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John Michell's Sacred Place Theory.
Alternative Religion, Traditionalism, and the notion of
Glastonbury as New Jerusalem.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Fascination and Purpose

John Michell (1933 – 2009) has changed many lives and is doing so posthumously. Michell's followers saw him as a prophet, a "saint" (Harte 2012: 203), a "guardian of tradition" (Godwin 2015: 2), and "among those who seek lost knowledge, John Michell is a bit of a superstar" (Cainer, in Screeton 2010: 88). Accordingly, his passing away was interpreted as "the end of an era" (Heath, 2009), and his *canonization* among his fellowship had not going to be long in coming. He indeed evolved throughout his life into a spiritual leader of various streams, partly even contrasting streams, such as left-wing Hippies and right-wing Traditionalists. However, as opposed these streams appear, as similar was Michell's spell, under which they were united. When I was getting acquainted with John Michell I could not help to be fascinated by this imposing character myself. John Michell was indeed a character, that is worthwhile to encounter in terms of his theories and in terms of his legacy. Until the very day, John Michell conferences are organized, and treatises and books, dedicated to his life and work, are published by his very fellowship. Additionally, his influence on the British counter culture, New Age and Earth Mystery Movement has widely been discussed by scholars of several academic disciplines. Especially Marion Bowman, Joscelyn Godwin, Amy Hale, Adrian J. Ivakhiv, and Adam Stout observed the phenomena of John Michell from an academic point of view. However, these examinations hardly reflect coherently upon his person and his theories. Either they consider his influence on specific topics and movements, or they discuss Michell as an example among many throughout their argumentation. By means of this thesis I am intending to participate in this progressive examination of the person and work of John Michell. Yet, I am intending to dedicate the major part of my thesis to Michell and his view of the world.

When I approached this versatile personality for the first time, I was wondering, which the possible implications were, one may draw from Michell's extensive oeuvre. With the intention of creating his own orthodoxies and his own cosmology, he drafted book after book, and approached subject by subject. However, as noticed already in the beginning of my research, that actually hardly any of his articles or books allow a cohesive summary or outline of his theoretical structure. By means of this technique, namely to keep a general attitude, each of his opinions appear as innovative and a greater amount of *insights* are achievable. Yet, in spite of the wealth of his theories and claims, Michell built up his theory with the help of

specific focal points. Now I am setting myself the task, to detect these core parts of his spiritual worldview, and to approach this endeavour by observing their precise application to Michell's Glastonbury focussed Sacred Place Theory.

The religious category of Sacred Place takes a prominent position within the study of religion and was initially influenced by the historian of religion, Mircea Eliade. However, in the course of innovative approaches towards nature and so-called "power places" (Ivakhiv 2007: 265) within natural surroundings, alternative interpretations of Sacred Places were established. The notion of certain common features among alternative sacred places, such as mutual origins, and global interrelatedness helped establishing a planetary Sacred Place Theory. This alternative theory is embracing beliefs of a sacred, living mother nature, and of meaningful planetary patterns, designed by means of the distribution of these power spots. Michell's contribution in this discourse has been highlighted by various scholars, such as Amy Hale, "In 1969 John Michell published *View Over Atlantis* which incorporated [...] theories about grids of energy connecting sacred power sites along the earth's surface" (Hale 2015: 187); or Adrian J. Ivakhiv, "Already in the late 1960s one can find the idea that a network of 'power places' is spread out across the planet. British mystic John Michell's book *The View Over Atlantis* (1969) served as an influential clarion call expounding such a vision and eliciting a movement of 'Earth mysteries' research and travel" (Ivakhiv 2007: 265). Consequently, I am going to observe Michell's Sacred Place Theory as part of a growing discourse on alternative religious perceptions of nature and sacred places. As its most crucial element, the theme of the Heavenly City recurs as the common denominator relating various sacred places. Yet, how the Heavenly City bears relation to earthly sacred places and to natural surroundings? And, crucially, to what extent are Glastonbury and the Heavenly City entangled, since, as I am arguing, that Glastonbury marks Michell's earthly core? Questions like these, shall be addressed in further consequences.

Therefore the major goal of this thesis is two-folded. Firstly, I am intending to portray John Michell in a comprehensive and critical way, with a special focus on his influences and ideologies, as well as his literary corpus. My second and major goal focuses on the crucial element of the Heavenly City within his Sacred Place Theory. Throughout the thesis, I shall observe various theories on sacred places and nature, in order to proceed to Michell's paramount example of a sacred place, namely Glastonbury. Therefore, I am aiming to gain insights on Glastonbury's earthly as well as heavenly relations to Michell's Sacred Place Theory; and to present this very theory in a clearly arranged manner.

1.2. Methods

For the most part of my thesis I am applying hermeneutic methods in terms of comparative research methodology. Concerning the selection of my sources, I set great value upon choosing a broad spectrum of relevant articles and books; whereby I did not exclusively treat examinations by academic scholars, but also those, drafted by members of alternative religious movements. By critically analysing the latter I was able to draw my own conclusions on values and dynamics throughout these movements. Predominantly I was observing Michell's own literary production, however, also among his fellowship I came across convenient material; that is to say, especially the topics of New Age and Earth Mysteries. Michell's books and articles are filled to capacity with *facts*, claims, references, assumptions, further references, mathematical calculations and formula, and alike. Without specialized knowledge on geometry, on numeric sequences, and means of measurements, most of John Michell's books are hard to crack. Therefore I gratefully applied various articles and books, which are approaching Michell and his several topics, as aiding tools. Albeit, the amount of scholars dealing with John Michell, as well as their treatises on him, are still limited, they helped me regardless; namely in order to improve or complement my own analysis, and to gain a more comprehensive picture of the interrelatedness of Michell's topics.

Additionally I intended to strengthen my research conclusions and to discover further topic related insights, by means of a field trip to Glastonbury in May 2018. Throughout my stay, which lasted for seven days, I was able to participate in Glastonbury's everyday routine, visit all major sights, which are partly central for Michell's Sacred Place Theory, and observe contemporary responses to my research interest. Furthermore, I was visiting a great amount of esoteric and alternative bookshops, which turned out to be rich sources for rare books on Michell and his theories; and on the other hand appeared as ideal venues for meeting various spiritual believers. However, my main intention of visiting Glastonbury was the annual holding of a conference, dedicated to Earth Mysteries, which took place in that very period of my stay. The name of the conference, *Megalithomania*, already indicates its involvement to John Michell's body of thought, since it was him who coined that term; the conference traditionally includes a specific *John Michell Memorial Lecture*, hosted by Christine Rhone, who co-authored a book with Michell. This year the *John Michell Memorial Lecture* was held by Robin Heath, a friend and co-researcher of John Michell, on *Keeping on the Old Straight Track Applying John Michell's legacy to new research*. Taking part in the conference extended my understanding of the Earth Mystery Movement; it provided unique insights into

its contemporary celebration of John Michell; it gave me the chance to meet devotees of his belief system; and to experience the commonly shared appreciation of Glastonbury as *the* spiritual hub of England. Another highlight was the unique chance of receiving an invitation to a private dinner party of the conference staff and organisers at John Martineau's house, another friend and co-researcher of John Michell. In fact, every single member of the dinner party was in some way or the other connected to my research subject – even his life long best friend John Neil. Hence I received precious information on Michell's private life, yet the most valuable aspect I acquired that evening was the certainty that my research project found its very authority and justification in the incessant appreciation and survival of John Michell's theories, by means of his fellowship, that was still actively walking along the *Old Straight Tracks*, which Michell had re-opened for them.

Thus, my field trip to Glastonbury was not solely intended to gain new insights, but rather to intensify my involvement. Apart from experiencing Glastonbury as a spiritual hub, I could create further theoretical links and open up new perspectives in the field. Mainly in the course of greatly appreciated conversations with conference attendees, co-authors, and friends of John Michell, as well as long-term Glastonbury residents.

1.3. Structure

Generally speaking, this thesis is structured along two major parts. That is to say, the three subsequent chapters provide the theoretical framework, the building blocks to proceed with; the three last chapters, on the other hand, are concerned with the specification of these building blocks. Precisely, John Michell, Glastonbury, and the *omphalos* of this thesis, namely Michell's Sacred Place Theory, are discussed thoroughly. In order to present a general overview of the particular chapters, I shall now summarize them briefly.

In the second chapter I am going to discuss the complex, hence most fundamental topic of religion and the phenomena of new religious movements. Furthermore, I shall outline those two new religious movements, which had been most influential for Michell's development and which represent(ed) his main target crowds, namely New Age and Traditionalism. I am going to observe both movements from various angles, whereby the former, New Age and *Occulture*, signify the major impact on Michell in the first part of his life; Traditionalism, on the other hand, became Michell's main source of influence in the second part of his life.

The third chapter provides a basic introduction into the vast field of Sacred Space. First, I am going to define the crucial religious category of sacred place as such. Consequently, I am

going to present the theory on sacred places, by the historian of religion, Mircea Eliade. His major categories had a great impact on further approaches to sacred places, in which I am going to shed light on the opposition of sacred and profane, on the belief in hierophanies at sacred places, and on his ascription of sacred places as centres. However, this chapter must be understood as a prearrangement for the succeeding chapter on *alternative* theories of sacred places, since within the field itself, Eliade is considered as the thought leader on this matter.

Accordingly, the next chapter focuses upon alternative and popular beliefs towards sacred places. I am going to introduce alternative perceptions on nature and nature religion; in order to proceed with two specific models of nature focussed religious belief systems, namely the belief in *Gaia*, that is the personified mother nature, and the belief in Earth Mysteries. Both of these two paramount examples shed light on alternative interpretations of nature and its sacred places within. Whereby especially the latter example of Earth Mysteries is in direct touch with John Michell's theories on nature, landscape, and sacred places. Here, not only the movement itself, but also its major categories are presented, which in equal measures influenced John Michell's Sacred Place Theory.

By no later than the fifth chapter the differentiation increases. I am going to introduce my major subject of interest, John Michell. Since he lived a long life, full of thematic shifts and various changing influences, I am going to approach the task of portraying the early and late phase of his life. Supplementary, I shall observe Michell's ideological orientation, in order to draw a coherent picture of the main character of this thesis. Here I am going to observe his Traditionalist, nationalistic, and right-wing tendencies, which are opposed to his prevailing counter cultural and left-wing fan community. Since these tendencies increased in his late phase, the examination of Michell's ideology may be understood as a specification of the subchapter on his late period. Ensuing, I shall turn my attention to his body of work, whereby I am going to discuss his literary corpus, his specific style, and eventually his most influential books, known as the Seminal Three. Among these three books, especially *The (New) View Over Atlantis* takes a prominent position, however, also *The Flying Saucer Vision* and *City of Revelation* are discussed.

Chapter six is revolved around Michell's paramount example of a Sacred Place, namely the small Somerset town of Glastonbury. Foremost I am going to give a short introduction into the history of Glastonbury, followed by the examination of a precise phenomenon in the beginning of the twentieth century in Glastonbury, namely of the *Avalonians*, who may be labelled as those, who paved the way for Michell's body of thought. Subsequently, I shall present a fine selection of the most relevant place-myths of Glastonbury, structured along its

division into many *Glastonburys*, namely a traditional, an alternative, and a blend of both. However, its most crucial place-myths in regard of Michell's Sacred Place Theory, namely Atlantis and New Jerusalem, are credited in a separate chapter, in view of their importance for Michell.

However, chapter seven's main focus is two-folded. It does present these most influential place-myths, yet they serve as the main prearrangements for the exposition of Michell's Sacred Place Theory. Accordingly, I shall firstly point out the importance of these two place-myths, which represent the foundation of Michell's claims on Glastonbury as a sacred place. I am going to observe both place-myths from various angles, in each case supplemented by Michell's own perception on them. Additionally, I am going to outline Michell's *practical* expression of his Sacred Place Theory, which he labels as Sacred Engineering. The two most significant elements of Michell's *practical* exposition, namely esoteric numerology and the New Jerusalem Diagram, are discussed in order to subsequently draw Michell's picture of his Sacred Place Theory. This last chapter must be understood not merely as the final chapter as such, but also as a first conclusion, since I am going to outline my major objective, namely Michell's view of the Heavenly City within his Sacred Place Theory.

Hence, in the actual concluding chapter, I shall mainly relate the last and most essential chapter, that is Michell's Sacred Place Theory, with the other chapters on Sacred Place Theories, as well as considering prospects for further researches.

2. Alternative Forms of Religion

This paper is dealing with worldviews and beliefs that combine a wide range of *alternative* values and faiths. *Alternative* is a crucially relational term, that only makes sense in relation to its opposite, the *mainstream*. So something or someone may only be labelled as *alternative* if there is a *mainstream* to be distinguished from: same as a distinctive group may define itself only through the *other*, *alternative* also needs a *mainstream* counterpart that is different from itself. Accordingly, this method of *othering* is commonly used by members of *alternative* forms of religion for the purpose of positioning themselves. Yet, it is crucial that both, *alternative* and *mainstream*, are dynamic concepts. Stout points out, that “there is nothing static about what ‘alternative’ means. In England at the time of the Christian Reformation, when the ‘mainstream’ was Catholic, then ‘alternative’ meant Protestant. After Henry VIII, this new religious movement became mainstream” (Stout 2012: 250). So *mainstream* can be comprehended in a global and local way and designates the groups, beliefs, ideas, behaviour etc. that are accepted by the majority and therefore considered as *normal*. Hence the concepts of *alternative* and *mainstream* implicate the notion of power and the claim to it. Each stream feels to be entitled to hold the only access to truth¹, whereas the opponent’s or the opposed stream’s claim to power and truth is denied. (ibid.: 249f.) Thus, *alternative* can only be comprehended correctly, if also its counterpart is taken into consideration, since it frequently defines itself rather indirectly, namely in terms of what it rejects.

In this chapter I am going to observe general notions on religion and some of its contemporary *alternative* developments. First and foremost, it is crucial to offer the attempt of a general definition and examination of *religion*, which may be seen as the basic building block, that allows further considerations on new religious approaches. Subsequently, I am going to discuss those new religious movements, that are especially significant within John Michell’s oeuvre and within the worldview of the Earth Mystery Movement, namely New Age and Traditionalism.

¹ Naturally, *truth* is a highly subjective term, which is composed according to certain values and interpretations of the past. Those values and interpretations are then again used as a basis of legitimacy of activities in the presence. (Stout 2012: 249)

2.1. Defining Religion

Religion is the common denominator of a myriad of belief systems, that experience some sort of social structure. These belief systems consist of rather traditional religious concepts, such as Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, and of rather recent concepts, for instance groups dedicated to Western Esotericism, like Theosophy or New Age. To all these belief systems, religion denominates the universe of discourse. However some new religious groups deny their association with religion since they link religion “with narrow-minded institutions and dogmatism” (Hammer 2006: 857), namely with the Catholic church and Christianity. Hence the concept of religion experiences great disapproval and disregard, even among groups that may be labelled as religious. As a result, the rather flexible concept of *spirituality* became increasingly popular throughout alternative religious groups, such as New Age groups of the 1960s, “For many of the spiritual seekers of those days, the very word religion was hopelessly tainted with what they saw as church authoritarianism. [...] Since then a linguistic innovation has set apart more individualistic and fluid beliefs and practises as ‘spiritual’, and the more fixed as ‘religious’ ” (ibid.: 858).

In the history of Philosophy and Theology countless attempts have been made, in order to offer a suitable definition of religion. Since the term *religion* covers such a broad field, an accurate definition that implies the whole spectrum of spiritual beliefs and behaviour, is necessary, yet challenging in its wording and demarcation. For this reason, one may find many different definitions, which underline various aspects of religious life: “Some emphasize the personal, others the social; some the beliefs, others the uses; some the structures, others the functions; some the private, others the public; some the mundane, others the transcendent; some the truth, others the illusion” (Bowker 1997: xv). Even etymological investigations of the Latin term *religio* lead to different understandings of its meaning. According to the Roman philosopher Cicero (106 – 43 BC), *religio* derives from the Latin *relegere*, which means ‘consider carefully’ or ‘to pass things over at the same ground’. In this sense, Cicero defined *religio* rather as religious practise than as a belief system, since the careful consideration of the correct course of ritual action was understood to be more central than the belief itself. Another approach goes back to the Christian author Lactantius (ca. 250 – 325 AD), who connected *religio* with the Latin term *religare*, which means ‘to bind things together’ or ‘to rebind’. This etymology puts the focus on the bond between God(s) and humans. However, the exact etymology of *religio* has not been clarified until today. (cf. Bowker 1997: xxvi; Hock 2002: 10f.)

In 1912 J. H. Leuba presented a collection of nearly fifty distinct definitions of religion – nowadays a similar collection would be even more extensive, since the range of religious groups keeps on growing. Here is not the place to present specific examples of those countless definitions, yet I shall briefly discuss the major attempts on how to define the complex body of religion within the field of Religious Studies. The discipline of Religious Studies dedicates itself to the historical, systematic and empirical research of religion as a cultural, hence social phenomena. As its key concept, religion naturally plays a major role, however it is facing similar problems of definition, as mentioned above. Generally one finds three major groups of approaches to the definition: substantive, functional and dimensional definitions of religion, whereby all three groups consist of a variety of different attempts.

Substantive definitions focus on the *essence* of a religion or belief. That is to say, the crucial feature(s) of the very group. Depending on the religious group, the central content of belief varies, however examples for this *essence* are God(s), the Absolute, the Transcendent, the Holy etc. In other words, substantive definitions aim to find the characteristic features within a certain religion, further to generalize the essence of religion for the purpose of comparing different religious groups. However, the very problematic aspect of this attempt is its tendency of generalization in order to compare different sets of beliefs. Further, substantive definitions commonly appear with an Eurocentric and evolutionary colouring. (cf. Figl 2003: 65ff.; Hock 2002: 15f.)

Within functional definitions, the major issue does not address the question what religion *is*, but rather focus on the social *functions* of religion within society. Religion is presented as a concept within a social *and* individual context within society that helps to react on certain social problems. This involves the difficulty, that each society and culture faces different social problems, hence each culture should define religion accordingly to their social challenges. However, this approach allows the integration of certain social aspects, which are not part of a more traditionalistic definition of religion, such as art or sport as a religion. (cf. Figl.2003: 67f.; Hock 2002: 16f.)

Finally, there is the concept of multidimensional definitions of religion. This approach focuses on various dimensions, that are believed to be found in any belief system. The amount of dimensions varies greatly, from simply three dimensions, to concepts of nine dimensions. The most important one was developed by Ninian Smart (1927 – 2001), who distinguished

seven dimensions of religion². The attribution of these dimensions is crucial for any group in order to be labelled as religious. In this sense, the multidimensional approach may be rather understood as a description of religious aspects than a definition per se. (cf. Figl 2003: 69ff.) Thus, defining religion is as difficult as it is important. I am not going to add another definition to the myriad of existing ones, however throughout this paper, religion shall be understood as a multifaceted, dynamic cultural phenomena that is necessarily fulfilling certain social functions and implying a transcendent component.

2.2. Alternative Religious Movements

If we talk of new religious movements, we mean those groups, which have been established approximately in the last two centuries. Usually, new religious groups emerge in reference to a specific classical religion, such as Islam or Christianity. Yet they differ greatly in certain matters of practise and belief, wherefore the established religion would not accept them as believing followers. Moreover, new religious movements are highly syncretic in character, since contents of further religions are frequently adopted and applied in an innovative way. (cf. Figl 2003: 457)

Melton defines four categories of different religious groups, which are interrelated and which help us defining the category of new religious movements. Firstly, he mentions *established religions*, which dominate the religious life within a country or region and therefore may be put on a level with mainstream piety. Hence, established religions, such as the Catholic church, have “the power to designate the boundaries of acceptable deviation in belief and practise and to identify those groups that fall outside those boundaries” (Melton 2004: 26). The second category are *ethnic religions*, which exist outside of the established religions, however still take part in mainstream religious life. For instance, certain Christian minorities in Arabic countries, that stay in their own ethnic and religious group in everyday life, may be labelled as *ethnic religions*. Thirdly, the category of *sects* designates those religious groups, which dissent from the *established religions* in terms of belief, worship and practise. Still they exist within more or less accepted boundaries since many *sects* tend to revert to established religious behaviour. Now, the fourth category concerns *new religions*. Unlike *ethnic religions* and *sects*, *new religions* do not enjoy recognized legitimacy from the *established religions*

² Firstly, Ninian Smart distinguished only six dimensions: (1) ritual, (2) experiential, (3) mythological, (4) doctrinal, (5) ethical and (6) institutional dimension. Eventually he added the (7) material dimension (cf. Figl 2003: 70).

since they are labelled as operating beyond acceptable limits. In fact they are assigned to a religious outsider status by the establishment and therefore act and exist quite solely within society. As mentioned above, the dominant religions define the delineation of insider and outsider, wherefore any *new religion* should be defined in relation to its religious counterparts: “New religions are thus primarily defined not by any characteristic(s) that they share, but their relationship to the other forms of religious life represented by the dominant churches, the ethnic religions, and the sects” (ibid.: 27). So any religious group, which exists outside of the established religion, is defined by the dominant religion as different. Depending on its level of dissimilarity, a new religious group may then be labelled as an outsider due to its *unacceptably* different religious behaviour. (cf. ibid.: 24ff.)

Consequently, both categories, *established religions* and *new religions*, interrelate and depend on each other, since they define themselves through the other. As discussed above, the process of *othering* is hence dominantly used in order to distinguish *new religions* from established ones. In this paper I am going to use the terms *alternative religions* and *new religions* interchangeable, on the grounds that both are distinctive of those established religions that are considered as part of the mainstream culture. In the next two chapters I am going to present two examples of new religions, which are defined as being alternative to mainstream religion.

2.3. New Age

Talking of *New Age* implies two possible meanings. It may be understood on one hand as the description of a specific contemporary alternative religious movement, that is crucially western and modern, and on the other hand as the belief in an expected astronomical shift, leading humanity into an imminent era, called *Age of Aquarius*, which is believed to host an improved world. This idea is related to the belief within western astrology, concerning the existence of large astronomical cycles. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 94)

Although New Age as a movement is considerably young, it has already changed greatly since it has emerged. Its peak was during the 1970s and 1980s, however its roots can be traced back to the early British UFO cults in the 1950s. Nowadays, its ascription as a connected movement is even partly denied, since it implies such a great variety of practises and beliefs. Due to this great modification from the early New Age groups to its contemporary versions, it makes sense to divide the movement into three categories, namely proto New Age, New Age *sensu stricto* and New Age *sensu lato*. Generally speaking, the New Age was, and still is, a common denominator of a variety of quite divergent contemporary popular practices and

beliefs, such as channelling³, healing or alternative interpretations of various sciences and history.

I am going to present a short overview of its historical development starting in the 1950s and its meaning as a new religious movement. Subsequently I am going to discuss its astronomical implications (New Age per se).⁴

2.3.1. New Age as a Movement

The beginnings of the New Age movement can be traced back to the 1950s, when small groups arose, which were fascinated by the idea of flying saucers visiting the earth. Some of these so called flying – saucer clubs believed in a new era to emerge, initiated by beings from a mystified outer space, whose revelations were believed to lead humanity into a New Age. Based on occultist worldviews, some apocalyptic UFO – cults were established: “Spiritually highly evolved beings, living in higher dimensions or on other planets and knowing what would come to pass, were now trying to warn humanity. [...] Those who followed their teachings would be picked up by flying saucers and [...] would become the pioneers of a new civilization” (Hanegraaff 1998b: 361). Throughout these early New Age groups especially David Spangler (*1945) was an influential figure, who offered in his books a coherent description of the early New Age beliefs. Following Hanegraaff, we may call the early appearance of the movement proto New Age groups. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 95; Hanegraaff 1998b: 361) Another source for early New Age ideology was theosophical literature, especially by Alice A. Bailey (1880 – 1949), whose theosophical accounts not only had a great impact on the early movement, but sometimes are even credited for introducing the term *New Age*⁵. (cf. Hammer 2006: 855; Hanegraaff 1998a: 95;).

Yet these proto New Age groups would have stayed marginal, if it was not for the emergence of the counter culture movement of the 1960s. Mainstream culture criticism established itself

³ Modern version of revelations from transcendent beings to certain humans, who are believed to possess a spiritual high awareness.

⁴ Throughout my presentation I am mainly referring to Wouter J. Hanegraaff.

