relatively few direct references to the occult, excepting the obsessive doctor and a sorceress. His demonic creations are thus as likely to have been inspired by Bible tales than from other, more esoteric scriptures. David Punter argues that Machen's books "...are the best in the rather sickly field of genre work which took up Darwinian anxieties as a base for terror." (Punter 22). This observation becomes evident when Helen's suicide is verified: "...I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being." (Machen 114). Punter rightly acknowledges Machen's exploitation of public concerns about the theological effects of Darwinism yet fails to note that Machen was also exploring and exploiting the consequences of Darwinism: the uncertainty and loss of faith.

3. The Case of Charles Dexter Ward

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward was first published in 1941, some 47 years after *The Great God Pan*, and incidentally, 82 years after the publication of *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection*. Lovecraft, though of course aware of Darwin and his work, was nevertheless writing on another continent (Rhode Island, in the United States of America), remote both in time and geography from the Victorian Britain of Machen. In *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* it is possible to observe how Machen was writing in his London zeitgeist, as a product of his time and location, and whether the anxiety of Victorian Britain was also felt across the Atlantic. Lovecraft wrote the novella *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* as a historical journal with two main narratives in the story (as did Machen who merged two separate stories, Clarke's and Villiers' into *The Great God Pan*). As mentioned earlier, the former narrative plot consists of the depiction of Charles Ward's ancestor, Joseph Curwen, and events are set about two hundred years prior to those of the then present-day. The events in the story therefore both pre- and postdate Darwin's investigative research. Lovecraft, writing fifty years after Machen, elected for the antagonistic counterpart to Machen's Dr Raymond, Joseph Curwen, to pre-empt Darwin as a figure who yearns in his obsessive desire to acquire knowledge of the (super)natural world. Curwen, and later Ward, occupy the role of doctor/scholar as Dr Raymond does with in *The Great God Pan*, however, they differ in that they subject themselves to experimentation for personal gain which is obvious in Curwen's longevity: "It was held, for the most part, that Curwen's incessant mixings and boilings of chemicals had much to do with his condition." (Lovecraft 15). Whereas Machen's basis for exploration lay in the Bible and science, Lovecraft paid more attention to the non-religious aspects of occultism. Curwen is a shaman-like figure of mysticism who is resurrected by Charles Ward, and whose demonic resurrection or re-birth facilitates his intention to substitute Charles Ward for himself and restore his position as a vampire-cum-mage who commands sorcery. Other artefacts belonging to occultism are present, for example the portrait of Curwen that has talismanic properties (evocative of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Wilde)), ancient texts written in cypher and evil spirits that can be summoned by following arcane rituals. Superficially, at least, Lovecraft's plot owes more to the inspiration of occult mediaeval sorcery and pagan legend than it does Christian theology and modern science. Thus, neither Ward nor Curwen represent figures of modernity; they have chosen to reject the teachings of the present and seek knowledge from the past, with the conviction that there is some hidden "truth" remaining to be discovered. Clive Bloom suggests that the current popularity of Lovecraft's work "...may be due to

the collapse in a belief in progress and technology" (Bloom 151). In addition, it could be suggested that technology, at least, is more accessible and comprehensive than at any time in the past. This is an evolving process with ever more information being made available to describe the physical world. To Lovecraft's contemporaries, technology would not have been as readily accessible as it is in the twentieth century, but moreover, in the post-industrial and post-Darwin age the natural world could largely be explained by observable phenomena, and what could not, was equally inadequately described by esoteric and mysterious supernatural explanations. Without doubt, technological advance raised questions about tradition, religion and received opinion, but it could nevertheless be explained rationally. Lovecraft's narrative then, is like a morbid fairy tale; a story of morality, a stage where discoveries and scientific development herald consequences that science and humanity have little control of "I say to you againe, doe not call up Any that you cannot put downe... Ask of the Lesser, lest the Greater shall not wish to Answer, and shall commande more than you." (Lovecraft 43).

4. Conclusion

Like Machen, Lovecraft acknowledges that information and understanding are themselves mutually powerful, and that an over acquisition of knowledge, without accompany understanding, often has destructive consequences. Mary, Curwen, and Ward are driven to madness by their spiritual enlightenment, which in turn result in the demise of Mary after Helen's birth, and indeed both Curwen and Ward meet a violent death. Nevertheless, the tone of neither *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* nor *The Great God Pan* is not unduly pessimistic, since resulting from the narrative destruction of the demonic antagonists we witness a resolution and an equilibrium restored. Thus, Lovecraft's narrative morality lies within the fear of abused knowledge; that it is possible for the curious and yet unprepared, to unleash an uncontrollable and destructive force. Interestingly, Lovecraft's attitudes towards transgression and punishment are remarkably secular and non-esoteric, which could suggest that by the 1920s (Lovecraft was writing *Dexter Ward* in 1928) the wider American society had already lost its God-fearing evangelism. Furthermore, the struggle with faith and the supernatural that is evident within *The Great God Pan* had been won by secularism, and the revelation was, in fact, that the answers to the puzzles posed by the natural world were not to be found at the pulpit. So, the conflict, instead of being one of faith, had become one of self-identity, and one of purpose and discovery. Charles Ward, while looking for answers about his past, instead loses his identity to Curwen. Darwinism, with its accepted explanation of the origins of man, first caused a crisis of faith [Machen] that progressed to one of

identity and purpose [Lovecraft]. Whilst neither novella represents an outright rejection of Darwin's theories of evolution, they tend to explore the consequences for taking discovery too far. In both *The Great God Pan* and *The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, there appears to exhibit the fear that discovery and revelation are, in fact, potentially irresponsible, and that each disclosure can have severe, not to mention unexpected, consequences. Where Lovecraft differs from Machen is in his relationship with God, in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* we witness Curwen and Ward effectively "play God" because the power of creation lies directly with them, to use or abuse as they see fit. Machen, however, seems to try to reconcile evolution with God as witnessed by the metamorphosis of Helen in her death throes "...as a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast, was changed into human form." (Machen 115).

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