⁵ Sometimes also the poet and visionary William Blake (1757 – 1827) is credited for *inventing* the term. For example by Christoph Boehinger in his doctoral dissertation (1994): “*New Age*” und *moderne Religionen Religionswissenschaftliche Analysen*. However, Hanegraaff points out that the term *New Age* appears only once in Blake’s whole oeuvre. Further, *New Age*, simply used as a context – free term, is quite unspecific and just a general millenarian term. Therefore Blake may be described as an inspiration for the movement, but not as its name giver. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 95f.)

as one of the major characteristic elements of New Age. Some alternative, counter cultural communities⁶ emerged, still predominantly focussed on the emergence of a New Age, yet with a transformed, highly idealistic attitude towards its rising. The passive waiting attitude of the proto New Age groups was replaced by an active “pioneer attitude” (Hanegraaff 1998a: 97). The members of these communities tried either to live as if the New Age has already started, or to live in a way that might support its emergence. This transformed ideology of New Age was based in England, had a strong disposition to Theosophy and Anthroposophy and may be called New Age *sensu stricto*. Within this stream of New Age the belief in the *Age of Aquarius* was omnipresent. “Typical for this New Age *sensu stricto* is the absolute centrality of the expectation of a New Age of Aquarius. All activities and speculation circle around the central vision of a new and transformed world” (Hanegraaff 1998a: 97). David Spangler, who already had a great impact on the proto New Age groups, continued being influential among the New Age *sensu stricto* groups, especially as an active member in Findhorn Community. Further George Travyan (1906 – 1996) represented another pioneer figure within the New Age *sensu stricto* movement. (cf. *ibid.*: 96f.; Hanegraaff 1998b: 361f.)

Corresponding to the rapid growth of the counter culture, also the New Age movement grew significantly and experienced further changes. In the late 1970s an increasing number of people joined the movement, which then started to be perceived as a unified group, based on various alternative ideas and practises. The early New Age *sensu lato* still had a counter cultural touch, but developed into a very complex, cross – cultural phenomena, mainly based and influenced by Californian counter culture. Despite of its name and in contrast to the New Age *sensu stricto*, the idea of a transformed New Age did not represent the centre of belief anymore. Accordingly, some groups would consider themselves as part of the New Age movement, yet not necessarily believe in the *Age of Aquarius*, since it developed into simply one among many topics characterizing the movement. However, one of the major themes was the idea of a new holistic paradigm. Within this idea, the characteristic emphasize of an imminent change is predominant, however only to some extent connected to the belief of a New Age. Distancing themselves from the mechanistic paradigm, introduced mainly by Isaac Newton and René Descartes, the main focus was laid on a scientific, yet holistic paradigm, inspired by the quantum theory of Max Planck and the General Relativity of Albert Einstein. Thus, the idealistic lifestyle within the New Age *sensu lato* implied the new holistic

⁶ For instance the Findhorn – Community in Scotland or the so – called *Freaks* in Glastonbury (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 96).

paradigm, combined with a spiritual perspective on life. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 97, 333; Hanegraaff 1998b: 362f.)

The two most important figures of the New Age *sensu lato* were probably Marilyn Ferguson (1938 – 2008) and Shirley MacLaine (*1934), who both had a great impact on new directions of the movement and its commercialisation. Especially in the 1990s the popularization and commercialisation continued and the movement converged to mainstream culture rather than to counter culture. Due to these developments, many pioneers of the New Age movement distanced themselves of later streams and reformulated sets of beliefs. In this sense the New Age *sensu stricto* continued existing as an independent group within New Age *sensu lato*, but the term *New Age* experienced a great degradation. While it used to be a self – designation, it now became increasingly meaningless and even pejorative. This lead to a common phenomenon, which Hanegraaff calls *New Age in an improper way*. This category implies a myriad of so called *alternative* practises and beliefs, which incorrectly became associated with New Age *sensu lato*. Even some streams, like Theosophy or Anthroposophy, that initially helped involving New Age as a movement, all of a sudden were credited as New Age themselves. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998b: 363f.)

As mentioned above, the New Age movement experienced great changes from its beginning to its present – day versions, and therefore many beliefs of the New Age *sensu stricto* vary from those of the New Age *sensu lato*. Hence, its united character is not self – evident. Yet Hanegraaff suggests to label the various streams as *one* movement anyway, since some crucial features are to be found in all of them. These features are mainly dominated by negative assumptions towards the current western society, such as cultural criticism, paradigm change, establishing (holistic) alternatives; but also by their similar basic conditions, such as their crucially Western and modern character or their common esoteric roots. Generally speaking, it makes sense “to define the New Age movement indirectly, i.e., in a negative sense, not in terms of what its adherents believe (for, again, these beliefs are very diverse), but in terms of what they reject.” (ibid.: 371; cf. ibid.: 370f.).

2.3.2. New Age as a Religion

I have just tried to show the common New Age behaviour of neglecting established institutions and conventions. Among those establishments, also religion is highly rejected by New Agers, since it is “associated by them with narrow-minded institutions and dogmatism” (Hammer 2006: 857). This disapproval is rooted in the counter cultural response to the traditional understanding of religion as an institution bound to church authorisation. By the credo ‘religion = church = Christianity = bad’ counter cultural New Agers would try to find alternatives in order to describe their belief system. Instead of *religion* they use *spirituality* as a more flexible term, running in accordance with the alleged individualistic approach within New Age. For most New Agers do not perceive the connection of their individualistic spiritual quest with a coherently organised movement, since “New Age is not an organized body of believers led by a spiritual hierarchy, who have ideally adopted creeds defined by a canon of writings” (ibid.: 858). Further, New Age doctrines, which are mainly modern inventions or variations of traditional concepts, are commonly connected by New Agers to ancient cultures, which predate Christianity and alike. Thus, the emic perspective of New Age denies any connection to the term and concept of religion, instead the new category of “spirituality” serves as the preferred denominator. (cf. ibid.: 857f.)

However, from a scholarly perspective, New Age indeed meets most requirements to be defined as a religious movement. Especially through the useful concept of the *cultic milieu*, introduced by Colin Campbell, explanations of New Age as a precise religious movement appear more evident: “The cultic milieu consists of all those vast numbers of individuals who have adopted a variety of beliefs that from the majority point of view may seem more or less unorthodox” (ibid.: 858). Campbell’s concept initially arose from Ernst Troeltsch’s classification of religious phenomena, namely the organisation into the three categories of *church*, *sect*, and *mysticism*, whereby the category of *sect* is deeply connected *and* opposed by the category of the *cult*. Within *sects* and *cults* unorthodox sets of beliefs are advocated by their members. However, *cults* are rather individualistic, implying fluctuating sets of beliefs, they are loosely structured, with undefined boundaries and a rudimentary organisation system. Now then, Campbell introduced the concept of the *cultic milieu*, in order to provide an explanatory theory on the development, disappearance, and interconnectedness of these *cults*, which are highly discontinuous and fluctuating in character. So the *cultic milieu* conduces as the constant feature within the fluid system of *cults*: “Thus, whereas cults are by definition a largely transitory phenomenon, the cultic milieu is, by contrast, a constant feature of society”

(Campbell 2002: 14) In other words, all kinds of new religious movements, that may be counted as *cults* rather than *sects*, and their commonly received ideologies, rise from the *cultic milieu*, albeit some streams or worldviews are more likely to persist than others. (cf. Hammer 2006: 858, Hanegraaff 1998a: 14f.)

Campbell's category of the *cultic milieu*, which is based on Troeltsch's divination of religious organisation, offers an explanation where New Age beliefs origin and it further allows us to distinguish between those streams, that are certainly New Age and those, that are simply part of the field of new religious movements. This very possibility of setting New Age and the general category of new religious movements apart, is crucial, as the assimilation of the two turns out to be one of the greatest problems when approaching the field. A similar difficulty experiences the relation between New Age and esotericism.

2.3.3. New Age and Esotericism

In a similar matter, as various alternative belief systems simply were labelled as New Age, also esotericism and New Age are commonly used interchangeable. As I have outlined above, New Age is a crucially modern phenomena, whereas esotericism is much older. Yet, New Age can not simply be classified as a continuation of esotericism, it is a modern reinterpretation, hence similar *and* different. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998b: 360)

Generally speaking, esotericism is a category, that implies a body of certain ideas, which nowadays are often associated with Occultism, Gnosticism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, as well as New Age. From an etymological point of view, the Greek term *esōteros* means 'inner', referring to the esoteric practise of *interiorism*, which is related to the belief, that through a certain knowledge enlightenment or individual salvation may be reached. The very term *esotericism* was then popularized by the nineteenth century occultist Éliphas Lévi (1810 – 1875). (cf. Faivre 1987: 156f.) Antoine Faivre (*1934) then again, is indeed the person, that can be credited for defining and confining the category of esotericism. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998b: 375)

Esotericism exists since late antiquity; however the sort of esotericism we are dealing with, namely those esoteric streams that have been established in the course of the Renaissance, may be referred to as *modern esotericism*. More recent streams of modern esotericism have been Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy or Carl G. Jung's approaches towards a visionary psychoanalysis. (cf. Faivre 1987: 157, 163)

The main aims of esotericism, namely reaching higher states of consciousness as well as overcoming the belief in dualities towards the understanding of unity within, have always been connected to a certain knowledge or gnosis. The term *gnosis* refers to the implication of learning and as a result on *coming into being*. (cf. *ibid.*: 157f.) The main components of European cultural tradition are frequently described as three-fold, namely reason, faith, and gnosis.⁷ The element of *gnosis*, then, is deeply connected to esotericism and, as Hanegraaff puts it, “may with justification be referred to as the traditional ‘counterculture’ of the west” (Hanegraaff 1998b: 373). So the components of *gnosis*, which refer to that certain kind of knowledge, that regularly was described as containing *unorthodox* sets of beliefs and implying a counter cultural touch, may be used as the common denominator of modern western esotericism and New Age. However, in the majority of cases, New Agers themselves are highly unaware of this connection and prefer to trace the sources of their specific *gnosis* back to earlier times than the sixteenth century, when modern esotericism was flourishing. Yet, initiates of esoteric traditions are credited as carrying this knowledge on. (cf. *ibid.*: 374)

2.3.4. *Occulture*

Another stream, deeply connected with both, modern esotericism and New Age, is occultism. It may be defined as a category that refers to a large number of practices, such as astrology, alchemy, magic and much more. It is essentially esoteric in nature, however needs to be distinguished from esotericism, which may be referred to as the theory that underlies all those practises, that are associated with the category of occultism. (cf. Faivre 1987: 36) Occultism as a new religious stream, circumscribed from particular esoteric streams, emerged primarily in France in the nineteenth century and was deeply related to Éliphas Lévi’s work. (cf. *ibid.*: 38) The term *occult* on the contrary has already existed much longer. The French term *occulte* appeared apparently for the first time in 1120 in the Psautier d’Oxford, and the English *occult* in 1545 in the Oxford English Dictionary. These first dictionary entries simply related to “that which is hidden or concealed” (Partridge 2004: 68), and only in 1633 the term *occult* was further concerned with the reference to ancient knowledge and secrets. Hence, based on the original meaning of the term *occult*, a concept was developed, focussed on secret and restricted knowledge, that eventually evolved into an esoteric subculture. (cf. *ibid.*: 68f.)

⁷ Initially suggested by the Dutch theologian Gilles Quispel (1916 – 2006), who understood mainstream Christianity as based on *faith*, Greek philosophy as based on *reason* and *gnosis* as the basic component of esotericism. (cf. Hanegraaff 1998b: 372f.)

Christopher Partridge (*1961), therefore, talks not of occultism, but of *occulture*, which “includes those often *hidden, rejected* and *oppositional* beliefs and practises associated with esotericism, theosophy, mysticism, New Age, Paganism, and a range of other subcultural beliefs and practises” (ibid.: 68). In other words, *occulture* is not a unified and coherent concept, but rather an umbrella term for a great variety of beliefs and practises that are combined in a very flexible and syncretic way. In this sense, in the centre of interest are less the traditional coherent whole of religions or spiritual streams, but rather certain elements of those. So for example

“within occulture, it is not Buddhism *per se* that people are interested in, but rather the *principles* or *elements* of Buddhism – and as such ‘Buddhism’ becomes a fungible, detraditionalized concept. [...] It is not the whole Buddhist dish that people want, but rather some tasty ingredients which can then be stirred into the occultural stew with other appetizing ingredients, the aim being to create one’s own occultic dish according to one’s own occultic tastes” (ibid.: 70f).

Due to its eclectic and inclusive character many streams may be identified as *occultural*, such as the New Age movement. I would not define New Age as simply *occultural*, however, *occulture* may serve as a common pot for ideas, practises, beliefs and symbols, which are used within a New Age worldview. New Age itself is very individualistic, centralizing on the sacralisation of the self, and in order to do so, the *occultural* resource pot works as a helping tool – both for explanation theories, and for devotees.

2.3.5. Conclusion

Nowadays, New Age should be primarily used as a *terminus technicus* that has a precise historical notation. In the 1990s and beginning of 2000s it was widely used to describe specific alternative religious movements in the tradition of the New Age. However, nowadays it makes sense to historicise it. Firstly, as explained above, members of streams, associated with New Age, distance themselves from the very term and its tradition, since contemporary New Age streams are barely connected to proto New Age groups. Secondly, scholars of New Age likewise use the term mainly explicitly in a historical manner, in order to provide a distinction of contemporary and historical manifestations of the New Age movement. Certainly, contemporary streams related to the New Age, yet dissociating themselves from it, necessarily needed a classification anyway; which is why, new terms and concepts evolved.

Well-known examples are for instance Partridge's *Occulture*, which were discussed above, or the commonly used term of the *holistic milieu*, which may be described as a specialised contemporary version of Campbell's *cultic milieu*. Both concepts allow the inclusion of a broad spectrum of alternative and modern worldviews and practises.

2.4. Traditionalism

As I am going to argue below⁸, John Michell and the Earth Mystery Movement are highly Traditionalistic⁹. For the purpose of understanding the context and the religious implications of this worldview, I am going to briefly outline the historical development and religious components of Traditionalism and subsequently discuss the interrelated topic of Perennialism.

2.4.1. Traditionalism as a Movement

General traditionalistic ideas do not essentially refer to a specific modern philosophy. Instead, they imply a common sentiment of preferring conservative, established practices and beliefs instead of the replaced modern alternatives. This general traditionalistic attitude has a nostalgic, melancholic colouring and most likely involves a certain critique of modernity, yet does not primarily focus on any religious components of tradition. However, Traditionalism as a movement connotes very specific religious implications and accordingly defines tradition as an ancient source, whose loss led to the persistent crisis of modernity, "The Traditionalist movement [...] takes 'tradition' primarily in this sense, as belief and practise that should have been transmitted but was lost to the West during the last half of the second millennium A.D. According to the Traditionalists, the modern West is in crisis as a result of this loss of transmission of tradition" (Sedgwick 2004: 21; cf. *ibid.*: 21f.).

The modern philosophical school of Traditionalism was established in the early twentieth century in France, and is closely connected to the philosophy of René Guénon (1886 – 1951), among others¹⁰. It is not an easy task, though, to demonstrate, that this philosophical school

⁸ See chapter 5.2.

⁹ In order to distinguish those terms, which are connected to Traditionalism as a cohesive movement with a specific religious ideology, from those terms, referring to a more general traditional context, I am capitalizing the former.

¹⁰ René Guénon was the most influential figure in the Traditionalistic circles of the twentieth century, wherefore also the term 'Guénonian Traditionalism' sometimes appeared. However, also the Italian Julius Evola (1898 –

eventually developed into a cohesive movement, since it has never appeared as a closed unity, but rather as a loose movement that is hardly palpable. It mainly centred around some philosophers, who may be referred to as Traditionalists, whose books and beliefs constituted a specific, yet unstructured, movement, that exists to a certain extent until today. The most crucial of these Traditionalists, in terms of establishing a network implying a Traditionalistic set of thoughts, was clearly René Guénon. His crucial position in the development of the movement, gave rise to identify the beginning of the movement with the elaboration of his Traditionalistic philosophy. On the other hand, when observing the political influences, Guénon's philosophy applies only to a certain extent to fascist subcultures, such as the European New Right, despite their unambiguous reference to Traditionalistic ideas. Nonetheless, when classifying the history of Traditionalism into three stages, the first stage undoubtedly concerns Guénon's attempt of developing the Traditionalistic philosophy, up to the 1930s, by means of drafting and publishing books and articles on the very topic. During a second stage, Traditionalists built upon this established body of thoughts, and tried to implement a Traditionalistic philosophy, namely in terms of Sufi Islam and European fascism. Finally, during a third stage, Traditionalistic philosophy consolidated itself within general Western culture. (cf. Hale 2011: 78f.; Sedgwick 2004: 22)

Referring to this three-stage model, the development as a movement was carried out in the second stage, when there already existed a proper set of thoughts, which was mainly composed of Guénon's books. These books were drafted in the first stage, in a preparatory phase. Naturally there were many more people involved, who also drafted books and hypothesised, however Guénon's books reached an authoritative status. In the second stage a worldwide network was constituted, in order to establish a so-called "Western elite" (Sedgwick 2004: 77), whose aim was it, to reconstruct a traditional civilisation.

Following Sedgwick, we may distinguish four crucial elements within Traditionalism, that may help to shed light on its outlines as a movement. Firstly, Traditionalists agree on the existence of a major crisis of modern Western societies. This crisis is allegedly caused by materialism, the lack of a spiritual foundation and the misguided belief in constant progress and change. Consequently the belief in a major crisis of modern societies implies a critique of modernity. Secondly, Traditionalists believe in the Perennial Philosophy, a universalistic school of philosophy, dating back to the time of the Renaissance. Traditionalism reinterpreted this philosophical approach in relation to Hindu philosophy and created the so-called

1974) had a seminal influence on Traditionalistic groups, namely on the European New Right, a modern fascist movement. (cf. Hale 2011: 79; Sedgwick 2004: 22)

Vedanta-Perennialism, which is one of the essentials of Traditionalistic philosophy. Thirdly, Traditionalists point out the significance of non-Christian initiation, or more precisely, the significance of the esoteric aspect of initiation. Each initiation into a group has two aspects: the exoteric one, which simply marks the individual's entry into the group, and the esoteric aspect, which allows access on a more transcendent level. For example, in a Christian context, the esoteric significance of baptism, which is *the* classical Christian initiation, "is that it gives the new Christian access to divine grace, and so the possibility of salvation, which is otherwise absent" (ibid.: 45). For this reason, the esoteric aspect of initiation is crucial to Traditionalists, whereas the exoteric aspect is rather meaningless. Now, there is a precise focus on non-Christian initiation, whereby Masonry and Sufism are the favoured ones. Fourthly, among Traditionalists exists a declared opposition towards so-called counterinitiation, which signifies the initiation into a religious tradition, that represents, in a Traditionalistic sense, the inversion of true tradition. *The* example for such a religious tradition, that appears as an opposite of Traditionalism, is Theosophy. For Traditionalists, counterinitiation leads away from the knowledge of the Perennial Philosophy and hence from the intended establishment of a traditional civilisation. Moreover, Traditionalists define counterinitiation and those religious groups related to it, as a precisely modern phenomenon and hence oppose it. (cf. ibid.: 24ff., 41, 45, 82)

This was but a short overview of the development of a Traditionalistic movement in the twentieth century and of its doctrines. However, to get a better understanding, it is advisable to take a closer look at Guénon's biography.

2.4.2. Traditionalism and its Religious Components

As I have just discussed, Traditionalism as a cohesive movement flourished mainly in the twentieth century and criticised contemporary culture and modernity. This, however, does not automatically imply a religious layer. I shall examine now, to what extent the philosophical school of Traditionalism may be labelled as a new religious movement.

In a Traditionalistic point of view, the current crisis of the modern (Western) world can be traced back to the loss of transmission of tradition. This necessarily implies the belief, that once, in times immemorial, there existed a tradition, which was superior to the contemporary one. That very tradition included an alleged knowledge of a certain spiritual or universal truth, which is not specified in greater detail, though. Now, this ancient or primal truth is believed to have existed from the very beginning of humanity, carried on for eternities by adepts in an

esoteric manner. Especially Ancient Egypt, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Masonry and the Vedas are frequently mentioned as major influences and sources for the transmission of this primal truth. Unfortunately, modern societies have lost the connection to the primal truth as there has been no sound transmission anymore, roughly since the Renaissance. Traditionalists are longing for the return of contemporary society to this *Golden Age* of traditional societies, which allegedly were based on spiritual principles and the knowledge of the primal truth. This return may be accomplished by means of learning or achieving understanding of this primal truth and further by distancing oneself entirely of any modern institution. (cf. Sedgwick 2004: 32) The belief in the existence of a universal truth, that has been carried on since the very beginning of human cultural tradition, is commonly referred to as Perennialism, that is to say, the belief in a Perennial Philosophy.

2.4.2.1. Perennialism

The Latin term *philosophia perennis* was introduced for the first time in 1540 by the Catholic scholar Agostino Steuco (1497 – 1548) in order to describe the major insight of Marsilio Ficino's (1433 – 1499) philosophy. (cf. Schmitt 1966: 506) As one of the most important philosophers of the Italian Renaissance, Ficino was mainly concerned with Neoplatonism, which is described as *the* characteristic philosophy during the Renaissance. Even though Ficino never used the term Perennial Philosophy¹¹ himself, his teachings dealt with the very subject: "A religious syncretist and universalist, Ficino believed that truth has been transmitted through a long tradition from the ancient philosophers and that wisdom has been revealed in many forms. Plato and the Neoplatonists, he believed, encompassed in their thought all the elements of the 'ancient philosophy of the gentiles'" (Spitz 1987: 320). He used Neoplatonism as a source of argumentation in order to support Christianity, yet not to prove its superiority, but rather to prove their common origin. For he understood Neoplatonism as representing an equal set of belief since it was allegedly deriving from the same spiritual origin, namely "a single perennial (or primeval or primordial) religion that had subsequently taken a variety of forms, including the Zoroastrian, Pharaonic, Platonic, and Christian". (Sedgwick 2004: 24; cf. Bowker 1997: 750; Spitz 1987: 320; Sedgwick 2004: 23f.)

At the heart of Ficino's Perennial Philosophy lays the *Corpus Hermeticum*. It is a collection of some gnostic texts on magical and philosophical matters, which was produced in the second and third century AD (cf. Bowker 1997: 425). Ficino declared the *Corpus*

¹¹ He addressed it as *prisca theologia* (cf. Hanegraaff 1998: 390).

Hermeticum, which he translated from Greek to Latin, as one of the first expressions of the Perennial Philosophy, since the authorship of the text was attributed to the mythical Hermes Trismegistus¹², who was an alleged “contemporary of Moses and the fountainhead of a primordial wisdom” (Hanegraaff 1998a: 390). Now, during Ficino’s lifetime the *Corpus Hermeticum* was thus misdated as leading back to the time of Moses and hence covering insights from an ancient tradition, which was allegedly transmitted in a straight line through Hermes, Zoroaster, Moses, Plato, and Jesus. Consequently, it was interpreted as *the* proof of primordial wisdom representing the common source and the common thread to both, Christianity and Platonism: “Since the *Pimander*¹³ was believed to derive from Hermes himself (the source of Moses and Plato), it was perceived as not just a collection of interesting discourses, but as a principal source of wisdom which contained the essence of religious and philosophical truth” (ibid.: 390). Finally, only in 1614, Isaac Casaubon argued conclusively that the *Corpus Hermeticum* did not date back to Mosaic times, but rather had a post-Christian origin, namely anytime after the second century AD. This led to a major downfall¹⁴ of the popular concept of Perennialism. (cf. ibid.: 389f.; Sedgwick 2004: 40f.)

Frequently, the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646 – 1716) is credited as the originator of the term Perennial Philosophy. However, as mentioned above, the very term goes back to the Catholic scholar Agostino Steuco and his *De perenni philosophia*. His major contribution was not only to coin the term *philosophia perennis*, but also to revise Ficino’s insights on his *prisca theologia* and to provide it with a new influential meaning: “It is a philosophy heavily influenced by late ancient Neo-platonic ideas, as well as those of the Renaissance thinkers who revived them. The *philosophia perennis* has an epistemology in which God is knowable by human reason; it is a religious philosophy which induces piety and a desire for the contemplation of God. [...] It is a philosophy in which the religious aspects are nearly indistinguishable from the non-religious” (Schmitt 1966: 522f.). Accordingly, Steuco followed Ficino’s position, that Platonism is the ultimate source of the universal truth and further on his position referring the interrelatedness of theology and philosophy. (cf. ibid.: 532) Leibniz applied the meaning given by Steuco in a looser sense, namely focussing on “those elements of philosophy which had endured through time” (Bowker 1997: 750).

¹² Hermes Trismegistus is the believed conflation of the Egyptian God Thoth, and the Greek messenger of the Gods Hermes (cf. Bowker 1997: 425).

¹³ Title of Ficino’s translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in 1462 (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 389).

¹⁴ Nevertheless the tradition of Hermeticism continued, since many Hermeticists simply refused to believe Casaubon’s re-dating (cf. Hanegraaff 1998a: 391).

So even after the revelation of the genuine period of origin of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which involved a loss of credibility for the Perennial Philosophy, Perennialism remained a subject within Western philosophy, however a marginal one. Thus, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Perennialism kept on flourishing solely within some secret societies, such as French Masonic circles and subsequently some occultist groups with a Traditionalistic colouring. (cf. Sedgwick 2004: 24, 40)

2.4.2.2. Traditionalistic Perennialism

In the nineteenth and especially twentieth century the Perennial Philosophy celebrated a comeback in terms of Traditionalism, as well as New Age streams. Due to their connection to esotericism and occultism, the Perennial Philosophy and Hermeticism alike, became crucial elements within both streams. Concerning Traditionalism, especially the combination of Perennialism and of the philosophical school of Vedanta is remarkable.

The original conception of Perennialism was dominated by the belief of the *Corpus Hermeticum* representing the main source of the universal truth. Now, in the nineteenth and twentieth century another major source was *discovered*. It was from then on supposed, that the primal truth may further be found in the Vedas. The Sanskrit term *Veda* signifies knowledge and is therefore defined as “[t]he body of sacred knowledge held to be the basis of true belief and practise among Hindus” (Bowker 1997: 1018). The body of texts is categorised in four distinct Veda collections, namely the Ṛg Veda, the Sāma Veda, the Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda. The Veda is authoritative, since it is believed to be of divine origin and thus eternal. However, the initially orally transmitted body of knowledge is usually described as dating back to the fourteenth century BC as their period of composition. Hence, the Veda represents the oldest Sanskrit literature. In Europe the Veda was discovered and critically analysed for the first time in the early nineteenth century. (cf. *ibid.*: 1018)

Accordingly, among Traditionalists in the twentieth century the narrative existed, that firstly, India was a place, where the ancient *truth* still existed, thanks to the sound and authentic transmission of knowledge from master to disciple, and secondly, that the Veda was a crucial source for that very ancient *truth* and thus for the Perennial Philosophy. A new branch of Perennialism hence occurred: Vedanta – Perennialism. (cf. Sedgwick 2004: 40f., 49) In an

universalistic attitude, the alleged *truth* of the original Renaissance Perennialism of Ficino was equated with the alleged truth of Hindu philosophy¹⁵.

Now, the Traditionalistic idea behind this perennial *truth* may be described in a political and in a religious dimension. Referring to the rather practical, political dimension, the primal *truth* is characterised as a universal or spiritual principle, “which once guided the development and governing of ancient civilizations, and which was handed down through initiatory traditions” (Hale 2011: 78). In this sense, the perennial *truth* equals the Traditionalistic definition of *tradition*. The religious implication on the other hand, “refer[s] to a fundamental core of truth to be found at the heart of all religions, no matter how diverse their external appearance and practises may be” (Bowker 1997: 750). As a concluding remark, we may define the perennial *truth* as the crucial element of Traditionalism in its sense of a new religious movement.

2.4.3. Conclusion

Traditionalism is a modern phenomena, namely of the twentieth century, yet referring to traditional sets of beliefs. Beside its major critics of modernity, the belief in a primal truth, that has been carried on by initiatives of esoteric circles, defines the heart of Traditionalistic thought. Christianity and Neo-Platonism find their way in the Traditionalistic worldview through the Perennial Philosophy. Hence Traditionalism is more than simply a worldview or philosophy. It is a new religious movement with a precise set of belief that is crucially *alternative* since it defines itself through *othering* from mainstream Christianity as well as from other new religious movements, such as Theosophy. Moreover, syncretic elements, such as Hindu and Islamic components, became part of Traditionalism in the twentieth century, which helped developing its specific new religious character.

Further, Traditionalists aimed to restore a “traditional civilisation” (Sedgwick 2004: 27) in the West, since they understood the West to be corrupt, materialistic and progressive¹⁶ beyond a possible cure and without any spiritual foundation. Now, this traditional society was imagined to be established by an *intellectual elite*, which consists of humans, who are aware of the destructive character of modernity and therefore ready to receive so-called “traditional teachings” (ibid.) in order to avoid the expected destruction of the Western modern societies.

¹⁵ In a similar manner, other traditional (and mostly esoteric) sources were included in the catalogue of roots of the intended restored tradition. Most notably Masonry, Sufism, but also Druidic sources and Orthodox Christianity. (cf. Hale 2011: 78f.)

¹⁶ Which was connoted as precisely negative!

These traditional teachings consisted of *Oriental doctrines*, that is to say Vedanta – Perennialism and Sufism, as well as the domain of Traditionalistic writings, which was dominated by the books of René Guénon. However, without achieving wisdom, which in a Traditionalistic manner means perceiving Perennialism, there was no hope for the future of the West. This pessimistic approach was combined with the Traditionalistic self-conception of constituting an exclusive and elitist movement, based on esoteric initiation. (cf. *ibid.*: 26, 50)

3. Sacred Space

In this chapter I am going to discuss concepts on the crucial religious category of sacred space and place, which represent fundamental features of any religion. First, I shall try to define and circumscribe the term *sacred place*, in order to subsequently discuss Mircea Eliade's Sacred Place Theory.

3.1. Defining Sacred Place

At the first sight, the use of the terms *space* and *place* appear as interchangeably. In fact they are very similar, however, they are *not* interchangeable. To understand this distinction a precise definition of these terms is indispensable. According to the Oxford Living Dictionary *space* may be defined as “[a] continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied“ or as „[t]he dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move“, whereas *place* is defined as “[a] particular position, point, or area in space; a location“ or as “[a] portion of space designated or available for or being used by someone“ (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/space>, 04.30.2018).

However, in this context the notion of *sacred* space and place is predominant, wherefore a more precise definition is needed, that puts the focus on the sacred character. A useful definition is provided by Jackson and Henrie who characterise sacred space as “that portion of the earth's surface, which is recognised by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem. Space is sharply discriminated from the non-sacred or profane world around it. Sacred space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity as man defines, limits and characterises it through his culture, experience and goals” (Jackson & Henrie 1983: 94). *Place* may be understood as a further specification of *space*, thus, functions as a more general or broader term. That is to say, concrete sacred manifestations, such as a church, a spring, a

temple, or alike, may be characterised as a *sacred place*. However the broad area, which is the venue for these manifestations, may be defined as *sacred space*.

There are two different categories of sacred places, namely those labelled as social sacred places, and those referred to as natural sacred places. The former may either occur as a site of specific historical significance for the corresponding belief system; or it simply designates places of worship, such as churches, mosques, temples, and so on, which might serve as a sacred place, but not as a necessity. Jerusalem conduces as one of the most obvious examples, since it is viewed by a great variety of religions as a sacred place, due to its historical developments. Thus the church of the Holy Sepulchre is considered a sacred place, albeit not mainly because of its function as a place of worship, but rather as a result of its location in a historically sacred place. Commonly there is a “general religious tendency of sacralising historical sites” (Davies 1994: 3). The second category refers to natural sacred places, that is to say, significant natural phenomena, such as mountains, rivers, or lakes, whose sacredness is grounded in certain legends, myths, or yet again, specific historical events of the very religion. Especially mountains and rivers are frequently interpreted as gates to heaven or as meeting points of heaven and earth. Generally speaking, socially connected sacred places are “constructed for religious purposes”, whereas natural sacred places “are religiously interpreted” (Brereton 1987: 526); usually, natural sacred places are considered as more significant than social sacred places. (cf. Davies 1994: 1, 5)

Further specifications allow the definition of a sacred place as “a defined place, a space distinguished from other spaces. The rituals that a people either practice at a place or direct toward it mark its sacredness” (Brereton 1987: 526). Thus a place is ascribed as sacred, if in a specific religious context, it is not arbitrary but meaningful, and if it performs a religious function. It is “a place of ritual and a place of meaning” (ibid.: 528). Special aesthetic or physical features on the other hand are not crucial for the sacredness of a place. (cf. ibid.: 526)

3.2. Eliade’s Sacred Place Theory

I have just tried to provide a first definition and description of the key concepts of sacred space and place. But how does an ordinary place transform into a sacred one? Based on which criteria a certain place is designated to become sacred? And why there is the necessity of sacred places anyway? Many scholars of religion have tried to find constructive answers and theories on these matters. One of the most influential scholars focussing on the concept of sacred space was the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1907 – 1986), who laid

the basis for further investigations on that very topic. Another influential approach towards sacred places was provided by the American historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith (1938 – 2017), who queried and criticised Eliade's approach, as I shall discuss below.

Mircea Eliade was born in Bucharest, Romania, where he studied philosophy. He spent many years in India for study purposes and eventually he was holding the position of a professor of history of religion at the University of Chicago. Apart from his occupation as a historian of religion, he was a philosopher, humanist, orientalist, and fictional writer. His most influential book on the history of religion and the experience of religion is probably *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1959), which examines to a large extent the religious categories of *sacred space* as well as *sacred time*. Apart from *The Sacred and Profane*, Eliade focussed in various articles and books on these categories, most noticeable his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958), which considers different aspects and categories of religion, among them again *sacred place* and *sacred time*. (cf. Brereton 1987: 534; Kitagawa 1987: 85ff.) Eliade's Sacred Place Theory mainly focuses on three major aspects, namely on the crucial opposition of profane and sacred; on the implication of the repetition of hierophanies and theophanies; and on the characteristic of every sacred place representing the centre of the universe. I shall now discuss these three features more closely in order to provide a basic overview of Eliade's Sacred Place Theory.

3.2.1. Sacred vs. Profane

When observing Eliade's interpretation of sacred space, one needs to approach his definition of the *sacred*. Influenced by Rudolf Otto's seminal book *The Sacred* (1917), Eliade's basic understanding of the sacred consists of its opposition to the profane. Eliade's foremost interest concerns the religious experience of the sacred or of the numinous, which is described "as something 'wholly other' (*ganz andere*), something basically and totally different" (Eliade 1959: 9f.). Now, the sacred is not only perceived as wholly different, but also as frightening for the very reason of its *otherworldliness*. It describes a sphere which is crucially different from anything of the human, that is to say profane, reality. But for the "*homo religiosus*" (ibid.: 18) the profane experience equals an unreal reality, hence the religious experience of the sacred is for the *homo religiosus* essential for "*being in the world*" (ibid.: 14). For Eliade "the Sacred is the Real, understood as Being, power, or creativity, as opposed to the profane, which is unreal, 'absolute non-Being,' or chaotic" (Smith 1978: 91; cf. Eliade 1959: 10ff.).

Although the two spheres, namely the sacred and the profane, are opposed, they are interrelated regardless, namely in the act of revelation the sacred on profane matters:

“By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A sacred stone remains a *stone*; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality” (Eliade 1959: 12).

Based on this concept of opposition, Eliade discusses the qualitative difference and opposition of sacred and profane space. As mentioned above, Eliade uses both terms, sacred *space* as well as sacred *place*, whereby sacred space depicts a large area, within which one or several sacred manifestations, that is sacred places, exist. Following the argumentation of the opposition of sacred and profane, sacred places are defined as crucially different from profane places. Without that opposition, the extraordinary character of sacred places would not be acknowledged in the same way. Hence, for believers, space is not homogeneous, it divides in meaningful and ordinary, namely in sacred and profane. On the contrary, the profane experience shows the neutrality and homogeneousness of space, since there is no need for its differentiation. (cf. *ibid.*: 22) The line between sacred and profane space equals the very line between impurity and purity. Whenever there is contact between the human and the divine world, purity is the basic condition that allows any further communication, or alike. Hence, a sacred place must be a place of purity, and its consecration implies not merely the transformation of profane to sacred, yet also of impurity to purity. (cf. Brereton 1987: 529)

3.2.2. Hierophanies

Two manifestations of the divine are significant in regard to sacred space: hierophanies, that is to say manifestations of the sacred or the divine in a specific sacred place, and theophanies, meaning the manifestation of a specific deity.¹⁷ Now, why are these different ways of manifestation so important in regard to sacred place? According to Eliade, most sacred places have been consecrated as a result of a hierophany or theophany, whereby those places may be further included, where saints lived, preached, prayed and died. (cf. Eliade 1958: 370) Hence

¹⁷ Eliade also mentions kratophanies, that is to say manifestations of power. However, kratophanies do not essentially imply a religious reference. (cf. Eliade 1958: 367)

Eliade stresses the “hierophanic nature of sacred places” (ibid.: 367). So hierophanies or theophanies are the main reasons, why a profane space transforms into a sacred one. However, also certain signs, which are communicated by the Gods, may detect the indication of the sacredness of a certain place. Depending on the belief system, there are various signs, heavy with religious meaning, possessing the authority of transforming profane space into a sacred one. These signs are detectable by means of various techniques, such as divination or more specifically geomancy¹⁸, or through messengers, like animals. (cf. Brereton 1987: 527; Eliade 1958: 369; Eliade 1959: 27)

However, the crucial point for maintaining that sacredness, lies in the repetition of its primeval hierophany. Through repeating the divine manifestation, by means of rituals, the place of this repetition reveals as sacred in the sense, that it becomes *real*. (cf. Brereton 1987: 533) Thus, this repetition ensures the sacredness of the place. However this does not mean, that a sacred place necessarily needs to be “the dramatic experience of the presence of the Sacred” (Smith 1978: 94); rather they serve as connecting points between the worlds. However, this connection is not limited to communication between the human and the divine world, but implies also the possibility of experiencing the repetition of cosmogony. In other words, by consecrating a sacred place, believers are able to “reproduce the work of the gods” (Eliade 1959: 29), for each sacred place equals the centre of the universe and hence the starting point of the cosmos, as I shall discuss below. So in the moment of consecration of a sacred place or in the experience of rituals at the very place, believers are able to connect with the divine in a qualitatively different mode of experience. Due to this experience not only the veil, separating heaven and earth, raises, but also the ontological difference of humans and Gods neutralises to a certain degree. For this reason, many sacred places are connected with the metaphor of an upwardly openness that allows an undisturbed liaison of heaven and earth. As a result of that openness the divine power or energy is allowed to flow. The most clear expression of this divine power is the benefit of healing, which believers expect from many sacred places, or even the hope of attaining salvation by means of divine presence. (cf. Brereton 1987: 529f.)

We may conclude, that the consecration of a sacred place usually happens by means of hierophanies or theophanies, which are identified by Eliade as the repetition of the

¹⁸ Geomancy is a specific method of divination, namely earth divination, that most likely originated in Africa, yet its most common reference is China. The initial method implied the interpretation of the various patterns of soil, seeds, rocks, and alike, that occur when these materials have been thrown onto the ground. (cf. Devereux 2000: 86)

cosmogony. In order to maintain the revealed sacredness of a certain place, the primeval divine manifestation of the very place, essentially, needs to be repeated.

3.2.3. Sacred Place as Centre

The notion of *centre* is omnipresent in Eliade's discussions of sacred places. "[E]very consecrated place, in fact, is a 'centre'; every place where hierophanies and theophanies can occur, and where there exists the possibility of breaking through from the level of earth to the level of heaven" (Eliade 1958: 373).

Referring to centres, a rich symbolism exists: sacred trees, mountains, the *axis mundi*¹⁹, or the *omphalos*, which is representing the navel of the world. All these symbols denote the idea of a cosmic centre and hence "the point of intersection of the cosmic spheres [...]; a place that is hierophanic and therefore real, a supremely 'creational' place, because the source of all reality and consequently of energy and life is to be found there" (ibid.: 377). This quote highlights the heavy meaning of *centre*, namely its interpretation as highly creational, as the place of cosmic origin and creation. For this, the equation of each sacred place with the centre, enables the believer to re-experience the creation of the cosmos in that very site. That means, that "because the sacred place is the center around which the world is ordered and the point of intersection with the realm of the divine, it is also the point of origin" (Brereton 1987: 533). Accordingly, these cosmological implications of each centre, allow those, who comprehend a sacred place as centre, to enter "the mythical *illud tempus* of creation" (Eliade 1958: 378). If we imagine the centre of the universe, the centre of this world, or even simply the centre of a country, the singularity of this centre seems to be essential. However, Eliade argues the multiplicity and even infinity of centres, since the quality of sacred space is essentially different to profane geometrical space, in the way that it allows further or infinite numbers of *breaks*. In this context, breaks equal sacred places and centres. (cf. Eliade 1958: 379; Eliade: 1959: 57)

So the centre is connected to sacredness, to transcendence, and to cosmological implications, but foremost it appears highly attractive to believers not simply for its sacred character, as it

¹⁹ Within certain belief systems the *axis mundi* is imagined as the universal pillar that connects heaven and earth and hence enables communication of these two spheres (cf. Eliade 1959: 36).

reminds them of paradise²⁰, the archetype of any sacred centre. Believers always try to be as close as possible to the Gods and thus try to remain close to their religious centres, their sacred places. Eliade shaped the term *nostalgia for paradise* for this specific condition of religious people. He explains it as “the desire to be always, effortlessly, at the heart of the world, of reality, of the sacred, and briefly, to transcend, by natural means, the human condition and regain a divine state of affairs” (Eliade 1958: 383; cf. Eliade 1959: 65; Eliade 1958: 383)

3.2.4. Critics

Various scholars have pointed out the key position of Eliade’s Sacred Place Theory, yet others have sharply criticised Eliade in terms of normativity, subjectivity, lack of contextualization of religious phenomena, and his uncritical and ahistorical methods. Jonathan Z. Smith has probably drafted the most important critique of Eliade’s crucial claims referring to sacred space and place. In his lecture *The Wobbling Pivot* (1971), he approached the topic by initially presenting and subsequently querying Eliade’s Theory. He applied his enquiry by means of addressing four questions to the issue, concerning the quality of chaos or profanity, the narrowness of the concept of centre, the discussion of mythic repetition of *first times*, and the dualism of the terms *archaic* and *modern*. (cf. Knott 2010: 479f.; Schwenzer 2016: 1, 3; Smith 1978: 97ff.) In the context of this thesis, especially Smith’s second question is crucial. Basically Smith argues, that Eliade’s use of the religious category *centre* is too narrow and too prevailing. This finds expression in Eliade’s selective employment of the category, and in his disregard of the periphery. According to Smith, Eliade either interprets his research material pursuant to his understanding of centre; and additionally neglects further material, which discusses the concept of centre, yet not mentioning the term as such. Furthermore, Eliade’s primal attention to the centre at the expense of its periphery, is sharply criticised by Smith. He suggests, that Eliade’s essentialisation of centre implies a biased and generalised notion, and must therefore be appraised as uncritical. This accusation of uncritical essentialisation, is in further consequences complemented by an alleged employment of generalisation and subjectivity. (cf. Knott 2010: 480; Schwenzer 2016: 5; Smith 1978: 98f.)

²⁰ Depending on the religious tradition, *paradise* is imagined in quite different ways: as a concrete place, located in celestial realms; as a state of mind, or alike. However it is understood as the place of origin of everything and as the final destination and purpose of life.

Hence, Eliade's study of sacred place acts as an influential and useful tool when approaching the categories of sacred space and place. However, a critical dissociation of his essentialisation and generalization is necessary. Especially devotees of alternative religions and Traditionalism alike greatly fancied Eliade's approach and celebrated him as their crucial mastermind, mostly in a noncritical manner. Therefore Eliade's Theory may be labelled as a precondition for alternative Sacred Place Theories, which I shall discuss now.

4. Alternative Theories on Sacred Place and Nature

In the last chapter I was discussing a traditional concept of sacred place, namely Eliade's essentialist view on sacred places, albeit appearing to be rather old-fashioned and mainly suitable for traditional religious concepts. Those religious streams, which are dedicated to alternative belief systems, perceive nature, its sacralisation and its sacred spots within a different angle, wherefore it is crucial to discuss these perspectives separately. Foremost, those contemporary alternative streams, dealing with the sacralisation of nature, are exponents of the New Age *nature religion*, Neo-Paganism²¹, the Earth Mystery Movement, alternative archaeology, and various other eco-spiritual belief systems. If referring to contemporary alternative nature perceptions, history starts in the 1960s, when the age "age of environmentalism" (Taylor 2005: x) has started. This period of environmental concern appeared as a result of growing awareness of and an alarm towards the vulnerability of nature. From then on, also the role of religion in environmentalism²² and generally in nature started to be more commonly addressed. (cf. Taylor 2005: vii) Especially among devotees of alternative religious movements, nature and environmentalism developed into crucial matters and subsequently various theories on these subjects were established by them.

In order to provide an overview of theories on nature, which have been set up by exponents of modern alternative movements, I shall discuss alternative perceptions of nature and subsequently the category of *nature religion*. As a major topic within this field, I shall present

²¹ Contemporary form of various religious belief systems, which centre around the veneration of nature, that is expressed as sacred, and which refer back to certain pre-Christian religions of ancient Europe. Commonly related to Britain and its alternative religious spectrum, such as Druids, witchcraft and fertility religions. The term Paganism was coined by Christians in the fourth century, in order to oppose Pagans negatively from Christians. (cf. Harvey 2005: 1247)

²² *Environmentalism* may be defined as "an interest in or the study of the environment, in order to protect it from damage by human activities", whereas *ecology* is "the relationship of living things to their environment and to each other" (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/environmentalism>, 09.13.2008).

the common belief of the earth as a living entity or more specifically as the Goddess Gaia. After that, I shall discuss the topic of earth energies and finally, I shall consider the possibility and conditions of an alternative theory on sacred places. All these categories and sub-topics of eco-spirituality are crucially connected to John Michell's Sacred Place Theory, which was established within these alternative perceptions of nature and shall be discussed below²³ in length.

4.1. Nature Perceptions

Nature and the earth as a whole are crucial categories in science, popular culture, as well as in various classical and alternative religious systems. I shall discuss now nature perceptions, and more precisely as they occur within the body of contemporary New Age.

Nature can be defined as “the physical world, including all living beings beyond the control of human culture” (Sullivan 1987: 324). However, a comprehensive definition of nature commonly also comprises the sky, the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies, mountains, waters and all kinds of vegetation, that at the first glance do not appear as *living beings*. Hence, a convenient definition of nature must also consider those elements, which are not *alive* in the common sense; nature includes “all the animals, plants, rocks, etc. in the world and all the features, forces, and processes that happen or exist independently of people, such as the weather, the sea, mountains, the production of young animals or plants, and growth” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/nature>, 09.21.2018). However, there is an extensive variety of meanings and interpretations of nature, wherefore Ivakhiv suggests a four-fold scheme of typical nature metaphors: *nature as resource*, understood as an usable source for economics and industry; *nature as object*, an abstract and measurable element as discussed within science; *nature as home*, focusing on the emotional identification and the relationship with nature; and *nature as spirit*, namely as the mystical and awe-inspiring *other*. Especially the metaphors of *nature as resource* and *nature as object* dominate the current discourse of nature, as they depict the main comprehension of nature within the omnipresent and dominant fields of economics, industrial agriculture and mainstream science. Since they are the driving force behind the contemporary nature discourse, they also influence religious and spiritual nature perceptions. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 37f.)

In a religious sense, nature is often interpreted “as a manifestation of the sacred”, which is “perceived as initiating a relationship with human-kind, a relationship that is the foundation of

²³ See chapter 7.

human experience and well-being” (Sullivan 1987: 324). Following this definition, we may stress the importance of the specific understanding of the human – nature relationship, as a crucial point in any perception of nature. In many cases, this relationship embraces similar qualities of humanity and nature, such as emotions, personalities and life cycles, as well as a common destiny. (cf. *ibid.*: 325) Depending on the stance, an anthropocentric and a biocentric view of this relationship may be distinguished, which already allows certain assumptions on the value of nature. As an answer to the commonly felt crisis of modernity, combined with spiritual green activism due to the ecological crisis since the 1960s, biocentric approaches are rather gaining ground. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 38)

When approaching New Age, nature is understood as a living entity, wherefore a “spiritual appreciation of nature” (York 2009: 64) and the pursuit of its well-being become apparent. It is for this reason, that New Agers aim for a harmonious and holistic relationship between humanity and its natural surroundings, which is connected with “the widespread New Age assumption that everything which is human or natural is interconnected [...] and [that] we are [...] one with nature” (Heelas 1996: 203). However, this idealised perspective is frequently sacrificed for the sake of one’s own personal spiritual development. In this sense, most alternative themes concerning nature, are interchangeably New Age and Neo-Pagan, yet if we take for instance the crucial topic of healing, New Age is rather focussed upon individualized healing, whereas Neo-Paganism puts the emphasis on planetary healing. (cf. *ibid.*: 33; York 2009: 64, 67)

Within the body of New Age, four major metaphors of nature and the earth occur: Firstly, the Earth is a living organism, that is “biologically alive, pulsating with circulating life-energies” (Ivakhiv 2001: 42); secondly, nature as a mother and Goddess, namely the belief in Gaia or in Pachamama; thirdly, nature as a teacher, which is “unpredictable, changeable, ultimately unknowable, but highly responsive” (*ibid.*); and fourthly, nature is interpreted as sacred mathematics, as it is believed to be connected to megalithic sciences or to the geometrical order of ley lines²⁴, thus nature is “ordered according to the harmonies of number, geometric form, proportion, Platonic essences” (*ibid.*). Related to these alternative nature metaphors, is the faith in ancient civilisations or culture, which apparently already possessed the necessary knowledge for comprehending nature and its sacred qualities and power. (cf. *ibid.*: 18f., 42)

²⁴ The concept of ley lines (or simply leys) refers to alleged straight lines, crossing all over the planet and thereby connecting sacred sites (cf. Devereux 2000: 108). I shall discuss this crucial category of leys below in chapter 4.4.3.

Another common New Age narrative is the belief of the disenchantment of nature, mainly caused by Christian repression of the veneration of nature or of *nature religion* in general. This approach implies a biocentric attitude towards nature, since the disenchantment of nature is commonly equalized with anthropocentrism. Therefore any biocentric belief system is not only aiming to establish a planetary biocentric religion and culture, but also feels the “need to see the re-enchantment of an environment disenchanted by a long history of religio-political anthropocentrism” (Partridge 2005: 69). A crucial element of this re-sacralisation or re-enchantment of nature is the belief, that humanity needs to *return* to a balanced and harmonious relationship with nature. Connected to this belief is the idealized claim, that ancient cultures possessed a specific consciousness of and sensitivity towards the sacred quality of nature and hence a superior spiritual and ecological attitude. Contemporary (monotheistic) belief systems, however, have allegedly lost this connection to nature. To many New Age devotees this return appears like a religious obligation, in order to re-sacralise and hence save nature. Thus a spiritually inspired environmentalism, which is interpreted as a way of worship towards nature, is understood as the necessary result of it. Environmentalism becomes a sacralised method of ritual within any eco-spiritual model. (cf. Partridge 2005: 78ff., 66) Sacralised environmentalism, as a New Age approach to nature, is deeply entangled with contemporary forms of *nature religion*, which I shall present now in the next chapter.

4.2. *Nature Religion*

Georg W. F. Hegel (1770 – 1831) was one of the first, to talk of *nature religion* as part of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*²⁵. For Hegel, nature religion is the common religious starting point of humanity, meaning the religious system, from which all further religious concepts have evolved. However, he discredits this religious cradle as highly *primitive*, “For Hegel, nature religion is crude and simple, the lowest form of religion” (Davy 2005: 1174). Accordingly, Hegel identifies *nature religion* with a certain *primitive* or *uncivilised* spiritual behaviour, which humanity escaped by means of Christianity. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the concepts of *Totemism* and *Animism*²⁶ were discussed as the paramount

²⁵ Firstly published in 1827 and mainly dealing with Christianity, however also taking other religions into consideration.

²⁶ *Totemism* describes a belief system, which centres around the faith of a spiritual kinship relationship between the human and the non-human world. *Animism* simply focuses on the omnipresence of spirits in the natural world. (cf. Taylor 2005: xii)

examples of such *primitive* sets of beliefs²⁷. The major accusation of Christianity concerned the alleged failing apprehension of the theocentric perception, that the earth is God-created; to the benefit of worshipping the creation itself. (cf. Davy 2005: 1174; Taylor 2005: xii)

Other philosophers, however, such as Friedrich W. J. Schelling (1755 – 1854) or August W. Schlegel (1767 – 1845) defined nature religion in contrast to Christianity, too, but as its innocent and magnificent predecessor. Their glorified understanding of *nature religion* corresponds to the very meaning of it as understood in the cultural movement of Romanticism²⁸, namely as the “primordial religion, the religion of the Garden before the Fall, a religion of innocence, without shame” (Davy 2005: 1174). Furthermore, the tendency at that time, to idealize indigenous people and their sets of beliefs as the most noble humans, possessing the most egalitarian perspective of social and spiritual life, helped popularizing the idea of the superiority of *nature religion*. (cf. Taylor 2005: xiii)

Within contemporary Religious Studies, *nature religion* is usually associated with Catherine L. Albanese (1940*), who wrote the influential book *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990). Albanese’s understanding of *nature religion*, namely “a religion [...] which takes nature as its sacred center” (Davy 2005: 1173), is quite general and allows, thus, the implication of various eco-focussed concepts. In this sense, beliefs within this field are not connected to any specific religious practises, which is why, *nature religion* may be used as a general religious category that can be applied to a great variety of religious belief systems. Within the spectrum of alternative religiosity, probably the New Age movement and contemporary Paganism²⁹ are attracted the most to notions and practises of *nature religion*. In fact, Neo-Paganism is frequently simply equalized with contemporary *nature religion*; even by Neo-Pagans themselves. Likewise, certain spiritual streams related to New Age spirituality, such as the belief in extra-terrestrials, UFOs, crop circles, astrology, etc. are qualified as being part of nature religion themselves. (cf. Davy 2005: 1173ff.; Taylor 2005: xviii)

Christopher Partridge, then, introduced the term *Eco-Paganism* as a specification of *nature religion* or Neo-Paganism. The concept of *Eco-Paganism* focuses not only on the spiritual and

²⁷ Nowadays the application of the terms *nature religion* and Paganism dominate the discourse on eco-focussed belief systems, that are understood as opposed to Christianity and hence still valued rather negatively.

²⁸ Cultural current in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Europe, which was mainly initiated by the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) and kept up by further philosophers of the idealized stream of *Naturphilosophie* (cf. Taylor 2005: xiif.).

²⁹ Such as modern British witchcraft (Wicca), contemporary Druidry, or Christian folk singers (cf. Davy 2005: 1175).

ritual implications of a sacralised and personalised nature, but further implies a “spiritually inspired environmentalism” (Partridge 2005: 66). Hence, any religious activity connected to *Eco-Paganism* must be centred around a sacralised environmentalism, since the earth and nature are considered as sacred, and therefore must be protected. This may further imply some *missionary duty*, in terms of ecological activism or resistance movements, such as the *Eco-Paganism* movements *Earth First!* or *The Dragon Environmental Network*. Both movements possess a similar understanding of a sacred earth and nature, which constantly gets *hurt* or is harmed by its human inhabitants. *The Dragon Environmental Network*, for instance, uses so-called *eco-magic* in order to stop environmental destruction. (cf. *ibid.*: 67, 73) These movements may be counted as *radical environmentalism*. As part of the eco-focused spiritual milieu, they commonly accuse other religions of their environmental ignorance or even failure. As a result, they experienced from the 1980s on criticism due to violent activism and sometimes for promoting ethnic nationalism. (cf. Taylor 2005: xviii)

As discussed above, within *nature religion*, nature represents the centre of faith and ritual, since it is believed to be sacred. However, the centrality of nature can not be used as the only characteristic feature of *nature religion*. Therefore, another category is necessary in order to distinguish *nature religion* from other eco-focussed belief systems, namely the category of transcendence. Different from religions, which possess a focus on nature, albeit transcend it³⁰; within *nature religion* the concept of transcendence does not play any role. Accordingly, *nature religion* focuses explicitly on *this* world: “Spirits and deities are of this world rather than beyond it, and can be contacted through the natural world. Nature religion is this-worldly religion” (Davy 2005: 1175). Thus, the category of transcendence may be used in order to specify and define the meaning of *nature religion*. Sometimes, the category of transcendence is used by some eco-focussed alternative religious movements, with a specific countercultural colouring, in order to show the superiority of nature as opposed to mainstream culture. Hence the category of transcendence is rather connoted negatively, as something that should be avoided and that applies rather to culture than nature. (cf. *ibid.*)

Again, *nature religion* may be defined as an umbrella term or concept for those religious movements, which sacralise nature or parts of it and centre most of their religious beliefs around it. This process of sacralisation frequently includes the belief, that nature embodies a divinity or a spiritually interpreted mother. The very belief of an embodied (mother) nature may be found in a broad spectrum of religious streams, but especially new religious movements of the twentieth century, such as New Age and Neo-Paganism, sympathised with

³⁰ Davy mentions for instance the Panentheism of Gus diZerega (cf. Davy 2005: 1175).

the idea of a sacred, personified nature. Connected to the narrative of a mother nature, that has become estranged from human kind, is the desire of the return of humanity to a harmonious relationship with its natural environment. Reasons for this back-to-nature approach of alternative religious groups are of various kinds. Apart from the starting counter cultural green activism in the 1960s, which helped spreading and popularizing the idea of a precious, yet vulnerable nature, it was especially the publication of the so-called Gaia hypothesis in 1979, which popularized the idea of nature as mother and further as Goddess. Thus, from the 1960s on, the image of mother nature as a vulnerable sacred Goddess, that needs human protection, developed as a core element of a new green spirituality within the field of contemporary and eco-focused alternative religious movements. I shall now discuss the very belief in the earth as a living entity and Goddess, namely Gaia, more closely.

4.3. Gaia

Foremost, it is important to distinguish the Gaia hypothesis and the notion of Gaia as mother earth. The later is an interpretation of nature and the earth as divine or as akin to humanity, whereas the former helped re-popularizing this belief in the twentieth century, mainly in alternative religious movements and in popular culture. I shall now briefly present both perceptions of Gaia.

The idea of a personified nature that possesses divine, feminine and/or maternal attributes is all but new. In western thought the opposition couple of *earth*, as the feminine force, and *sky*, as the masculine counterpart, has existed since ancient times and continues to a certain extent until today. But *earth* is not simply discussed as feminine, but also as holding maternal and nurturing characteristics, attributes that have commonly and uncritically been adopted and correlated with visions of femininity. Throughout the history of religion and mythology, one comes across countless references to Goddesses dedicated to the earth and/or nature or to the earth as mother: The R̥g Veda³¹ mentions the earth as a kind and gentle mother; Roman mythology addresses the personified earth as the Goddess Terra or Tellus³²; Greek mythology calls her Ge³³ or Gaia. Gaia is believed to predate history and humanity, since she was born when creation started, hence she is representing the beginning of life. The Greek poets Hesiod

³¹ The oldest collection of Vedic hymns, in the body of Hindu religions.

³² Commonly also Terra *Mater* or Tellus *Mater*, as an indication that the Goddess of earth is also representing the mother Goddess.

³³ From the name *Ge* such terms as geology or geography derived (cf. Monaghan 2005: 679).

and Homer have both mentioned the mother Goddess, who was seen as the foundation of life and as the mother of all beings. However, there is only little knowledge and solid evidences of the ancient Greek worship behaviour towards Gaia. Regarding ancient fertility or Goddess cults, artefacts, such as the small Venus figurines³⁴, are frequently discussed as alleged proofs for Goddess worship. (cf. Monaghan 2005: 679f.; Partridge 2005: 63)

Simultaneously with the ‘greening’ of Western thought, a “widespread desire for a life-affirming, mythic, or symbolic connection to the Earth” (Ivakhiv 2001: 20) came about. In the beginning, the Gaia hypothesis did not intend, however, to provide a response to this desire, for biochemist James Lovelock (*1919) initially evolved it in the course of his scientific work for NASA in the 1960s. Originally, Lovelock’s task concerned the probability of life on Mars, which turned out to be unlikely, wherefore Lovelock relocated his attention to the conditions of life on earth. Together with the microbiologist Lynn Margulis (1938 – 2011), he developed a theory, whose crucial insight is the explanation of the earth as a single organism and as a self regulating-system: “the biogeochemical components of the Earth behave as if they constituted a single, dynamically self-regulating organism” (ibid.: 19). Additionally, they offered the interpretation of the earth as a living being: “Rock, sea, cloud, tree, animal are [...] in continual and complex relation, with each affecting and subtly altering each other. Thus the exchange of planetary atmospheric gasses can be compared to an individual’s breath, the water system to the circulation of blood, the ozone layer to the skin” (Monaghan 2005: 679). This crucial feature of liveliness attributed to the earth or to nature was an innovative, modern scientific expression of the ancient perception of the earth as a vivid and divine being. When publishing the hypothesis in 1979, the suggestion of novelist William Golding, to name it after the ancient Greek Goddess of the earth, seemed obvious. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 19f.; Monaghan 2005: 679; Partridge 2005: 61f.)

Especially among spiritual seekers of New Age and *occultural* milieus, the Gaia hypothesis became very popular, since they understood it as the scientific proof of some widespread ideas, such as biospheric holism and the sacredness of nature, which had been circulating in the spiritual and counter cultural circles of the 1960s and 1970s. Especially the notion of the so-called *anima mundi*, that is the belief in a *world soul* or *earth spirit*, was connected to the biospheric holism, that allegedly found a confirmation owing to the Gaia hypothesis. The idea of a *world soul* dates back to the early Greek philosophers and continued to be influential during the Renaissance, when “the living world was seen as embodying the ‘world soul,’ or in

³⁴ Most prominently is the small Palaeolithic figure, named *Venus of Willendorf*, which was found in Austria in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Latin, the *anima mundi*” (Currier 2005: 63). In the twentieth century, the topic of the *anima mundi* was resumed by Lovelock, among others, in the course of his reflections on Gaia representing a living entity. Namely, that the earth works as a self regulating mechanism, that keeps all its components in the right balance in order to enable life. Now, according to Lovelock, this balance can not be mere chance, wherefore he suggests, that “the intention behind it might be said to derive from the *anima mundi*, the world soul.” (ibid.) The conflation of these two ancient beliefs helped spreading and popularizing the idea of a sacred earth, which is why, references to Gaia play nowadays an essential role within any eco-focussed spiritual milieu. (cf. Currier 2005: 63; Ivakhiv 2001: 20)

In the second half of the twentieth century, at roughly the same time as the re-awakening of the Gaia myth, the belief in ancient European civilizations, that were tribally and matriarchic organised and that worshipped a specific Goddess as a mother earth, was again popularized. The driving force of this theory was the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1921 – 1994), who propagated the controversial idea, “that Neolithic Old Europe was a peaceful, egalitarian, gylanic (woman-centered), Goddess-worshipping culture” (Ivakhiv 2001: 21). Although hotly debated by scholars, the theory enjoyed great popularity among members of various counter cultural movements, critics of modernity, cultural feminists, environmentalists, New Agers, and alternative archaeologists. (cf. ibid.) Hence, after the publication of the Gaia hypothesis, Gimbutas’ popular theory may be seen as another influencing factor, that attached importance to the belief of a sacralised nature, which is transfigured as mother earth.

4.4. Earth Mysteries

When approaching Earth Mysteries, one is entering a vast field of speculative theories and references to mysterious powers and phenomena of the earth, whereby the focusing lens is not merely targeted at the earth as a whole, but rather at specific places, which are believed to embrace special energies. Hence, a major aim runs along the objective of *nature religion* and any eco-spiritual belief system, namely to re-sacralise nature. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 22) Earth Mysteries as such, are interpreted as a continuum of techniques and beliefs of an alleged ancient spiritual tradition, that originated in the lost civilisations of a distant past and is believed to continue until today at specific sacred places. Thus, the field of Earth Mysteries is a contemporary phenomenon of spiritually motivated preoccupation with ancient mysteries related to the earth, landscape, or nature, that are mostly accepted as universal truths, leading to a more comprehensive perspective on life, and that are utilized in order to re-interpret

history and the presence. It is believed, that details of this spiritual tradition and its specific spiritual knowledge, are to be discovered by means of hidden indications throughout the landscape, at megalithic sites, and at various prehistoric sacred sites. The major narratives within the field of Earth Mysteries concern the superior knowledge, methods and spiritual sensibility of the *ancients*, who lived in a distant prehistoric past; the romantic belief in a lost Golden Age in prehistory; and the belief in the power and sacredness of ancient holy places that are connected through ley lines or earth energy currents. These major narratives have been postulated in accordance with countless myths, conspiracy theories, references to *Fortean*³⁵ phenomena and various topics, such as speculations of prehistory, ley lines, lost continents, *astro-archaeology*, sacred geometry, geomancy, or megalithic sciences, among innumerable others. (cf. Hutton 2009: 314; Ivakhiv 2005: 525; Sheeran 1990: 71)

Concerning the terminology, *Earth Mysteries* is primarily used in Britain, whereas the U.S. American version is rather referred to as *Ancient Mysteries*. The term *Earth Mysteries* occurred for the first time in 1974, when it was used for the headline of an article in the *Whole Earth Catalog*³⁶. However, the popularization and common use of the expression *Earth Mysteries* did not happen until its appearance in *The Ley Hunter* in 1976, the magazine then for alternative archaeology³⁷. (cf. Devereux 2000: 6) Accordingly, the field of Earth Mysteries is a British phenomenon³⁸.

I shall now briefly present an introduction of the history of Earth Mysteries as a movement, and subsequently discuss two major topics within the Earth Mystery discourse, namely common perceptions of prehistory and of ley lines or energy currents.

³⁵ The term *Fortean phenomena* is an umbrella term of a wide range of scientifically unexplained paranormal phenomena, usually associated with parascience, such as ghosts, crop circles, UFOs, extra-terrestrials, and alike. The designation derives from Charles Fort's (1874 – 1932) lifelong observations on unexplained phenomena. Due to his popularity (mainly in counter cultural circles) and impact, the terms *Fortean phenomena*, referring to his object of study, and *Forteans*, referring to his constituency, have established themselves within the field of parascience. (cf. Harte 2012: 208)

³⁶ An U.S. American based counter cultural magazine and product catalogue, that was firstly published in 1968.

³⁷ *The Ley Hunter* is commonly opposed to *Antiquity*, the major journal of mainstream archaeology (cf. Screeton 2010: 24f.).

³⁸ There has been similar investigations in Germany based on interests in ancient civilisations, mysterious phenomena and so-called *Heilige Linien*. Mainly the nationalistic researchers Wilhelm Teudt and Josef Heinsch were the main proponents of theories, that explored the possibilities of astronomical references in German landscapes and sacred sites. However, due to the connections to World War II and to the Third Reich in Nazi Germany, research attempts ceased. (cf. Ivakhiv 2005: 526)

4.4.1. Earth Mystery Movement

I have just mentioned, that the term *Earth Mysteries* had been coined in the 1970s. However, the story of the movement surrounding it, has started already in 1921, with the English businessman Alfred Watkins (1855 – 1935) standing on a hilltop in the English countryside region of Herefordshire, when he “suddenly saw the English landscape spread out before him as if laid out in a network of invisible lines” (Ivakhiv 2005: 526). His seminal³⁹ book *The Old Straight Track* (1925) marked the emergence of the influential ley theory, whose major insight concerned the alignment of ancient sites along straight tracks; and subsequently it gave rise to the entire field of alternative British archaeology. Among members of the Old Straight Track Club⁴⁰ and generally among supporters of the ley theory, the activity of *ley hunting*, which was the collective roaming over rural areas in quest of undiscovered leys, became increasingly popular. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 22f.; Stout 2006:7) It is crucial, however, to mention, that Watkins himself interpreted his leys in the beginning soberly as trading tracks, and only in the course of time he “increasingly suggested that his straight tracks, or ‘leys,’ had been laid out for religious rather than practical reasons” (Hutton 2009: 317).

Beside Watkins’ authority on the development of the Earth Mystery Movement, another influencing factor needs to be mentioned, namely the spiritual awakening of Glastonbury and subsequently its attribution as *the* playground for British Earth Mysteries. Especially a particular group of people is related to the impact of Glastonbury on the growing significance of Earth Mysteries, namely the *Avalonians*. (cf. Hutton 2009: 317f.) As I am going to argue below⁴¹, the *Avalonians* pulled in some form or another the spiritual and *occultural* strings of Glastonbury and helped transforming it into the spiritual capital of Britain. Noteworthy are mainly Katherine Maltwood (1878 – 1961), who helped re-mystifying the landscape surrounding Glastonbury; and Dion Fortune (1890 – 1946) who received channelled information on the spiritual qualities of Glastonbury based on its connection with Atlantis. Glastonbury thenceforward was believed to represent the paramount example of a sacred place. (cf. Hutton 2009: 318f.; Sheeran 1990: 72; Stout 2006: 8)

³⁹ Seminal not only in terms of his impact within the Earth Mystery Movement, but also in terms of reactions. The established archaeological societies called it the craziest book that has ever been written about British archaeology; alternative archaeologists and supporters of Watkins, on the other hand, perceived him as a direct successor of other dismissed researchers, such as Galileo Galilei. (cf. Stout 2006: 7f.)

⁴⁰ Founded by Alfred Watkins in response to a growing community of middle-class ley enthusiasts (cf. Hutton 2009: 317).

⁴¹ See chapter 6.2.

The next stage in the development of the Earth Mystery Movement only occurred in the 1960s, when a new wave of alternative spirituality captured Britain. The major focus was now laid on megalithic monuments, extra-terrestrials, leys in combination with energy streams, holistic perceptions of nature and the earth, and a never ceasing notion of the spiritual and ecological superiority of an alleged prehistorical Golden Age, whose lost wisdom started to be re-discovered. Generally speaking, sacred places and their connection to human culture and spirituality remained at the heart of Earth Mysteries, simply the explanations for their sacredness had shifted. Hence, two prevalent streams of explanation theories crystalized during the second period of the Earth Mystery Movement, namely *astro–archaeology* and megalithic science, and an *energetic* ley theory. (cf. Hutton 2009: 321f.; Partridge 2005: 78)

The Earth Mystery Movement is commonly identified with *alternative archaeology*, as its major objective, namely the history of human interactions and relationships with the earth, corresponds to the traditional archaeological approach; however, *alternative archaeology* varies in terms of methods, which are expanded and reconsidered⁴², and in terms of research emphasis, which is shifted to a romanticised prehistoric past. (cf. Stout 2006: 4)

An important branch of *alternative archaeology*, that has emerged in the course of the Earth Mystery renaissance in the 1960s, is called *astro–archaeology*⁴³. This alternative discipline implies the analysis of various subjects, such as “the relationship between archaeological sites and their alignment with celestial bodies” (Screeton 2010: 33), or similarly “the relationship between prehistoric and megalithic sites and the observed positions of the heavenly bodies at the time of the sites’ construction” (Ivakhiv 2001: 23), or “the modern study of the use of astronomy by ancient peoples” (Devereux 2000: 12). Leading proponents of *astro–archaeology* at that time, were Gerald Hawkin (1928 – 2003), who related the positions of the megaliths of Stonehenge to celestial bodies⁴⁴, and Alexander Thom (1894 – 1985), who claimed the existence of a megalithic science as a result of his examinations of British stone circles. From then on, any theory on sacred place was centred around megalithic monuments and their ancient astronomical and mathematical implications. (cf. Hutton 2009: 322; Ivakhiv 2001: 24; Ivakhiv 2005: 526)

⁴² In terms of methods, alternative tools are used by alternative archaeologists, such as „tracing of apparent trackways or power lines; dowsing; the detection of possible alignments of ancient monuments on heavenly bodies; and the making of a sensuous personal relationship with prehistoric sites“ (Hutton 2009: 323).

⁴³ Among U.S. American alternative archaeologists also commonly referred to as *archaeo-astronomy* (cf. Screeton 2010: 34).

⁴⁴ He further established the theory of Stonehenge depicting an enormous computer, which he set forth in his book *Stonehenge Decoded* (1965) (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 24).

Another crucial figure, that was connected to megalithic science and that took a special position in the emergence and popularization of Earth Mysteries, was undoubtedly John Michell, and eminently his seminal book *The View Over Atlantis* (1969). An achievement, among many⁴⁵, was the implementation of geomancy, as a method for alternative archaeology; and of sacred geometry, as the underlying principle to any aspect of Earth Mysteries. Relating to the later, he “proposed that there are correspondences between geometrical shapes, mathematical principles, natural energies and other geophysical properties, and cosmic harmonies; and that these principles were utilized in the design and construction of sacred monuments including the stone circles of the British Isles, the pyramids of Egypt, Greek and Hindu temples, medieval and Renaissance cathedrals and churches” (Ivakhiv 2005: 526). *The View Over Atlantis* managed to outline the whole movement, to provoke people to get involved and to publish books and articles on the very topic. Michell was an expert of merging distant fields and knew well how to capture the attention of the (counter cultural) crowds by means of his books. Especially his theory on sacred places and their interconnectedness attracted wide interest within the Earth Mystery Movement. (cf. Hutton 2009: 323; Ivakhiv 2001: 24; Ivakhiv 2007: 265)

In the 1970s and 1980s new theories had been developed within the body of Earth Mysteries, such as the hypothesis of a *global energy grid* by Michael Behrend⁴⁶, who “began detecting alignments of ancient sites in geometric shapes [...] spread on a vast scale across Britain” (Ivakhiv 2005: 528); or Tom Grave’s “localized version of [the] Gaia theory” (Ivakhiv 2001: 27), which he presented in his *Needles of Stone Revisited* (1986). Related to the Gaia and eco-spiritual discourse, he discussed eco-magic and earth-acupuncture as useful methods in order to detect energy streams and manipulate them for the good. These new perceptions were related to the spiritual consciousness of a living and sentient earth, whose vital energy was ensured by those energy currents; and in response to recent reinterpretations of Watkins' leys, namely from trading routes to palpable energy pathways. (cf. Ivakhiv 2005: 527)

Nowadays, the Earth Mystery Movement still survives through certain organisations, such as *R.I.L.K.O.*⁴⁷, *The Dragon Project Trust* or *The Institute of Geomantic Research*; magazines, like *The Ley Hunter* or *The Newsletter of the Network of Ley Hunters*; and conferences or field trips, such as *Megalithomania Conference and Tours*, *Avalon Landscape Walks*,

⁴⁵ I shall discuss Michell’s influence in length below, in chapter 5.

⁴⁶ Similar approaches came from Becker and Hagens, who suggested “a planetary grid model according to which the Earth’s energy field is comprised of great circles on the surface of the Earth – so called ‘Rings of Gaia,’ whose intersections may mark energy points or ‘planetary chakras’ ” (Ivakhiv 2001: 29).

⁴⁷ Research Into Lost Knowledge Organization.

Mystical Earth Tours, Sacred Sites Tours or so-called *ley hunting Moots*. (cf. Sheeran 1990: 67; The Newsletter of the Network of Ley Hunters, 2018)

4.4.2. Prehistory

Most aspects and concepts referring to Earth Mysteries are believed to come upon and to take place in a vague, distant past, which is sometimes marked as Neolithic, but more commonly it is only forasmuch outlined in terms of timing, as it is labelled as pre-modern or pre-Christian. Generally, the shared axiom of any devotee of Earth Mysteries comprises the notion of *the more ancient, the better*. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 34; Partridge 2005: 78)

Adam Stout provides a useful description of prehistory:

“Prehistory is a peculiar place. It’s beyond history, beyond the tyranny and the constraints of written record, and therefore it gets treated as a kind of empty space, a land that’s ripe for colonization by pioneers and hucksters of every kind who use it as a testing-ground for ideas and views about human nature, society, destiny. There’s plenty of conflict, for these ideas are often contradictory. Prehistory is a place where different visions for the future are passionately fought out in the presence” (Stout 2008: 1).

Hence prehistory is a very fruitful ground for speculative and alternative theories, for there is no accurate way on how to prove or disprove anything postulated within that vague age. Yet, there is another reason, why prehistory enjoys such a great popularity among members of the Earth Mystery Movement, namely the sensation of dominance compared to mainstream archaeology. Since “[e]arth mysteries proponents generally define their project in opposition to that of the scientific establishment” (Ivakhiv 2001: 32), an era in human history, that is hardly accessible by means of established archaeological methods, transforms into an exclusive research *space* for *alternative archaeology*. Furthermore, that part of history, which is tangible by written records or material culture, had been interpreted and evaluated by established archaeology, whereas the age of prehistory appeared as an unbiased and unknown *territory* within the field of archaeology. Thus, if “[d]escribing the past means telling a story” (Stout 2008: 3), the Earth Mystery Movement occupied and *colonized* prehistory by telling its story. *Colonized* in the sense, that contemporary values, meanings and prejudices were transferred into a prehistoric setting. “Time was to be colonized much as space had been in the previous century. Prehistory, hitherto barely charted, was to be systematically explored

[...]. In an archaeological variant of the White Man's Burden, the techniques and the prejudices of modern civilization were used to make sense of prehistory" (ibid.: 165).

Prehistory, is expressed as an idealized time of a Golden Age. This myth of a Golden Age, namely when people were still in harmony with their surrounding, with the whole universe and acted according to its laws, runs like a golden thread through any Earth Mystery discourse. (cf. ibid.: 157) The loss of those paradisiac times is explained by various theories among Earth Mystery proponents, yet all share the same goal, namely to contradict the concept of "[s]ocial evolution – the idea that societies evolve inexorably from simple to complex, from good to better" (Stout 2006: 10), for their crucial belief consists of the contrary. That is to say, the stage of human civilisation has experienced a downwardly development from high to low; and the ancients had been *noble savages* who were forced into barbarianism due to the downgrade of civilisation. (cf. Sheeran 1990: 71; Stout 2006: 15)

The dwellers of prehistory have many names, such as "megalith builders" (Michell 1990: 35), "prehistoric alchemists" (Michell 1983: 8), "astronomer priests" (Hutton 2009: 321), "mystical scientists" (Screeton 2010: 42), "Atlanteans" (ibid.: 319) as a rather specified case; or they are simply referred to as the *ancients*. Now, the *ancient* is representing an idealised stereotype of a member of those glorified ancient civilisations, that allegedly possessed outclassing qualities, and dedicated their life to spirituality (cf. Hutton 2009: 323). Generally speaking, Earth Mysteries mainly pay attention to those members of the prehistoric society, that belonged to the elite, like "the astronomical initiates of a noble civilization" (Michell 2013: 21).

Hence, the Earth Mystery Movement takes up the position of a romanticized view on prehistory and its alleged connection to a Golden Age or lost paradise. The major reason, then, for evoking this secularized version of the initial religious myth of the Garden Eden, lies in the wish "to rebuke the present and to project certain cherished values into the future" (Sheeran 1990: 72; cf. ibid.: 71f.).

4.4.3. Ley Lines and Earth Energies

Ley lines and energy lines or earth energies⁴⁸ apply to a related matter. Generally, one may distinguish ley lines and earth energies based on where they are believed to occur. Namely,

⁴⁸ The energy subject within New Age discourse is an enormous ever-growing field, which can not be expounded completely at this point. The spiritualist and metaphysical movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth

leys on the surface of the earth, detectable through certain landmarks, such as rivers, hills, churches, etc., and earth energies underground, in the earth's interior.

In the course of time, the Anglo-Saxon term *ley* has experienced many different definitions and attributions, however there is usually a division of ley in a traditional, rather agricultural meaning, and in its modern reinterpretation. The Oxford English Dictionary supplies along these lines two entries on leys, firstly, “[l]and that has remained untilled for some time; arable land under grass; land ‘laid down’ for pasture, pasture-land, grass-land”, and secondly, “[t]he supposed line of prehistoric track in a straight line usually from hilltop to hilltop with identifying points such as ponds, mounds, etc., marking its route” (<http://www.oed.com>, 09.29.2018). However, a general understanding of leys as used in Earth Mystery discourses, may be laid down as “denot[ing] an alignment of ancient places – a straight line of sites across country” (Devereux 2000: 108). Ley lines always have been a major player of the Earth Mystery Movement in order to disassociate themselves from the archaeological establishment. Mainstream archaeology on the other hand dismissed, even ignored the ley line theory for the most part. An exception was Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy's *Ley Lines in Question* (1983), which gave an explanation about the established archaeological opinion on the topic. (cf. Stout 2006: 18) On the parts of the Earth Mystery Movement, the study by Williamson and Bellamy was all, but ignored; ley lines were the alternative archaeologist's favourite child, after all. Paul Screeton describes his and his fellow ley hunting reaction as follows: “If ever the ley-hunting fraternity closed ranks it did so in spectacular fashion to universally condemn a couple of archaeological upstarts who had mounted a concerted literary attack upon its foundations and major figures. John [Michell], I and countless others were outraged” (Screeton 2010: 34f.). This example shows how deep the rivalry amongst mainstream and alternative archaeologists was rooted, and how leys took a major part in it.

As I have already discussed, ley line theories originated in Alfred Watkins' belief, that Britain used to be covered by a network of straight trading tracks, which he called leys, and which are still observable by various landmarks. As a consequence, the outdoor activity of *ley hunting*, that implied exploring and scouting undiscovered ley lines and their landmarks, boomed among “ley aficionados” (Ivakhiv 2001: 23), British hobby archaeologists and alike as a popular pastime. (cf. *ibid.*)

In the 1960s the revival of ley line fascination commenced, and ran parallel with the hype at that time about extra-terrestrials and flying saucers. The British ley hunter Tony Wedd (1919

century constitute some of the major initial sources for contemporary energy perceptions. (cf. Ivakhiv 2007: 281)

– 1980) reinterpreted in his *Skyways and Landmarks* (1961), Watkins’ secular trading tracks as “flight paths for alien spacecraft” (Hutton 2009: 321), and additionally postulated the idea, that extra-terrestrials target ancient sacred places, which are aligned along these “magnetic lines of force” (Devereux 2000: 109). This may be labelled as the first approximation of leys to rather subtle energy lines. (cf. Devereux 2000: 109f.; Hutton 2009: 321)

The next serious involvement with the topic, was John Michell’s *The View Over Atlantis* (1969), which was the starting point for a new approach, that fused leys with “sacred geometry, ancient architecture, numerology, gematria⁴⁹, pyramids, [and] Chinese geomancy” (Ivakhiv 2001: 24). Especially the discourse on sacred geometry in combination with sacred places and ley lines became increasingly popular. John Michell was indeed the major representative and pioneer of theories combining leys and sacred geometry. However, in the course of time, especially due to the progressing popularisation of the energy discourse, similar approaches, such as Behrend’s global energy grid theory, or Grave’s localized Gaia theory, arose. The major insight of these theories, in relation to sacred geometry, was “[t]he idea [...] that Earth’s energies are structured according to specific geometrical and mathematical patterns and formulas” (Ivakhiv 2007: 281; cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 27)

In the mid 1970s the idea of “perceptible energy pathways pulsing and circulating through the landscape” (Ivakhiv 2005: 527) largely supplanted the traditional ley theory; and henceforward a division of two different camps concerning the quality of leys had come about. On one hand, the approach of ley hunting in the tradition of Watkins; and on the other hand, leys as energetic currents, holding an “objectively real, and perennial, force” (Hutton 2009: 324), whereby especially the second approach of *energy lines* gained wide credence among Earth Mystery and New Age devotees. However, the two concepts are rather supplementing than opposing, since it is mainly believed, that those currents run along the original straight pathways of leys⁵⁰. (cf. Devereux 2000: 110; Hutton 2009: 324; Ivakhiv 2005: 527)

The initial implementation of energy currents into the ley line theory, and ultimately their dominance over it, did not mark the primal beginning of the involvement with the very topic within Earth Mysteries. Dion Fortune was among the most famous pioneers and representatives of this theory. She believed that earth energies, also commonly referred to as

⁴⁹ Specific names, words or phrases are associated with numbers. Ensuing, numerical values are credited to these names, words or phrases depending on their letters. Commonly related to Jewish mystical tradition. (cf. Nicholson 2009: 41)

⁵⁰ Recent theories of Earth Mystery devotees acknowledge energy currents as rather flowing in serpentine or circles (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 109f.).

telluric forces, are emitted by ancient sacred sites. (cf. Sheeran 2009: 69) John Michell was standing in this very tradition, since he believed, that sacred places comprise of special energies. He supported his theory on energetically charged sacred places with the allegedly parallel running Chinese tradition on telluric energy currents, called *lung mei*. According to Michell, Chinese geomancers had been surveying the Chinese landscape in order to detect those energy lines and subsequently to decide on where to locate tombs, temples, and alike:

“Geomancers, exponents of *feng-shui*, were consulted over the erection and siting of any building or tomb anywhere in China, and over the placing of any tree, post or stone which might affect the appearance and nature of the countryside. It was recognized that certain powerful currents, lines of magnetism, run invisible over the whole surface of the earth. [...] The magnetic force, known in China as the dragon current, is of two kinds, yin and yang, negative and positive [...]. The most favourable position is where the two streams meet” (Michell 1983: 60).

Michell compared these Chinese lines of energy with Watkins’ ley lines and the Chinese method of *feng shui* with pre-Celtic geomantic methods of the Druids. He suggests, that within both concepts sacred monuments are built depending on the occurrence of energy currents, wherefore leys and *lung mei* follow the same principle. (cf. Hutton 2009: 321f.; Michell 1983: 70)

A crucial overlapping of theories may be found in the relation of the Gaia theory with the Earth energy discourse: the popular theory of a vitalised and personified earth, transfigured as the mother Goddess, is directly affecting the concept of *earth energies*, and vice versa. That is to say, if the earth is imagined as a living organism, “then it is reasonable to suppose that life-energy flows through its body, and that there will be places, chakras or energy centres, where the flow is more intense and the energy more concentrated than elsewhere” (Ivakhiv 2007: 281). In accordance with this metaphor, most Earth Mystery devotees henceforward applied an innovative approach towards the earth and its sacred places, which were now called “power points” (Ivakhiv 2005: 527), “Gaia’s erogenous zones” (Ivakhiv 2007: 281), or “‘light and power’ centres” (Sheeran 1990: 70). In a ley-hunting tradition, several projects emerged⁵¹

⁵¹ For instance Paul Devereux’ Dragon Project, which was founded in 1977. The major purpose of the research group was the measurement and documentation of unusual energy streams at known sacred places all over Britain. The second, albeit unofficial purpose was the sensed need for some scientific credibility of the energy–ley line–discourse. The project is still running until today. However, it changed its name to the *Dragon Project Trust*. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 28; Ivakhiv 2005: 527)

in order to discover major energy centres and currents; with the further intention to manipulate these subtle energies for the good in an eco-spiritual manner. Corresponding to the shifted attention from ley lines towards energy currents, also the favourite method in order to detect sacred places, crossing nodes, or currents, shifted from geomancy to dowsing. (cf. Ivakhiv 2005: 527; Ivakhiv 2007: 281)

4.5. Alternative Sacred Place Theory

In this chapter I have tried to present various alternative perceptions on the sacredness of nature and the earth, as well as speculative theories on the origin of eco-spiritual practises and belief in pre-historical times. All those various perceptions, as found within *nature religion*, *Gaia*, *Eco-Paganism*, *astro-archaeology*, ley lines, and ancient megalithic science, follow similar patterns, and are thus interrelated. It was, for instance, generally accepted among alternative archaeologists, that the “religion of megalith-builders [...] was that of the Mother Goddess” (Stout 2006: 11). Accordingly, ancient megalithic sites may be interpreted as sacred places, which are holding similar values for Earth Mystery proponents and devotees to the belief of a personified sacred earth alike. Further on, ley lines and energy currents correlate with these megalithic sites dedicated to the mother Goddess. This list of correlation may be continued; however in order to illustrate the pattern of an alternative Sacred Place Theory, the crucial focus needs to be directed towards its devotees and their aimed experience.

Heelas’ description of the spiritual experience of New Age devotees, may be referred to the corresponding experience of sacred places by devotees of an alternative Sacred Place Theory: “Indeed, the most pervasive and significant aspect of the lingua franca of the New Age is that the person is, in essence, spiritual. To experience the ‘Self’ itself is to experience ‘God’, the ‘Goddess’, the ‘Source’, ‘Christ Consciousness’, the ‘inner child’, the ‘way of the heart’, or most simply and, I think, most frequently, ‘inner spirituality’ ” (Heelas 1996: 19). Hence, visiting and experiencing sacred places, which are believed to embody some sort of divinity or sacred energy and which provide access to spiritually superior ancient knowledge, may be interpreted as experiencing the inner spiritual self. As I have outlined above⁵², the New Age movement and similar alternative religious approaches, have a very individualistic focus; the experience of the self and the salvation of the self are central. However, when approaching an alternative Sacred Place Theory, the focus further includes a planetary constituent, that is to say, parallels between the personal and the planetary salvation may be drawn. In the context

⁵² See chapter 2.3.2.

of a “new planetary culture” (Ivakhiv 2007: 264) and religion, spiritually motivated travelling to sacred places all over the planet experienced increasing popularity from the late 1960s onwards. Ivakhiv provides the convenient category of *New Age Pilgrimage*, which implies *power trips* to *power places*, that are believed to be distributed all over the planet, holding *natural power*. The notion of *power* mainly refers to the energy and spirituality, that are believed to be found within any sacred place. Hence to experience spirituality, and to activate the natural power or energy, it is necessary to visit those sacred sites. (cf. *ibid.*: 263, 265, 268) New Age travelling must be seen within the context of a New Age *nature religion*, putting special emphasis on Gaia, as the mother Goddess, who is palpable at sacred places, which are transfigured as “Gaia’s theophanies” (*ibid.*: 268). Thus it makes sense, to compare travelling, within the frame of New Age *nature religion*, with *New Age Pilgrimage*. Generally, pilgrimage may be defined in the following way: “The literal or metaphorical movement to a condition or place of holiness or healing. [...] Exterior pilgrimage is a journey to some place which is either itself associated with the resources or goals of a religion, or which is the location of objects which may assist the pilgrim” (Bowker 1997: 752). Hence, *New Age Pilgrimage* is the solitary or communal journey to places, that are considered sacred within the context of New Age *nature religion*, in order to heal, cleanse, or find salvation⁵³.

Among the fellowship of the “New Age Earth pilgrims” (Ivakhiv 2007: 268) exists a common consensus on the quality of their pilgrimage sites, namely “as places of personal transformation, [...] generally associated with cultural traditions that are thought to be sufficiently older than and different from western modernity such that they come to represent an alternative to the disenchanted West.” (*ibid.*: 267). However, they are at discord, regarding the precise amount and selection⁵⁴ of planetary sacred places.

Probably the most convenient example of a *New Age Pilgrimage* event was *The Harmonic Convergence*, which happened in 1987, and whose intention was the collective experience of sacred places. The initiator of this global meditation event, appealed to “144,000 people to meditate, pray, chant and visualise at sacred sites and power spots throughout the world”

⁵³ The goals of these so-called power trips do not solely apply to the individual or to the group, but rather to the well-being and salvation of the entire humankind. A special focus is laid on Gaia, who is commonly referred to as the hurt or sick mother. (cf. Partridge 2009: 64f.)

⁵⁴ Various New Age authors have tried to pool the most important sacred places on the planet. For instance, Robert Coon’s *Revelations from the Melchisedek Priesthood*, which describes the twelve sacred places on earth; or Richard Leviton’s *The Galaxy on Earth: A Traveler’s Guide to the Planet’s Visionary Geography* (2002), which includes a list of fifty-six sacred places. Both books mention Glastonbury as a sacred place. (cf. Ivakhiv 2007: 268, 278)

(ibid.: 265f.). To *experience* a sacred place implies a variety of meanings. However, in the course of *The Harmonic Convergence*, it mostly referred to the energy and ancient wisdom, that may be perceived and applied best at these sites; and that may even help “to launch the [...] transition into a New Age of peace and harmony” (ibid.: 266).

It may be concluded, that the common thread among any exponent of an alternative Sacred Place Theory is the tripartite belief in the non-homogeneousness of space; the belief in the inherent energy, power or wisdom within any sacred place; and in the equality of all sacred places. When comparing this alternative approach to Eliade’s traditional Sacred Place Theory, the parallels are obvious. Hence, most alternative Sacred Place Theory view themselves as in accordance with Eliade’s initial concept, albeit involving a precise counter cultural colouring, an eco-spiritual approach and speculative Earth Mystery theories.

5. John Michell

In this chapter I am going to introduce the controversial figure of John Michell, who exercised wide influence on the British Earth Mystery Movement and on the perception of Glastonbury as *the* crucial sacred place in England. Firstly I shall offer an overview of his biography, whereby I am going to divide his process of creation into an early and a late phase. Subsequently, I shall observe influencing factors on Michell and his impact on various agents and fields, especially on British alternative religious movements. Another thematic priority is laid on Michell’s seminal books. In a concluding manner, I shall finally outline his specific Sacred Place Theory; which works at the same time as a preparatory introduction to the last two chapters.

5.1. Biography

John Frederick Carden Michell was born on the ninth of February 1933 in London, England, and died at the age of seventy-six on the twenty-fourth of April 2009 in Poole, England. He was born into a wealthy middle class Cornish family, whereby his father Alfred was working as an estate agent, and his mother Enid was the daughter of Sir Frederick Carden, who had the title of a baronet. Together with his two younger siblings Charles and Clare, Michell was raised at his maternal grandfather’s country estate Stargroves, which is located close by to Newbury. This time of his life, in the peaceful rural environment of his grandfather’s house,

marked for Michell the initial starting point of a lifelong affinity towards nature and the British countryside. (cf. Heath 2009; Harte 2012: 204; Martin 2009; Screeton 2010: 1)

Before Michell went to College, he attended the well-known Cheam preparatory school⁵⁵ in the county of Hampshire, where he took up the position of the head boy. He continued his education at Eton College and subsequently served his obligatory two years in the Royal Army. During his service, he got the chance to attend the School of Slavonic Studies, and as part of his duty, he finally worked as a Russian and German translator within the arm of Naval Intelligence. After this mandatory period, he continued his passion for languages and enrolled at Trinity College, Cambridge for Modern Languages, specialising in Russian, in which he was fluent, and German. However, Michell never graduated from Cambridge. Reasons for the withdrawal from his studies may be found in his reluctance of the teaching methods and contents at Cambridge, namely their rather rationalistic and materialistic fashion, which Michell deeply detested, as well as within his hedonistic lifestyle, namely his affinity for mind expanding substances, like Hashish or LSD⁵⁶, or simply, as his friend Paul Screeton supposed, “because he could not get out of bed in time for exams” (Screeton 2010: 2; cf. *ibid.* 7, 93). Once Michell turned his back on an academic degree and career, he was persuaded by his father to start working in the family real estate business in London. However, dealing with properties was for Michell “quite amusing, but of course I wasn’t any good at it” (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 2), which is why, after only a short and apparently unsuccessful period, Michell realized, that also the estate business was not meant to be his destiny either. Even so, he was “one born into wealth” (Screeton 2010: 2) and hence was holding a fortune, which he lavishly spent in the course of his bohemian lifestyle in London of the 1960s. (cf. Hale 2011: 81; Heath 2009; Screeton 2010: 2)

5.1.1. Early Phase

Living in London during the heyday of British psychedelic counter culture definitely shaped Michell in his way of thinking and theorizing. Especially the bohemian neighbourhoods of Soho and Notting Hill Gate allowed Michell building up a vast social network, and he “was well placed to observe and influence the changing society” (Screeton 2010: 68). Hence, it was not long before he was familiar with most of the counter cultural *celebrities* of London. Even

⁵⁵ Another famous attendee of that renowned and elitist preparatory school was Prince Charles.

⁵⁶ Lysergic acid diethylamide is a hallucinogenic substance, that was discovered by the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann.

without yet being a successful author, his popularity established itself rapidly among those bohemians of Soho and Notting Hill Gate. “With all the self-assurance, impeccable manners and debonair charm [...], John was equally at ease in the company of intellectuals and artists, or rogues and swindlers” (ibid.: 2). The young Michell lived a non-judgmental and egalitarian attitude towards his fellows and welcomed everybody in a cordial manner in his home. Accordingly, Michell was commonly referred to as an “exemplary host” (ibid.) and “exceedingly fine company” (Heath, 2009), which was reflected in “the constant traffic of people passing through” (ibid.). It was in those days of his early popularity that he “form[ed] part of the Rolling Stones’ entourage” (Lachman 2009: 39). Consequently, he was regularly surrounded by artists, such as Michel Rainy, the fashion designer of John Lennon and Mick Jagger, Brian Jones, the original leader and founder of the Rolling Stones, Anita Pallenberg, a popular style icon and the unofficial muse of the Rolling Stones, and, of course, Mick Jagger himself, who became a lifelong friend, mainly due to their common penchant for cricket. (cf. Lachman 2009: 39; Screeton 2010: 98) Apart from the counter cultural artists and the soon-to-be rock legends⁵⁷, Michell built friendships with writers and editors of the main British alternative press, and in the course of time he became an underground writer for alternative magazines, such as *International Times*, *Oz*, *Fapto*, *Friends and Frenz*. These underground magazines, did not solely cause Michell’s early success, but gave him also first insights into rather radical perspectives, since these magazines “were hotbeds of extreme politics, anti-authoritarian, anti-police and pro-drugs” (Screeton 2010: 52, 68).

Michell published his first book in 1967 at the age of thirty-four, which marked the outset of a new chapter in his life. Up to that point, he lived a hedonistic, bohemian life without a certain vision and definitely without any considerations on how to make a living. Owing to his efforts during those years working in his father’s enterprise, he did possess a property in Notting Hill, but an apartment in Notting Hill and the kind of lifestyle he used to have, came along with high costs of living. Once Michell realized, that his inheritance was on the wane, and that his general financial situation became increasingly critical, he decided to take up the trade of an author. “Writing thus became John’s full-time profession, rather more out of necessity than choice” (ibid.: 3). Presumably, not even Michell himself might have expected that his first book would have been subsequent by that many sequels. However, in the course of time and with the steady accumulation of publications, a new major purpose of writing emerged: to gently educate his readers. Michell emphasized on the importance of providing alternative

⁵⁷ Another influential rock band, that was highly influenced by Michell’s thoughts and concept, are the Grateful Dead, who eventually also joined Michell’s R.I.L.K.O. (cf. Screeton 2010: 101).

perspectives and in this spirit he advocated against popular mainstream theories, such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution⁵⁸. Accordingly, his disciples saw his writing as a contribution to "higher education [...] with the intention of making us more thoughtful, less confident in the experts, and less receptive to political agendas sugar-coated in moralism" (Godwin 2015: 8; cf. *ibid.*; Lachman 2009: 39f.; Screeton 2010: 81, 88).

That initial book of his body of work was called *The Flying Saucer Vision: The Holy Grail Restored* (1967) and in Michell's words, it was "the right book at the right time" (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 6); whereby it was actually a rewritten version, since Michell lost the original manuscript in a café in London. Proceeding to this first seminal work, Michell wrote an article on the very topic, simply labelled *Flying Saucers* (1967), which was published in the underground magazine *International Times*. The basic ideas of the article, as well as the book, focused on flying saucers, interpreted in a Jungian way⁵⁹, that fly along straight tracks, namely ley lines, which eventually all lead towards Glastonbury. (cf. Marshall 2009: 46; Screeton 2010: 6, 8) Flying saucers and intelligent life from outer space represented highly hyped topics in the late 1960s and Michell utilized them as an *omen* for a New Age of changed awareness, and to break out of the rationalistic and materialistic fashion he had experienced among his fellows in Cambridge. (cf. Screeton 2010: 7) However, the basic ideas of his book, namely theories concerning ley lines, did not originate from Michell himself. The crucial turning point in Michell's worldview was a speech given by Jimmy Goddard in 1965 at the Kensington Central Library, which was titled *Leys and Orthotemies*, and discussed the possibility of flying saucers moving along ley lines. In those days, Michell was still ignorant of ley lines, however, inspired by the speech, he encountered the topic and came inevitably across Alfred Watkins and his *The Old Straight Track: Its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sites, and Mark Stones* (1925). Watkins became Michell's major idol and he wished to follow in Watkins' footsteps as a "neo-antiquarian" (*ibid.*: 102). Accordingly, Michell was very keen on

⁵⁸ Michell was a strong opponent of Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882), whose Theory of Evolution has done, according to Michell, a lot of harm. He labelled Darwin's theory as a materialistic and vulgar cosmogony or creation myth and the faith in it as a form of secular religion: "Many writers have identified the Darwinian faith as a form of secular religion. More exactly, it is a cosmogony or creation myth and it has the same magical, fairytale appeal as have all traditional cosmogonies" (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 70; cf. Screeton 2010: 53, 70).

⁵⁹ Jung interpreted UFOs as a *modern myth*. In his view, UFOs confirmed his theory of archetypes, which implies the idea "that there are basic patterns or images in human experience which find their expression or manifestation in all ages and cultures" (Nicholson 2009: 41). Jung labelled these archetypes as *psychic dominants*, which basically conforms to the traditional belief in Gods. Hence, Jung interpreted UFOs as a modernized religious myth. (cf. *ibid.*; Screeton 2010: 6)

Tony Wedd's claim, that flying saucers move along these very specific Old Straight Tracks of Watkins. (cf. *ibid.*: 10)

After his first publication, Michell cautiously started to embrace the field of Earth Mysteries, with a very specific British and counter cultural touch. However, by no later than his second publication, Michell definitely achieved the position of a “countercultural icon” (*ibid.*: 3) and as the “father figure” (Heath, 2009) of the British Earth Mystery Movement. The first edition of *The View Over Atlantis* (1969) went out of print in no time and achieved cult status among alternative, counter cultural and underground groups alike. “It took its place in the growing body of Earth Mysteries literature and was so persuasive that for many outsiders it came to define the genre altogether” (Harte 2012: 205). Michell wrote about ley lines, earth energies, sacred engineering, UFOs, esoteric numerology, sacred geometry, meaningful patterns in the landscape, sacred places, and much more. Many topics, which Michell introduced in *The View Over Atlantis*, continued to be Michell's major themes in his subsequent books and articles. (cf. Rickard 2009: 38; Screeton 2010: 16f.)

1969 was also the year, that Michell founded together with Keith Critchlow and Mary Williams the *Research Into Lost Knowledge Organisation*, short R.I.L.K.O., which flourishes until today with lectures, events and publications⁶⁰. On its homepage, the ambition of the organisation is stated in the following way: “RILKO (the Research Into Lost Knowledge Organisation) is dedicated to studies in patterns – hidden knowledge in myth, legend, number, geometry, art, music, architecture, megalithic structures and the geomantic layout of cities / landscapes” (<http://www.rilko.org>, 10.10.2018). These target topics conform with Michell's major fields of interest. Generally speaking, the period from the 1970s onward, meaning the period after Michell had established some fame⁶¹ owing to his two early counter cultural bestsellers, was scarred by three major projects or topics: firstly, challenging mainstream archaeology by means of ley lines, *astro-archaeology* and theories on *Megalithomania*⁶²; secondly, the advocacy of alternative approaches to science and history, mainly through the defence of ancient metrology and the currency of Earth Mysteries and *Fortean* topics; and thirdly, his campaign for British counter culture, which prominently is related to Glastonbury Festival. I shall now briefly examine these three major fields.

⁶⁰ Michell also published frequently in the biannual R.I.L.K.O. journal. After Michell's death, R.I.L.K.O. posthumously honoured him as its Professor Emeritus. (cf. Screeton 2010: 85)

⁶¹ Albeit Michell would never describe himself as famous: “Oh, I was never *famous*! [...] I achieved a certain notoriety...” (Michell, in Marshall 2009: 47).

⁶² Michell coined the term, describing the enthusiasm or mania for ancient sites and megalithic monuments (cf. Screeton 2010: 32f.).

I have already discussed, that Alfred Watkins' ley lines had a great impact on Michell and his successive approximation of alternative archaeology. Another important influence in his early examinations of this favourite topic of his was Alexander Thom and his *Megalithic Sites in Britain* (1967), which introduced him to the field of *astro-archaeology*⁶³. That is to say, Michell embraced the idea of astronomical implications of megalithic sites, namely their arrangement according to the heavenly bodies and the extension of terrestrial ley lines to those lines connecting the stones with the stars. (cf. Nicholson 2009: 41) Michell turned into a passionate ley hunter and advocate of *Megalithomania*. In his major book on the very topic, namely *Megalithomania: Artists, Antiquarians & Archaeologists at the Old Stone Monuments* (1982), he describes the excitement about megalithic monuments as following: "In the early years of this century the astronomical interpreters of prehistoric sites flourished, and attracted followers in Ireland and Brittany. All sorts of people joined in, from professional surveyors to clergymen and mystics, creating a wave of popular enthusiasm for megalithic sites or, as here styled, 'megalithomania'" (Michell 2007: 8). According to Michell, attraction to megalithic monuments is eternal, yet cyclical. In the eighteenth century *Megalithomania* was caused by William Stukeley's connection of Stonehenge with the Druids. The next, revived *Megalithomania* occurred from the 1960s onward due to Alexander Thom's new approach towards megalithic monuments in combination with Watkins' leys. (cf. Michell 2007: 8; Screeton 2010: 32f.) Michell thenceforward was very active at events and publications organised by the ley hunting and alternative archaeology community, such as regularly held Ley Hunting Moots⁶⁴ or the monthly appearance of *The Ley Hunter* magazine from 1969 onwards. However, he was quite aware of the outsider perspective and especially the scientific opinion on leys and *astro-archaeology*: "All this excitement about a collection of battered old rocks and mounds of earth must seem puzzling to those who have yet had no direct experience of megalithomania" (Michell 2007: 8f.; cf. Screeton 2010: 18).

By no later than 1970, Michell paid particular attention to a field, which held crucial importance to him, namely the field of ancient metrology. Michell discussed the sacredness of ancient measurements due to their alleged link to sacred geometry, to sacred engineering, and to the human body. He believed, that the megalithic builders of Stonehenge possessed insights

⁶³ Michell published a book on the very topic, namely *A Little History of Astro-Archaeology Stages In The Transformation Of A Heresy* (1977).

⁶⁴ Rural meetings of passionate ley hunters and Earth Mystery groups in order to find new alignments of ancient monuments or leys. As an inspiration for all subsequent Moots acted the fiftieth anniversary party of Watkins' first ley *discovery* in 1921, the so-called *Mystics' picnic*, which was held on the first ley, close by Blackwardine, Herefordshire, in 1971. (cf. Screeton 2010: 18, 30)

on the sacred origin of those ancient measures and hence used them to build megalithic monuments according to the calculated distances between the heavenly bodies and the earth. Hence, ancient metrology was interpreted by Michell as a “tool [...] to investigate monuments placed on the landscape” (Heath, 2009). As a starting point for Michell’s increased attention and endeavour, served the set up of a *Metrickation Board* by the British government in 1969, which declared all ancient imperial measures, like foot, yard, furlong, etc. as obsolete. However, for Michell, who strongly believed in the sacred origin of those measures on which he based many of his theories and calculations, the inception of the Metrickation Board seemed like a horrendous attack against his faith. He insisted, that “the English foot is the sole survivor of that universal system of ancient measures derived from the dimensions of the earth itself” (Godwin 2015: 4). Consequently, in 1970, he established the *Anti-Metrickation Board* as a reaction to the governmental assault on his metrological *protégés*. The major purpose of this reversed enterprise was explanatory work and spreading knowledge on the importance of the ancient measures. This purpose was approached by means of slogans, like “Stand up for the foot” (Screeton 2010: 69), media-events, such as the “Foot-Ball” (Godwin 2015: 4), a newsletter with biblical implications⁶⁵, called *Just Measure*, and the first Radical-Traditionalist Paper, called *A Defence of Sacred Measures* (1972). In the course of his life, Michell and some of his companions in that matter⁶⁶, dedicated a lot of books and articles⁶⁷ on this favourite topic of his. (cf. Godwin 2015: 4; Screeton 2010: 42, 69) Another significant feature of Michell’s early phase as a writer was his espousal of condemned subjects and his empathy with outsiders, namely with “those at the bottom of the ladder who might have found their place in a more traditional social order but whom present-day conditions have made outsiders [...]: tramps, canal folk, and ‘New Age travellers,’ or the West Africans and Asians of his Londoner district” (Godwin 2015: 2). In this spirit, Michell was very much interested in “unconventional behaviour and beliefs” (Screeton 2010: 78), as for instance described in his *Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions* (1984). He commonly also applied unconventional behaviour to his own writings, such as *The Hip Pocket Hitler* (1976), which focused on *funny*

⁶⁵ Its title was inspired by the biblical propagation: “A perfect and just measure shalt thou have that thy days may be lengthened“ (Deuteronomy, 25:15, in Screeton 2010: 69).

⁶⁶ Especially his life-long friend John (Nosher) Neal, „probably the only other person who truly understands Michell’s research into number and measure“ (Marshall 2009: 49), and his other metrickation companion Robin Heath, with whom he published the book *The Measure of Albion* (1999) (cf. Heath, 2009).

⁶⁷ Most relevant *Ancient Metrology: the Dimensions of Stonehenge and of the Whole World as Therein Symbolized* (1981), and *The Lost Science of Measuring the Earth: Discovering the Sacred Geometry of the Ancients* (2006), collaboratively with Robin Heath.

quotations of Hitler; or his Radical-Traditionalist Papers, in which he analysed topics and “things from angles that were unexpected and sometimes forbidden” (Godwin 2015: 2.; cf. Screeton 2010: 62, 78) Further he put an emphasis on phenomena attributed to Charles Fort’s catalogue of unexplained or anomalous phenomena. Fort’s books experienced a major revival in the 1970s and particularly Michell binge-read them, wherefore he possessed almost encyclopaedic knowledge of *Fortean* phenomena. Fort was a major inspiration for Michell’s thinking and his body of work: “After his mentor Plato, the next most influential figure in John’s life was probably Charles Hoy Fort” (Screeton 2010: 50). Accordingly, Michell published books and countless articles⁶⁸ on *Fortean* topics. Michell’s ascription as an English eccentric himself was very much due to his tendency of incorporating *Fortean* topics and applying unconventional perspectives. (cf. *ibid.*: 50f.)

The third crucial element of Michell’s early phase concerns the aspect, that he is mostly related to, namely his counter cultural position as “the man to voice the concerns of a young disillusioned yet vibrant post-war generation” (*ibid.*: 5). I have already discussed above, that Michell’s involvement in the British counter culture initiated in his bohemian period in Soho and Notting Hill Gate, where he used to be a regular member of an alternative high society. The buzzing fifties and sixties had been mainly concerned about strange phenomena, UFOs, rock and roll, music festivals, and of course mind altering substances. Michell was among those, who wished for an overall change and upheaval of society, being similarly libertarian and rebellious, yet at the same time he was within this “mælstrom of new things in art and music, drama and drugs [...] a calm centre” (Rickard 2009: 39; cf. Harte 2012: 205). It was Michell, who inspired many Hippies of London to leave the city in quest for a rural life, since Michell insisted on the mystical implications of the British and especially English rural landscapes; not for nothing Michell was commonly referred to as the “modern-day Merlin of hippiedom” (Screeton 2010: 1). Moreover, it was Michell, who increased and revived the spiritual significance of the sleepy Somerset town of Glastonbury by appointing it as the New Age centre of Britain. For many of that generation it was a memorable day, when “John [Michell] persuaded an obscure dairy farmer, Michael Eavis, to found a festival in 1971” (*ibid.*: 3), which marked the beginning of Glastonbury festival. Michell and the festival organiser Andrew Kerr understood the festival as part of a universal departure towards a

⁶⁸ Most prominently his book *Phenomena: A Book of Wonder* (1977), co-authored by Bob Rickard; and various essays within his columns in *The Oldie* and *The Daily Mirror*, as well as in the *Fortean Times* (cf. Screeton 2010: 54).

spiritual New Age, combining sacred geometry, leys, New Age, and further astrological influences. Kerr explains his perspective of the festival's importance as follows.

“Sacred geometry is to do with the measurements of the Universe. The Great Pyramid, Stonehenge, the Glastonbury Zodiac, all the stone circles and megalithic structures in the world are built according to sacred geometry. [...] If you build according to the rules of sacred geometry there are two major factors you have to take into account. One, you have to use sacred measurements and two, you have to build on lines of force. [...] The stage at Glastonbury Fair was built in the form of the Great Pyramid on a powerful blind spring in the hope that it would draw to it beneficial astrological influence into our tired planet” (Kerr, 2013).

Michell's role within this spiritual project was the one of the enchanter of the landscape and of the mystic who unearthed those alleged secrets, that provided the basis for the festival's ideology. Kerr, among many others of British New Agers, truly believed, that his friend was indeed “divinely inspired” (Kerr, 2013; cf. Harte 2012: 209; Lachman 2009: 40).

5.1.2. Late Phase

Michell's late phase was characterized by some shifts in his thoughts towards a more radical Traditionalism, with a rather conservative and right-wing interference. He was dominantly working on articles, reviews and columns, however still authored plenty of books.

In 1990 he founded together with Christine Rhone and Richard Adams a magazine on the crop circle phenomena with the significant title *The Cereologist*⁶⁹ which ran thirty-six editions until its end in 2003. With their commonly geometrical shape crop circles became a major field of interest for Michell because for him “research into the crop circle phenomena followed on naturally from his existing investigations into megalithic monuments” (Williamson, 2009). He dedicated also a book to the topic, *Dowsing the Crop Circles: New Insights into the Greatest of Modern Mysteries* (1991), and thereupon moved on to the next topic of his interest. (cf. Screeton 2010: 54f.)

Michell assumed a hostile attitude towards three major institutions and theories, namely Charles Darwin's Evolutionary Theory, the Metrication Board of the British government and mainstream or academic archaeology. Especially the latter remained an opponent most of his life, represented by the academic journal *Antiquity*, which again was represented by its editor,

⁶⁹ From the eighth edition onwards the name changed into the *Cerealogist* (cf. Screeton 2010: 55).

the academic scholar of archaeology Glyn Daniel (1914 – 1986). The crucial controversial subject circulated about the “‘ownership’ of the past” (Stout 2006: 20), whereby both sides would claim it for themselves. All the more surprising was the invitation of *Antiquity* journal to Michell in 1991, to contribute to the journal with a review of the South Bank exhibition, called *From Art to Antiquity*. (cf. Screeton 2010: 70, 92; Stout 2006: 3)

Further activities concerned lecturing functions, which Michell apparently highly enjoyed, as it gave him another opportunity of fulfilling his passion and life aim of teaching his fellows. He truly believed in education by means of accomplished revelations: “The instrument of all human enlightenment is an educated mind illuminated by revelation” (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 109). At *The Prince’s School of Traditional Arts* he mainly lectured on creative geometry; at the alternative *University of Avalon*, located in Glastonbury, he was a faculty member and lectured on various topics. Additionally he was member of the *Temenos Academy*, a Traditionalist institution situated in London, which was founded in 1990 by the poet and Platonist Kathleen Raine. Precisely corresponding to Michell’s ideology, the *Temenos Academy* understood itself as “devoted to the development of the spirit and the universal tradition” (Hale 2011: 82; cf. Screeton 2010: 88, 92).

The year 1992 was a crucial year for Michell, both privately and as a writer. For it came to Michell’s knowledge that he had a son of twenty-eight years old that was a writer himself, and it was the initiation of his period as a newspaper columnist. First he started his column for *The Oldie*, where he examined contemporary topics and critics of modernity alike; and in 2001 he additionally commenced another column for *The Daily Mirror*. At least his columns in *The Oldie* Michell continued until the year of his death, namely 2009. (cf. Martin, 2009; Screeton 2010: 87ff.)

From the early years on, when Michell still dwelled in his pre-writing hedonistic lifestyle of a bohemian, he was already painting. He created cartoons, drawings, geometrical and watercolour paintings, however, he never labelled himself as a painter. The graphic designer Allan Brown, with whom Michell was working on his last publication, which had a rather artistic touch, said of Michell: “He doesn’t see himself as an artist, or his paintings as artworks. To him they are simply illustrations of geometrical truths” (Brown 2009: 45). Anyway, after painting all his life, he finally exhibited his (mainly) geometrical paintings in 2003 at the Christopher Gibbs Gallery. Ensuing, Michell’s publishers Thames and Hudson asked him to create an art book of all those geometrical paintings, that Michell produced all over his life, and more frequently in his last decades when numbers and geometry started to govern his worldview. The project, that he started off with Allan Brown was hence born.

However, Michell had never really worked on *How the World is Made* with the intention to make it an art book, but rather to fulfil his life goal of cracking the code of cosmology and to establish his own mystical cosmology. By means of his paintings, he tried to illustrate “how the universe is held together [...] by numbers where properties and patterns form universal relationships” (Screeton 2010: 104). Apparently, Michell worked from as early as his 2001 publication *The Dimensions of Paradise: The Proportions and Symbolic Numbers of Ancient Cosmology* onwards towards *How the World is Made*, which was meant to be his *magnum opus*. However, Harte does not designate *How the World is Made* as Michell’s *magnum opus* but rather as a coloured or drawn revised version of *The Dimensions of Paradise*. (cf. Brown 2009: 45; Harte 2012: 207; Screeton 2010: 73, 92)

Unfortunately, *How the World is Made* could only be published posthumously, since John Michell was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, which eventually should cause his death. Yet before he died, Michell married on the twenty-sixth of April 2007, at the age of 74 the Archdruidess of the *Glastonbury Order of Druids*, Denise Michelle Price. The wedding ceremony took place in St. Benedict’s Church in Glastonbury, however, the marriage was dissolved shortly after; claims vary from two to six months after the actual wedding day. (cf. Screeton 2010: 94f.) Even though the harsh cancer treatment made Michell weak, thin and frail, he still welcomed guests in his home as he used to do all his life. Only in the last weeks before his death, Michell finally gave up his home, for being nursed at his son’s house, where he died on the twenty-fourth of April 2009. His wish would have been, to die on May Day, since it is considered an important Celtic festival, namely Beltane. However, he was buried on that very day, with a funeral service in the parish church of St. Mary in Stoke Abbott (Dorset). An additional memorial service was eventually held on second of July 2009 in the All Saints’ Church in Notting Hill Gate, where Michell used to live most of his life. The church was desperately packed with more than 400 mourners, who wished to bid farewell. Accurately, the hymn of *Jerusalem* by William Blake was played, and many famous people joined the memorial service. According to the attendant Adam Stout, it was “a ‘society’ occasion, and duly made a flippant paragraph in the gossip column of the Standard and Daily Mail; but this was no ordinary slice of high society. These folk were upper crusties: eccentric English dreamers, pioneer-leaders of a whimsical revolution” (Stout, in Screeton 2010: 103f.). Michell was survived by his son and his family, as well as by his two siblings Charles Michell and Clare Lyon. (cf. Screeton 2010: 95, 102f.)

5.2. Ideology

Throughout his life, Michell influenced and was equally influenced by various fields. Usually he is mostly associated with the left-wing counter culture: “The public face of John Michell was that of an advocate of the hippies, the anarchists, the misfits, and the New Age travelers, those who oppose modernism and capitalism” (Hale 2011: 94). Yet, Michell identified himself with this crucial feature of his development and ideology actually only in the beginning of his career. In later years he even tried to play down or to airbrush his role as thought leader and mentor of the British counter culture. (Screeton 2010: 69) Accordingly, many of his ideas are rather influential right-wing or at least fitting to right-wing ideologies, which definitely appealed more to Michell than any *flower-power* Hippie philosophy. Michell shared beyond all doubt certain elements with the Hippie movement, such as his faith in counter cultural changes of society, or in the psychedelic culture as opposed to mainstream orthodoxies. But John Michell was not a Hippie, he was a Traditionalist, even a self-proclaimed *Radical Traditionalist*.

Michell coined the term *Radical Traditionalist* in the 1970s and used it as a self-expression of his own worldview. He explained it in the following way: “There is a way of thinking that is both idealistic and rooted in common sense. It is called radical-traditionalism. It is my way of thinking [...] but it is not likely to have any great influence in the modern world” (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 67). The ideology of *Radical Traditionalism* implies detestation of modernism, capitalism, immigration, multiculturalism, commercialism, centralised power, socialism, and materialism, and focuses on a Golden Age and ethnoregionalism (cf. Hale 2011: 79f.; Screeton 2010: 67). These contents of any Radical Traditionalist ideology, which originated from Michell’s philosophy, conform in many points with the major subjects within Michell’s body of work: Perennialism, focus on a possible return to a Golden Age, anti-capitalism, anti-modernity, suspicion of rational thought and academic orthodoxies, the belief in social hierarchies and in racial/cultural division along racial and cultural lines, belief in masculine leadership, belief in theocracy and sacred kingship, authoritarian, and anti-multiculturalism. (cf. Hale 2011: 82f.)

The modern world and its innovations represented for Michell a main enemy image, and there was probably nothing he despised as much as changes. He complained about the awry or even demonic modern mind and blamed modernity for “the degradation of the land, chaos and a spiritual degradation of the peoples of the world” (ibid.: 83). Consequently, Michell never tried to be innovative and progressive in his thinking, quite the opposite actually. However,

his philosophy is not simply retrogressive, but forward-looking in the sense that his self-proclaimed *prophetic* visions of the dawn of a New Golden Age are necessarily related to the future. Michell deeply believed that “all ‘new ages’ are revivals of an older, more Golden Age; all forward-looking thought is drawn from the springs of the past” (Harpur 2009: 44). In that regard, a New Age will be instigated, by means of renunciation of modern society and its orthodoxies, implying the return to a traditional lifestyle and “to the universal perennial tradition which had dictated human behaviour in times past” (Hale 2011: 83; cf. *ibid.*: 83; Screeton 2010: 89).

Major inspirations in the development of Michell’s Radical Traditionalist ideology have been Traditionalists, such as the British writer and politician William Cobbett (1763 – 1835), the Italian Traditionalist and esotericist Julius Evola (1898 – 1974), and the French Traditionalist René Guénon, which I have already discussed above⁷⁰. Especially the Traditionalistic notions expressed in Evola’s major book *Revolt Against the Modern World: Politics, Religion, and Social Order in the Kali Yuga* (1934) left a deep impression: “Michell believed deeply in the eternal and spiritual truths that Evola’s writing seemed to convey” (Hale 2011: 83). A specific Radical Traditionalist ideology, based on the crucial right-wing and Traditionalistic aspects of Michell’s body of thought, has been promoted by supporters of Traditionalism and of the emerging European New Right. Target crowds of this promotion have been all kind of right-wing movements, but also followers of Neo-Paganism, who are very interested in Michell’s work anyway, due to his focus on Earth Mysteries, sacred sites, the relation of people and their land, as well as anti-modernism. Interestingly enough, Michell’s writings are hardly associated with right-wing or Third-Positionist⁷¹ movements, such as the New Right or specific Traditionalistic movements with racial and fascist implications, which act in continuation of Historical Fascism or Nazi esotericism. Associations of Michell with British mystic nationalism and Neo-Paganism on the other hand are very common, presumably because a focus on Druids and rather charming Celts appear less threatening, so Michell could keep his image “as a charming British eccentric and champion of the outsiders” (Hale 2011: 96; cf. *ibid.*: 91f., 96). In the last two decades, however, Michell has been increasingly promoted by exponents of the New Right⁷². His *Confessions of a Radical Traditionalist* (2005) serves as an example for this promoting campaign, since it was published by *Arktos*,

⁷⁰ See chapter 2.4.

⁷¹ The Third-Positionist movement has a specific fascist philosophy, that is socialist, anti-capitalist and crucially “transcend[ing] the Right/Left divide” (Hale 2011: 95; cf. *ibid.*: 94).

⁷² Probably Michell himself took also part in this campaign towards the end of his life, when his philosophy developed even further towards right-wing ideologies (cf. Hale 2011: 93).

an esoteric publishing house with a dominating “radically culturally separatist and New Right readership” (ibid.: 93). Especially the liaison of esotericism and radical right-wing positions within Michell’s philosophy, in combination with specifically directed promotion, as well as publishing projects, helped to create a new audience for Michell’s books. (cf. ibid.: 77, 93)

When observing Michell’s political attitude, it becomes quite obvious, that although he was covering left-wing topics, his political attitude may be described as conservative, nationalistic, right-wing, and elitist. As an example, Michell read only *The Daily Telegraph*, a distinctive right-wing paper, and embraced an elitist attitude when approaching tradition, which partly lead to a “distancing manner from the underclass” (Screeton 2010: 58). Nevertheless, Michell was known for his “egalitarian approach towards people [...] making information available to all” (Heath, 2009) and additionally for his empathy for outsiders who kept their dignity and refused to adjust to the social norms. (cf. Godwin 2015: 2; Screeton 2010: 58f.) According to Godwin, Michell’s opinions and solutions “lie off-centre, neither to the Left nor the Right, but in the third dimension: the Above” (Godwin 2015: 8). When addressing ‘the above’ he apparently focused on the spiritual dimensions of Michell’s work, yet Hale argued, that Godwin was actually “subtly characterizing Michell’s work as ‘Third Position’” (Hale 2011: 94). Along these lines, Hale suggested that Michell embraced both ends of the political spectrum, far right and far left, meaning that his rather right-wing tendency is accompanied by a Third-Positionist attitude. In this way, Hale interprets Godwin’s third dimension as a precise “‘third position’ for contemporary New Right activists” (ibid.: 95; cf. ibid.)

Michell’s nationalistic and elitist tendencies may be exemplified by reference to his faiths into the power of the institution of Sacred Kingship and into Britain’s superiority as announced within mystic British nationalism and British Israelism. Michell was an idealist at most levels. Thus it is not surprising, that his approach to social order and leadership was idealistic as well. Related to his condemnation of democracy⁷³ lies his confidently celebration of divine or sacred kingship. This alleged traditional institution of divine kingship is understood as “a spiritual authority imposed from above” (Godwin 2015: 9). Hence, the faith includes the expected return of the King, whereby Michell identified that anticipated leader with Platonian philosopher kings, rather than Evola’s warrior kings. He further compared the king or the perfect leader of a country to the central axis or the pole of that very region or country, in the sense that the leader connects the people with the divine, like the central axis connects the earth with the heaven(s). (cf. ibid.: 9; Hale 2011: 83f., 86) In the course of his nationalistic

⁷³ His approach to the ideal social order is crucially anti-democratic, which may be observable in his disdain of Britain’s membership in the European Union (cf. Hale 2011: 86f.).

perceptions, he embraced various theories, that consider Britain's pre-eminence. As within a mystical approach towards nationalism, Britain is considered as the sacred land and "a site of spiritual redemption in the New Age" (Hale 2011: 82). Michell adopted an idealized view of England as an idyllic earthly paradise, which allegedly corresponds to its pre-Reformation times. This idealized view of Michell's England is characterized by three major links, namely the immediate past of his childhood, the Merry England as described by Cobbett, and the timeless and infinite imaginative earthly paradise as described by William Blake. His rural childhood memories are mainly based on his experience at his maternal grandfather's house in rural England of the nineteenth century, where he perceived the countryside as to be composed of decentralized rural villages. The image of Merry England, as Cobbett has proposed it, fits very much Michell's Traditionalism:

"His [William Cobbett's] idea of progress was to look backwards to the days of Merrie England [...] – when every village had its dynastic farmers and craftsmen, its sporting heroes, beauty queens and aged wiseacres, its own customs, stories, music, style of dancing and way of speaking. In it its ancient manor house a dimply noble family upheld the local economy and culture. Long summer days passed happily, uneventfully; mid-winter was a time of fun and festival; and there was plenty of the best for all. No one had ever heard of Darwin, Freud or van Gogh and no one was so clever as to have a nervous breakdown" (Screeton 2010: 68).

As a third major link serves "Michell's very particular type of Blake-inspired British mystic nationalism" (Hale 2011: 87), that focuses on The New Jerusalem and Albion⁷⁴. In alignment with William Blake, William Cobbett, and other typically English radicals, he was a defender of Albion, which Michell describes as the "guardian of the British landscape" (Michell 2007: 157), and Godwin as "the soul of Britain" (Godwin 2015: 4; cf. *ibid.*: 3f.; Hale 2011: 87; Harpur 2009: 44)

British Israelism was not of major interest for Michell, wherefore I shall not greatly emphasize on it. However, Michell crucially agreed with two aspects, usually related to British Israelism. That is to say, British people as the chosen people, and Britain as the spiritual and sacred centre of Europe or of the world, and hence the place where the New Golden Age initiates. Michell's reinterpretation adds a special focus on Glastonbury as the

⁷⁴ Both topics shall be discussed in length in chapter 7.2.

most important sacred centre within this prophecy, which I shall discuss extensively below⁷⁵. (cf. Hale 2011: 91)

5.3. Michell's Literary Corpus

Most references to Michell's life and work mention a corpus of about forty books and pamphlets, not including the countless articles he drafted. Harte instead suggests, that only approximately fifteen of his major books matter, as many of his publications are either dealing with similar topics or are revised republications. (cf. Harte 2012: 206)

The topics of Michell's oeuvre vary strongly, "ranging from prehistoric science and metrology to eccentrics and the authorship of Shakespeare" (Screeton 2010: 3). Further he was dealing with various aspects of Earth Mysteries, Sacred Place Theories, ufology, Neo-Platonism, sacred geometry, crop circles, and much more. His articles and columns, which were published in several newspapers and magazines, covered any topic of his range of interest. However, his favourite subjects usually concerned rather traditional and aesthetic themes, rooted within his strong distrust of the modern world and within his emphatic refusal of changes. Yet, a neatly arrangement of Michell's "interests, thoughts and philosophy [is] a difficult and almost impossible task" (ibid.: 51) due to the sheer inexhaustible range of topics and their interrelatedness. Many of the subjects he elaborated, had a great influence on musicians, on various alternative counter culture movements, and on believers in ancient civilisations and their divine knowledge. Especially his construction of British New Age topics merged with alternative archaeology and mystical landscapes made him exceptional popular among his British counter culture followers. He came to be known as the representative and driving force of "the intellectual wing of the alternative culture" (Heath, 2009).

In his first years as an author he published three books that remained all his life very influential and are still considered as being distinctive for Michell's worldview: *The Flying Saucer Vision: The Holy Grail Restored* (1967), *The View over Atlantis* (1969) and *City of Revelation: On the Proportions and Symbolic Numbers of the Cosmic Temple* (1972). Already within the first years as an author a specific pattern of frequent and successive publications may be noticed. In some years Michell even published two books consecutively. Again, Michell's habit to pick up his publications to republish them in a revised manner, made these successive publications possible.

⁷⁵ See chapter 7.3.

5.3.1. Michell's Miscellany

Michell's body of work is enormous. And so is the quantity of his different genres. He mainly wrote books and articles, yet one may find also columns, pamphlets, short stories, reviews, poetry, wordplays, and hitherto unpublished drafts within his oeuvre.

Michell's first articles were published in the underground magazine *International Times* in the beginning of the 1960s. The total number amounts to possibly hundreds articles, mostly on topics also treated within Michell's books. (cf. Screeton 2010: 90)

Deeply rooted in his literary miscellany are his columns, which he mainly wrote for *The Daily Mirror* and *The Oldie*. *The Oldie's* column was called *An Orthodox Voice*, which was published monthly in almost every issue from 1992 – 2009. Even during Michell's last interview before his death he was still drafting his last column for *The Oldie*. The highlights of this column were collected and published in two different anthologies, namely *An Orthodox Voice* (1995), comprising twenty-five essays, and *Confessions of a Radical Traditionalist: Essays by John Michell* (2005)⁷⁶, comprising 108 essays. (cf. Marshall 2009: 49; Screeton 2010: 89f.) His other project as a newspaper columnist appeared in *The Daily Mirror* and similarly to *The Orthodox Voice* concerned a great variety of topics, such as “creation myths, creative [...] geometry, numbers, traditional measures, consciousness, dream therapy, near-death experience, love, psychic possession, astrology [...], prophecy, alchemy, Stonehenge, Druids, earth spirit, corn circles, UFOs, lost civilisations and Atlantis, the pyramids, hermits, Heaven and Hell, fortune and daimonic reality” (Screeton 2010: 88). Except for Michell's tendency of addressing rather Traditionalistic and alternative topics⁷⁷, there is no constant thread or opinion detectable within his columns. Many essays appear even rather contradictable when contrasted, probably owing to continuous shifts in his interests and focuses throughout his life. As Hale points out, especially in the last decade of his life “Michell was taking more of an interest in an explicitly New Right agenda” (Hale 2011: 92), which I have discussed more closely above⁷⁸. Michell attached great personal importance to these two columns, wherefore one might get a rather personal picture of a man, who is by some of his admirers even addressed as a “neo-mystical cult figure” (Screeton 2010: 3). For

⁷⁶ Republished by Joscelyn Godwin as *The John Michell Reader: Writings and Rants of a Radical Traditionalist* (2015). Godwin wrote the introduction in the original as well as in the republished version.

⁷⁷ His favourite topics concerned critics on the establishment and crucially on the modern world and the modern mind as „one form of demonic possession“ (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 89).

⁷⁸ See chapter 5.2.

this reason, also topics are discussed, which appear rather unconventional for a John Michell, such as love, music, or drugs. Precisely his role as an advocate for mind expanding substances becomes quite obvious within his columns. For instance, in his column for *The Oldie* he wrote an essay in October 2001, where he analyses advantages and disadvantages of various substances and discussed the legal status of them. It becomes quite clear, that besides LSD and Mescaline, the *Philosopher's Friend*, namely Cannabis⁷⁹ was credited by Michell as “*tremendously important*” (Michell, in Marshall 2009: 49) for his creative process, for the achievement of a rather spiritual worldview, and for a deeper understanding of art and music. (cf. Michell, in Godwin 2015: 142ff.; Screeton 2010: 95f.; Marshall 2009: 49).

Michell was greatly delighted with another crucial genre of his, namely pamphlets, which he labelled *Radical-Traditionalist Papers*. From 1972 onwards, Michell self-published his seven *Radical-Traditionalist Papers*, whose various topics corresponded in their controversialness, their provocativeness, and their non-mainstream and anti-establishment ideologies. The subjects of the *Radical-Traditionalist Papers* deal with the defence of sacred measurements⁸⁰, population control, Babylon's downfall, the defence of a blasphemous homoerotic poem⁸¹, the Irish problem, Stonehenge⁸², and Salman Rushdie's conflict with the Muslim community. Michell's pamphlets are a paramount example of his tendency to espouse condemned, unconventional, or unorthodox subjects and to defend outsider perspectives, whereby “[h]is claims were invariably absurd; if they were not, he would not have made them” (Harte 2012: 206; cf. Godwin 2010: 2, 5; Screeton 2010: 60ff., 78; 84f.).

Additionally, Michell embraced further literary genres, however he never laid great focus on them. He drafted a few, however published only one short story, *1850 BC Revisited*, which appeared in 1969 in the sixty-first issue of the *International Times*. It further was attached as an appendix to Paul Screeton's *biography* of Michell⁸³. The short story has a length of six pages and concerns a time travelling anti-hero. Moreover Michell played around with poetry and wordplays, and especially towards the end of his life he increasingly wrote book reviews for the conservative magazine *The Spectator* or for the alternative magazine *Fortean Times*.

⁷⁹ Michell was known for constantly smoking hand-rolled cigarettes containing Cannabis on whatever occasion. This was commonplace until shortly before his death and sort of accepted by everyone or hardly noticed by anyone. (cf. Screeton 2010: 95f.)

⁸⁰ Related to Michell's *Anti-Metrication Board*, as discussed above.

⁸¹ Michell had many friends in the gay community (cf. Screeton 2010: 95).

⁸² In the sixth *Radical-Traditionalist Paper* he was expressing his perspective on the 1985 ‘Battle of the Beanfield’, a major conflict between the police and the Stonehenge Free Festival goers (cf. Screeton 2010: 62).

⁸³ Paul Screeton: *John Michell. From Atlantis to Avalon* (2010).

Additionally, among all the drafted material, certain written texts have never been published, for no publishing house showed interest. (cf. Screeton 2010: 90f.)

5.3.2. Style

Michell was known as a proper “English gentleman” (Harte 2012: 204), who was not only dressed and well-mannered as it befits a gentleman, but also employed an elegant way of talking and writing, or as his friend Robin Heath has expressed it: an “exemplary command of the Queen’s language” (Heath, 2009). Michell was very old-fashioned in his writing attitude and set great value upon the choice of his wording and on his elegant handwriting, for which he even won prizes at Eton. Related to his attitude of elegant writing manners, was his reluctance to technology, especially to computers: “I shall never let one of those demonic things into my house and I advise readers who have them to throw them out” (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 82). He was frequently referred to as a poet, or even as a “rhetorician” (Harte 2012: 206), rather than a scholar or intellectual, since he used such a poetic and aesthetical language and accordingly “[h]is criteria for truth were aesthetic and moral rather than veridical” (ibid.: 209; cf. Screeton 2010: 81). He further had an outstandingly romantic perspective of the ancient superior past, wherefore a typical beginning of any writing was “[i]t has always been the tradition of the wise” (Michell, in Harte 2012: 206).

Michell wrote the majority of his books from memory and in an autodidactic style. That means that he combined different self-studied insights of various influences and merged them into his very own theory. Accordingly, he “moves from a paragraph on something he had read, then onto something he had read somewhere else, in the belief that it would all eventually fit together” (Harte 2012: 205). Even though Michell attached a bibliography, one cannot find any citations in his books, for the very reason that Michell intentionally outlined his contents as a result of revelation. Following any scientific system, which may also include a citation system, was understood by him as of no need or even harmful. (cf. ibid.: 206) Basically, Michell believed, that certain *ancient truths* are ready to be perceived by anyone, who is willing to accept that “the insights of the past were not based on inquiry or discovery, but had instead appeared fully formed at the earliest times of which we know” (ibid.). To receive these ancient truths, which form most of Michell’s framework, he truly trusted so-called “flash[es] of inspiration” (Godwin 2015: 6) or “flash[es] of revelation” (Nicholson 2009: 41), which allow the person receiving theses flashes to intuitively gain deep insights into *ancient truths* and to approach scientific topics in a spiritual manner. Michell himself

explained those moments of spiritual awareness as “moment[s] of magical inspiration, the origin of the Holy Ghost” (Michell, in Nicholson 2009: 41) and saw himself as performing in a line with his mentor Alfred Watkins, who apparently worked in a similar way of intuitive revelation. The content of those revelations received by Michell varied greatly, however always concerned bygone insights of apparent superior preceding orthodoxies⁸⁴. (cf. Hale 2011: 82; Marshall 2009: 46) Harte criticizes, that Michell’s books are without any proper insight, anyway: “An output of fifteen major books over fifteen years is impressive, but you could search them for a long time before you found any new facts, and you could search some of them forever without finding any facts at all” (Harte 2012: 206). Again, Michell emphasized on aesthetics and romanticising rather than facts and scientific insights or methods.

Generally speaking Michell referred to a wide range of topics, theories and alleged *facts* by scholars or so-called scholars, which he combined with his own revelations in order to reach his intended or expected conclusion. Accompanied by complex mathematical and geometrical calculations, for a layman it seems difficult if not impossible to analyse Michell’s writings as truths or hollow statements. “John [Michell] sacrificed half of his most seminal work [*The View Over Atlantis*] to a string of mathematical legerdemain that must have left most of his readers baffled” (ibid.: 207). Nevertheless the difficult mathematical calculations and accumulation of numbers and measures gave most of Michell’s readership the impression of him possessing a superior intellect or him being a great mystic. (cf. ibid.; Screeton 2010: 1) Throughout his life, Michell truly believed that by means of geometry and mystic numerology all secrets and the entire ancient knowledge eventually would be revealed to him. The aim of these mathematical and numerological revelations was the creation of his own cosmology, whereby geometry signified its crucial key. “One day I’d like to do a kind of alternative cosmology. That is a kind of Plato’s Republic or a Darwin’s Origin of the Species but with different conclusions” (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 40), and his cosmology was a symbolic one, written in mathematical language. Therefore, *The View Over Atlantis* characterizes with its focus on geometry the starting point for a numerical worldview in correspondence with the *Canon of number*. (cf. Brown 2009: 45; Marshall 2009: 48)

⁸⁴ Contemporary orthodoxies are labelled by Michell as “simply the latest in a series of changing fashions” (Harte 2012: 206).

5.4. The Seminal Three

As I have outlined above, Michell's first three books have been crucial for his own success as well as for the development of the British Earth Mysteries. Accordingly, they are referred to as the seminal triumvirate, namely *The Flying Saucer Vision* (1967), *The View Over Atlantis* (1969), and *City of Revelation* (1972). Due to their importance, I shall discuss them more closely, whereby I am going to focus on *The (New) View Over Atlantis*, for it is the most influential.

When approaching references to Michell's triumvirate on the part of his own followers as well as of his critics, all share the opinion on its outstanding role. Harte talks of "a philosophical earthquake, a re-enchantment of the world. It was a quiet, a very English revelation" (Harte 2012: 205); also Michell's friend and co-author Bob Rickard stresses its importance when he writes, "[s]o much of what we now take for granted as the familiar landscape of alternative culture – from leys and free festivals to the rediscovery of Britain's sacred sites and the birth of New Age – sprang directly from these three seminal works by John Michell" (Rickard 2009: 39); Michell's *biographer* Paul Screeton is likewise confident of their impact when stating that Michell's "seminal books [...] greatly influenced the Sixties/Seventies counterculture and brought earth mysteries and fortuneism to a wider public" (Screeton 2010: 81); and Robin Heath even considers them as part of a prospective curriculum: Michell's "books lie in waiting to become the textbooks for a new generation that will use the information they contain within an as yet unclassified academic discipline" (Heath, 2009). These selected reactions to Michell's early work shed light on the major influence those books wielded, and on the position Michell was occupying. Michell knew perfectly how to catch the prevailing mood of those days due to his insider perspective, and his sense of the interrelationship of these popular topics. He "functioned in a synthetic fashion by bringing together and popularizing several different strands of esoteric belief relating to sacred Britain" (Hale 2011: 82; cf. Screeton 2010: 17). When observing these three books, it becomes apparent that certain subjects act as their common denominator; predominantly the whole spectrum of Earth Mysteries with a focus on alternative archaeology and megalithic science, and sacred geometry or esoteric numerology. Michell looked at these main subjects from various angles, with a strong tendency towards esoteric numerology. Whereas he still highlighted in his first book dragons and UFO occupants⁸⁵, which are illustrated as related to

⁸⁵ Apparently Michell's opinions towards flying saucers and extra-terrestrials changed dramatically throughout his life. First, he agreed with the common credo of the mystical links between megalithic monuments, leys and

fairies and traditional spirits, he almost exclusively emphasized in the latter two works on the universal truth of numbers and their symbolic implications. Another crucial subject, which runs like a red thread through all three books is Glastonbury's characteristic as the mystical and sacred centre of Britain. (cf. Harte 2012: 205ff.; Marshall 2009: 48)

5.4.1. The Flying Saucer Vision

The first book of this trilogy with its startling title *The Flying Saucer Vision: The Holy Grail Restored* (1967) owns forasmuch a big importance in the development of Michell's worldview, as it was the starting point for his great project of the re-enchantment of the world, or more precisely of England. (cf. Harte 2012: 205; Martin, 2009) The main insights of this book concern the allegedly obvious connection of flying saucers with megalithic monuments, and with the popular British myths of King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Michell tried to find ways of explanation on how flying saucers were moving along those alleged trackways, which he had become so enthusiastic about. He compared them with Chinese *lung mei* energy lines or called them English *lung mei*, which he believed were based on a pre-Christian dragon cult. He dedicated only a single footnote to this insight, which gives some indication on the quality of ley lines as a sole side issue in the beginning of Michell's writing career. The emphasis was rather laid on levitation causes of flying saucers, which he believed to possibly correspond to the construction methods of megalithic monuments. This emphasis was reversed in the sequel book, in the sense that "the lines are the key and the UFOs incidental" (Nicholson 2009: 42; Nicholson 2009: 41f.; Screeton 2010: 19).

5.4.2. The (New) View Over Atlantis

The View Over Atlantis (1969) is a small book of approximately 200 pages, published for the first time in 1969 and finally republished in 1983. It consists of three parts that focus mainly on British ley lines and their supposed relation to megalithic and natural landmarks⁸⁶ of *ancient sciences*, as discussed within *Earth Mysteries*. These *powerful* landmarks are

flying saucers. He additionally stated, that he had seen plenty of flying saucers, especially around Glastonbury, describing them as "distant lights in the sky, moving about like goldfish in a bowl" (Michell, in Marshall 2009: 47). He further compared extra-terrestrials with higher beings, that shall return from the sky, namely some God-like beings. However, towards the end of his life he made clear, that he does not believe in extra-terrestrials as such. (cf. Lachman 2009: 39; Screeton 2010: 14)

⁸⁶ Such as The Great Pyramid in Egypt, Stonehenge, or Glastonbury Tor.

discussed by Michell as being conducive to cosmic revelations on the so-called *lost knowledge*⁸⁷.

The View Over Atlantis continued with Michell's project of re-enchantment, now with a precise focus on the British landscape, which was portrayed as *interveined* by ley lines creating a meaningful pattern. This pattern represents a landscape code, "a sort of alchemy on a cosmic scale" (Nicholson 2009: 42), since it combines sacred (terrestrial) geometry, ley lines and sacred places, and aims to harmonise with all heavenly bodies of the universe. (cf. Michell 1983: 33; Nicholson 2009: 42) Landscape is thus discussed within the book as concealing a revelation, which is laid out as a "celestial pattern" (Michell 1983: 47), providing insights in the astronomical implications of terrestrial geometry, as well as in the advanced knowledge of mathematic, astronomy and magic of a lost prehistoric civilisation. Michell suggested, that remains of that civilisation, such as stone circles, various megalithic or ancient monuments, or geometrical patterns within those ancient monuments, could be interpreted as part of the *lost knowledge*. Michell deeply cherished the belief in the cyclical quality of great truths and secrets of history, which "may disappear for a period but be cyclically renewed" (Screeton 2010: 19). Now, the insight of *The View Over Atlantis* touched the disclosure of the *lost knowledge* within the landscape and expressed upon its ancient monuments: "[T]hese monuments contain, both in their dimensions and in their relative geographical positions, the whole vocabulary of the sacred language of the past" (Michell 1972: 89). Similar to John Aubrey's discovery of Avebury in 1648, Michell believed, that the contemporary remains of the *lost knowledge* were so obvious, that they must be found when observed well: "The English countryside [...] harboured [within its landscape] the remains of an ancient civilisation [...] that had hitherto escaped notice precisely because of its size" (Lachman 2009: 40). Accordingly, Nicholson labels those indications of an ancient wisdom as hidden, yet perennial, simply waiting to be unearthed in the right moment by the right person, namely John Michell. (cf. Michell 1972: 1f.; Michell 1983: 13, 33; Nicholson 2009: 43; Screeton 2010: 8) Of all those lines crossing Britain and creating that very sacred pattern, Michell proclaimed in *The View Over Atlantis* the supreme significance of the St. Michael Line, traversing all "southern England, passing through Glastonbury Tor and countless prehistoric monuments, as well as the many churches that are dedicated, curiously, to Saint Michael" (Marshall 2009: 47). Michell was tremendously proud of his *re-discovery*, since he was sure that the St. Michael Line marked a crucial indicator of the *lost knowledge* relating to

⁸⁷ The *lost knowledge* is a core concept of Michell, and its resurrection the precondition for any spiritual upheaval that may lead into a New Golden Age. (cf. Screeton 2010: 19)

those sacred places related to the ancient myth of Jesus approaching Glastonbury on that very route with his uncle Joseph of Arimathea. (cf. Screeton 2010: 20f.)

Apart from the concepts on landscape codes and *lost knowledge*, the third major subject of *The View Over Atlantis* concerns the sacred *Canon*. Michell's major sources of inspiration on his interpretation of the *Canon* were Plato's geometrical performances and William Stirling's *The Canon. An Exposition of the Pagan Mystery Perpetuated in the Cabala as the Rule of All the Arts* (1897): "I happened to come across an old book – The *Canon*. It's all [*lost knowledge*] in there." (Michell, in Marshall 2009: 48). The *Canon* comprises of an ancient code of numbers and measures, and thus constituted not only Michell's main vision over the last thirty years of his life, but further outlined his worldview. Harte refers to Michell's understanding of the *Canon* as a kind of "eternal archetype of order" or as the prime mover of a series of beliefs: "Behind the apparent beauties of the countryside lies the web of leys and earth energies; behind them, the primordial Eden when the sacred landscape was first set out; and behind that, the eternal archetype of order" (Harte 2012: 205; cf. *ibid.*: 207; Screeton 2010: 43). Hence, Michell interconnected most of his favourite subjects in accordance with the mathematical and geometrical insights of the *Canon*, which may be perceived best at those sacred landmarks. For Michell the *Canon* acted as a sacred manual for both landscape codes and *lost knowledge*.

The book that proved to be published at the very right moment for its insights, established itself as the new canon for the New Age movement as well as for the reinvented Earth Mystery Movement. Accordingly, for Michell's target audience, like Hippies, New Agers, or followers of the Earth Mystery Movement⁸⁸, *The View Over Atlantis* was seen as a manual on how to improve the harmed connection between humanity and the *cosmic consciousness*, by using ancient wisdom and sciences: "Hippies turned themselves into the new guardians of ancient skills and wisdom by rejecting industrial society and communing at old sites or going for mystical nature rambles along leys, keeping an eye open for UFOs" (Nicholson 2009: 42). The success of *The View Over Atlantis* allowed Michell to spread his ideas on a bigger scale and partly to put some of them into effect, namely his visions concerning Glastonbury. The sleepy Somerset town established itself as a New Age capital and the original Glastonbury Fair proceeded according to the major insights of *The View Over Atlantis*. (cf. Kerr, 2013)

More than ten years after the big success of *The View Over Atlantis*, Michell, now a major counter culture icon, decided in 1983 to republish it as *The New View Over Atlantis*. At the

⁸⁸ As I have argued above, the target audience had changed throughout his life, from members of various streams of alternative counter culture to rather devotees of Traditionalism.

first sight it seems like only slight changes had been made but a closer look reveals clear modifications not only in the structure and size of the book, but also on its main foci and declarations. Some former myths or hypotheses had been clarified or completely deleted and renewed. While Leys, Glastonbury and sacred geometry⁸⁹ still proved to Michell's favourite topics, Flying Saucers are hardly found anymore. (cf. Screeton 2010: 27)

5.4.3. City of Revelation

After Michell's big success he felt inspired to continue with his great project of establishing a cosmology, based on esoteric numerology and the *Canon*, and published in 1972 *City of Revelation: On the Proportions and Symbolic Numbers of the Cosmic Temple*. As I have stated above, Michell had already developed within *The View Over Atlantis* a certain numerical approach and introduced the crucial category of the *Canon* of number. In *City of Revelation* he disregarded many of his previous topics, like UFOs, leys and landscape figures, and concentrated exclusively on numbers, which revealed to him as "the key to unravel all the secrets of Earth and Heaven" (Nicholson 2009: 42). However, in order to understand the numerology applied in *City of Revelation*, that is the numerical structure of the *Canon* and its related geometrical figure, the *New Jerusalem Diagram*, an advanced knowledge of mathematics and classical education, such as Plato or Pythagoras, are required. The book is hence very difficult to access, and appears partly confusing and contradictable: "From heady hippy tripping, John's followers and general readers were brought abruptly down to earth" (Screeton 2010: 41; cf. Michell 1978: 159f.; Screeton 2010: 41).

Basically, Michell claimed that all truths, secrets and insights of the world may be understood through sacred numbers and geometrical forms⁹⁰. He considered the *Canon* of numbers and its geometrical implications as sacred, since he traced their origins back to revelations of enlightened humans, who received in ancient times crucial insights from divine beings. (cf. Martin, 2009) However, the chief innovation of *City of Revelation* concerns its dominating new framework of the Holy City. Within this framework, the other principal subjects, namely sacred geometry, numerology, gematria, the concept of New Jerusalem, and the *Canon* are all

⁸⁹ He dedicated a whole new chapter to Glastonbury and to numerology.

⁹⁰ Michell also included in these speculations the topic of gematria. He argues, that by means of numbers, not only a pattern of powerful lines across the landscape, but also deep patterns in the structure of language may be perceived. (cf. Nicholson 2009: 42)

united. Whereby the *city* of Atlantis is depicted within *City of Revelation* as part of the ancient lost knowledge that ought to be re-discovered. (cf. Nicholson 2009: 42; Screeton 2010: 41f.)

In 1988, Michell published an extended and revised version of *City of Revelation*, namely *The Dimensions of Paradise: The Proportions and Symbolic Numbers of Ancient Cosmology*. Its cover was adorned with a painted version of The New Jerusalem Diagram, painted by Michell himself, apparently according to Plato's description. Michell's last book, *How the World is Made: The Story Of Creation According To Sacred Geometry*, published posthumously in 2009, could be labelled as a coloured *City of Revelation*. (cf. Godwin 2015: 5f.)

In this chapter I tried to outline the controversial figure of John Michell, who was famous mainly by means of his books and through his involvement in the re-enchantment of the British landscape. He aimed to provide the framework as well as practical instructions on how to re-establish a heavenly Eden on earth, which he imagined to upraise at Glastonbury under specific circumstances. Before discussing Glastonbury's major role in the revived British Golden Age within Michell's Sacred Place Theory, I shall take now a closer look at Glastonbury itself, its history, and its major place-myths.

6. Glastonbury

Glastonbury is a small market town, located in the county of Somerset in the southwest of England, surrounded by endless green fields, rivers and lush forests. The town inhabits approximately 8800 people. Due to tourism, pilgrimage, and the happening of the world famous *Glastonbury Festival* the amount of people staying in Glastonbury varies though, especially in the summer months. Compared to its size Glastonbury enjoys a far reaching reputation and popularity. It is famous for various reasons and attracts a countless number of people who visit Glastonbury with different intentions, among them also all kinds of spiritual seekers. Each group interprets Glastonbury according to their beliefs. I follow Ivakhiv's and Bowman's approach on Glastonbury, describing it as a town with many faces, to an extent that they speak of numerous *Glastonburys*: "Glastonbury is not one place but many; it is a place of parallel pasts and presents" (Bowman 2005: 159) Furthermore Bowman calls it "the centre of a number of worlds, because of the way Glastonbury functions as a [...] multivalent location" (ibid. 164). Strictly speaking, the concept of Glastonbury as a multivalent space originates from Dion Fortune's theories and was eventually adopted by Bowman and Ivakhiv. Dion Fortune's approach to Glastonbury was carried out in her major book on that topic, *Glastonbury: Avalon of the Heart*, which was published in 1934. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 65).

Thus the concept of multi-valency implies, that a variety of groups rate Glastonbury's importance within their belief system or along their spiritual journey as outstanding. Each of these perceptions of the small town is based on different representatives and is connected with specific narratives and so-called place-myths. This specific descriptive category of place-myths applies between the conflicting priorities of "divergent interpretations of history" (ibid.: 93) among various players in Glastonbury. In chapter three I have described *place* as a particular space, defined and used by a specific group. This implies, that a place, used by a variety of groups, may be attributed with a multitude of meanings and myths. Thus each group claims its authority upon the place by means of specific place-myths, which enable its followers to interpret the precise place according to their beliefs. The concept of place-myths mirrors therefore the struggle for prevalence in terms of tradition and the interpretation of history. (cf. ibid.) Glastonbury unites traditional or historical place-myths, and recently developed place-myths of an *alternative* community, which mainly reinterpret established place-myths. As a result Ivakhiv distinguishes twelve different *Glastonburys*, dependent on their "competing place-myths, each of which grounds itself in divergent interpretations of history, its mainstreams and its alternatives" (ibid.). Each of these *Glastonburys* is justified through its believers who label their interpretation of Glastonbury as well as its place-myths as truthful, unassailable, or even as self-evident facts: "Many of the claims [...] about Glastonbury's past and its present significance have the status of 'common knowledge' or 'received wisdom,' [...] mean[ing] that they are now so embedded in the oral tradition of various groups and individuals in Glastonbury that they tend to be stated as uncontested fact" (Bowman 2003: 158). Bowman herself mentions nine different perceptions of Glastonbury that are largely corresponding in Ivakhiv's study.

In the following subchapters I am going to observe Glastonbury from different angles in order to analyse it as a pattern of Michell's Sacred Place Theory. First I want to introduce Glastonbury on a general base, describing it in its historical and geographical context. Further on I shall examine Glastonbury from different perspectives by using prominent place-myths, whereby my main focus is going to lie on *alternative* spiritual interpretations of Glastonbury. My aim is to present the main interpretations and myths as well as an overview of this little town, which represents not merely a central sacred place among various spiritual seekers, but which takes also such a prominent position within Michell's Sacred Place Theory and his entire oeuvre.

6.1. Historical Descriptions

The history of Glastonbury may be displayed in many ways as the history of its Abbey since it used to be the most dominant and central feature of Glastonbury's religious, political, economic and social life throughout the Middle Ages. In terms of position, "Glastonbury Abbey is located about twelve miles from the coast at Burnham-on-Sea, six miles from Wells, twenty-six miles from either Bristol or Bath" (Nitze 1934: 357) and within the town of Glastonbury it is situated in its very centre, encompassed by its main streets and buildings. So, historically as well as geographically, it represents the centre of Glastonbury. The main references on the Abbey's (and therefore Glastonbury's) early history as well as on legends surrounding it, are William of Malmesbury's *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie*⁹¹, Adam of Domerham's *Historia de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus*, and John of Glastonbury's *Cronica sive antiquitates Glastoniensis ecclesie*. Especially William of Malmesbury and John of Glastonbury are considered to be important historians that wrote crucial chronicles concerning Glastonbury's actual as well as mythical historical development. In other words, they took a major part in its mythmaking, since "William's [of Malmesbury] and John's [of Glastonbury] works, especially, show the stages by which the Arthur and Joseph legends developed in Glastonbury tradition" (Carley 1983: 819). Furthermore a main aim was to emphasize on a permanent Christian presence at Glastonbury, which was claimed in *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie* to begin by no later than 601 AD. (cf. *ibid.*: 820).

The landscape of present-day Glastonbury and its surrounding was probably fairly inhospitable in early Saxon Times⁹². Although most of the surroundings were situated below sea level, they were protected by higher coast ranges which prevented the area to be flooded by the sea. Nevertheless Glastonbury earned its identity as an *island*⁹³, since the landscape encompassing it used to be mainly swampy marshes and frequently afflicted with flooding due to rain, rivers, and lakes. Reports of first settlements on this *island* may be found only from the sixth or seventh century AD, when a few Christian settlers dwelled on Glastonbury Tor, which until today is the highest elevation, and in its immediate surroundings. Eventually this community grew and established an Christian abbey, namely Glastonbury Abbey. It

⁹¹The original version of *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie* is not available and the earliest copy of 1250 had been most likely revised. This theory is supported by the assumption that the monks of the Abbey tasked William of Malmesbury with writing a chronicle that focuses especially on the ancient origin of the Abbey. Since the chronicle turned out very factual it may have been rewritten later on. (cf. Carley 1983: 819)

⁹² Approximately fifth or sixth century AD.

⁹³ I shall discuss the relations of its identity as an island with the mystical *Isle of Avalon* below, in chapter 6.3.2.

received great support by the ruling Saxon kings, whereby it became at least since the eleventh century AD the most powerful and rich landowner of the whole area and dominated spiritual, economic, and social life in and around Glastonbury. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 76)

The first centuries of its existence and especially its foundation are not attested well, only the three mentioned sources are available, wherefore many legendary stories were established, as for instance on the legendary Twelve Hides or Twelve Brothers who are said to have arrived with or without Joseph of Arimathea⁹⁴ (cf. Savage 1942: 406). However the Abbey's history after its mysterious origin is quite transparent. Its Golden Age as "one of the greatest monasteries in England, second only in wealth to Westminster" (Stout 2012: 250) began with St. Dunstan becoming abbot of Glastonbury Abbey in the middle of the tenth century. In the late twelfth century the Abbey experienced heavy setbacks as a fire destroyed most of the Abbey, including its enormous library, and additionally its most important patron King Henry II died. Yet the power of the Abbey did not decline, on the contrary these misfortunes led once again to a period of reinterpretation and creative mythmaking concerning the Abbey's origins and its connection to legendary figures such as Joseph of Arimathea, St. Patrick, and King Arthur, who received prominent positions within the Abbey's legendary foundation. Various political and religious reasons gave rise to the establishment of an Arthurian cult⁹⁵ and a cult connected to Joseph of Arimathea⁹⁶. Moreover the alleged century of the Abbey's founding was then believed by some as the second century AD. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 77f.; Stout 2012: 250f.)

The end of the Abbey's Golden Age was carried out through King Henry VIII's Dissolution of Monasteries which took place between 1536 and 1541 and led to the destruction of numerous Catholic monasteries throughout Britain and the establishment of the Anglican Church. In the course of these anti-Catholic processes also the Glastonbury Abbey got destroyed and its last abbot, Richard Whiting, was hanged on Glastonbury Tor. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 78) The sixteenth century was characterised by shifting mainstream positions regarding the conflicted relation of Protestants and Catholics and further mythmaking. "Somerset, in fact, was to become the county with the lowest population of Roman Catholics and the highest numbers of Protestant radicals and reformers" (ibid.: 79). A famous reformer was

⁹⁴ This will be discussed below in chapter 6.3.1.

⁹⁵ Especially through the strategic *discovery* of his grave in 1191 the legendary King Arthur got attached to the Abbey. Strategic in the way as the monks of the Abbey tried to reinforce its power and prestige. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 77)

⁹⁶ In order to remain a supreme authority, the legends of Joseph of Arimathea were related to the Abbey's origin (cf. Stout 2012: 251).

John Bale who initiated another revival of Joseph of Arimathea in 1546. Joseph of Arimathea was used by him as a spiritual legitimacy for a supreme form of Christianity in Britain. Moreover he offered an alternative historical version of the Abbey's and therefore Glastonbury's origins which received, thanks to the approval of reigning Queen Elizabeth I, a status of acceptance. (cf. Stout 2012: 253f.) The revived Arimathean cult focused on the so-called Lady Chapel within the Abbey's ground, that was originally named after Joseph of Arimathea, namely St. Joseph Chapel. It was idealized as the birthplace of British Christianity and "Glastonbury was fast becoming a Protestant shrine" (ibid.: 256). This transfiguration saved the St. Joseph Chapel from vandalism, wherefore it is one of the few buildings that remained until today. Stout speaks of "selective Demolition" (ibid.: 254), since all the other religious buildings belonging to the Abbey got demolished by radical Protestant devotees as a significant gesture against Catholicism, but "[n]o one felt like tearing down the birthplace of British Christianity" (ibid.: 255f.). After many years of no specific interest in Glastonbury except for a few pilgrims, the Church of England bought 1907 the ground and the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey and started with its restoration as well as with archaeological excavations led by Frederick Bligh Bond (1864 – 1945) (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 80; Benham 2006: 199). Today the Abbey serves rather as a historical site and tourist attraction than a pilgrimage destination, although many church related events still take place within its ground.

In Glastonbury's recent past, more precisely in the first half of the twentieth century, many new interpretations of the town and its many myths and legends emerged. Glastonbury transformed into a major centre and meeting point for many *alternative* religious groups. Especially one distinctive group of people highly influenced this development within Glastonbury: the *Avalonians* or simply called the *spirituals*. Foremost, I am going to observe the legacy of the *Avalonians* with reference to Glastonbury's historical description in a more recent context. Subsequently I am going to discuss the most significant (spiritual) streams and place-myths of Glastonbury.

6.2. The Legacy of the *Avalonians*

Talking to New Age devotees in Glastonbury or self-appointed experts within the field of British Earth Mysteries, it may appear, as if the spiritual awakening of Glastonbury (and of the English landscape in general) in the twentieth century started in the 1970s and was due to John Michell's writing on that topic, precisely due to his seminal trilogy⁹⁷. However Michell's

⁹⁷ *The Flying Saucer Vision* (1967), *The View Over Atlantis* (1969), and *The City of Revelation* (1971).

approach towards Glastonbury's spirituality may be labelled as a *reawakening* since the pioneers of that movement are to be found already in the beginning of the twentieth century: the so-called *Avalonians*. Benham describes John Arthur Goodchild (1851 – 1914), Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884 – 1968), Frederick Bligh Bond, and Dion Fortune as those, who were “involved in the spiritual rebirth of Avalon in the first thirty years or so of the twentieth century” (Benham 2006: xviii). Hence the expression *Avalonians* must be understood as a description of a specific group of people, who identified themselves with the spiritual nature of Glastonbury, which they referred to as *Avalon*⁹⁸, and who created or invented a sacred tradition relating to the concept of Glastonbury as a sacred place. In consideration of that deep connection felt by the members of this group, it is not surprising that actually one of the *Avalonians* themselves shaped the very expression: “It was Dion Fortune who coined the term ‘Avalonians’ for the particular generation of Glastonbury seekers that she found herself among” (ibid.: 251). She further contrasted the term *Avalonians* with its secular counterpart, the *Glastonburians*: “In the hey-day of Glastonbury [...] there dwelt [...] the Glastonburians and the Avalonians; the Glastonburians were those who only knew the place as a market town and a tourist centre, and the Avalonians were those who were in touch with its spiritual life” (Fortune 1986: 111).

Since the *Avalonians* called themselves in reference to the alternative name of Glastonbury, namely *Avalon*, it is certain, that it possessed great importance to them. However, *Avalon* did not apply to the *Avalonians* in a conventional way, such as the burial place of King Arthur, rather they comprehended it as a *feeling* or as “a magical point of fusion between the known and the unknown” (Benham 2006: 1). Concerning the etymology of *Avalon* Nitze refers in his article on the link to its apple orchards: “Avalon [...] is originally the Celtic *Avallō*, the *vicus Avallonis* that underlies such place names as *Avallon* in Burgundy and in Savoy or Havelu in the Eure-et-Loire, and means, quite appropriately, *pommerie* or ‘apple-orchard’” (Nitze 1934: 357). Nowadays the expression *Avalon* found its way also in secular domains, such as business-names, schools, or public transportation: “The name Avalon has become associated with Glastonbury to a point beyond question. It is everywhere” (Benham 2006: 1).

Hexham's research on new religious movements in Britain offers a similar account to the *Avalonian* one. He distinguishes between two corresponding groups within the alternative (religious) scene in Glastonbury, which may be categorised as part of the British new religious movement. He calls them *spirituals* and *freaks*, whereby especially the belief and

⁹⁸ There are many concepts on the origins of the term and the concept of *Avalon*, which I am going to discuss in chapter 6.3.2.

value system of the *spirituals* may be understood as correspondent to or based on the very system of Dion Fortune's *Avalonians*. He characterizes the *spirituals* as follows: "They are united by the belief that Glastonbury is an important spiritual center. Some of them describe it as the 'religious heart of Britain,' while others say it is 'the most sacred place in the world.' [...] They believe that modern society is in decline because it has lost its 'spiritual roots.' [...] They seek spiritual satisfaction and claim to base their lives on religious values" (Hexham 1983: 3f.). While Dion Fortune opposes the *Avalonians* with a single group only, namely the secular *Glastonburians*, Hexham opposes the *spirituals* with further religious (Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, British Israelites, Druids, and Essenes) and counter cultural groups (the settling and visiting *freaks*). (cf. *ibid.*: 3)

All four *Avalonians* had a great impact on Glastonbury's occult and spiritual awakening. John Arthur Goodchild combined theosophical and esoteric elements within his books, *Light of the West* as the most famous one, and focused on Goddess and Universal Feminine worship. Goodchild further had a great impact on reviving and retelling the Grail story and connecting it to Glastonbury. Wellesley Tudor Pole is remembered as an occultist, a visionary, and the founder of the Chalice Well Trust. Building on Goodchild's theories on a mysterious Chalice or Grail, Tudor Pole stressed the association of Glastonbury's Chalice Well with the Holy Grail and continued retelling Glastonbury's Grail story. Frederick Bligh Bond carried the profession as an architect and was entitled to be leading excavator at the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. Within his position he cultivated extraordinary and unconventional methods, such as dowsing and cabalistic numerology, in order to locate excavation sites, or *automatic writing* sittings, which allegedly happened under trance with the help of two psychics⁹⁹. Due to these methods his religious colleagues eventually distanced themselves from him and even an 'anti-Bond lobby' got established within the excavation team. Soon enough he got dismissed, but until today his legacy, especially of his work on sacred geometry within the Abbey's ground, enjoys deep admiration by an alternative crowd, for. The fourth and probably most famous and influential *Avalonian* was Dion Fortune, born Violet Mary Firth, who was one of the most eminent British occultists of the twentieth century. She was mainly known for her books on occultism and related topics, *Avalon of the Heart* being the most famous one, as well as for founding her theosophical society *Fraternity of the Inner Light*. She connected Glastonbury Abbey with an alleged ancient stone circle and influenced thereby also Bond's excavation

⁹⁹ A psychic is a person that beliefs in his or her ability to reveal knowledge by means of his / her mental power, and therefore is commonly described as "a person who is sensitive to parapsychological forces or influences" (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/psychic>, 11.08.2018).

work and his imagination. Throughout her life a specific belief in Glastonbury's sacredness accompanied her and influenced her successors: "If any place could become the English Lourdes it is our Avalon" (Fortune 1986: 113). Even though Dion Fortune died in London, she was buried in Glastonbury and until today her grave is well kept on Glastonbury's cemetery. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 106ff., Hutton 2009: 318)

So each one of them contributed in a different way to connect Glastonbury with its supposed sacred origin. Thus they are the precursors of those later figures that helped *re-enchanting* Glastonbury as the core of a British sacred landscape, that is to say (among others) John Michell, Geoffrey Ashe (*1923), and Katherine Maltwood. As mentioned above, John Michell and his fellow *truth-seekers* on the alleged mystical or sacred origin of Glastonbury did not invent the *Avalonian* perspective on it, but it was "through the writings of John Michell [that] the legacy of the earlier Avalonians, and particularly the work of Frederick Bligh Bond" (Benham 2006: 273) was carried on. Michell built upon that legacy, which those first *Avalonians* of the 1930s left to him, and connected it with popular belief systems of that time. In other words, Michell re-awoke by means his writings the spirit of Glastonbury, whereby it got declared as the British New Age centre. Those who incorporated this newly awakened spirit are therefore the successors of the *Avalonians*, precisely those who pursued their legacy as from the 1960s.

6.3. Many *Glastonburys*

As mentioned above, one may speak of many *Glastonburys* on the account of its numerous and parallel running interpretations. I shall present now the main interpretations of Glastonbury and in the course of that, observe representative groups as well as narratives and place-myths. I am going to divide this presentation in three categories: a traditional one, an alternative one, and a perspective that lies in the middle and combines traditional as well as alternative perspectives.

6.3.1. Traditional Glastonbury

In a traditional sense Glastonbury is mainly interpreted as a rural market town in the county of Somerset, as a historical heritage site, primarily focused on its Abbey, and as a Christian heritage site, interpreted as the British birthplace of Christianity.

In a matter-of-fact perspective the inhabitants of Glastonbury understand their hometown as a simple “market town, and a centre of leather and sheepskin production and tanneries” (Ivakhiv 2001: 94). Connected to this business focused perception of Glastonbury are some shops, selling traditional local products. Spiritual or even religious aspects play a secondary role, if even.

Not far from that perception lies the understanding of Glastonbury as a national heritage site which concentrates on marketing strategies for touristic purposes. The major players towards a perception of heritage are in this connection mainly the Christian past, the agricultural past, the ancient past of the Iron Age, the natural heritage, and some mystic associations with the legendary King Arthur and his connection to Glastonbury Tor and the Abbey. However these mystic associations are only remarkable in the sense, that they may be used for marketing. Especially stressing the importance of King Arthur’s association with mysterious Glastonbury is highly popular: “the mysterious legends and myths associated with the Tor and the other hills and springs, among them that centered around the legendary figure of Arthur, which still rates highly in the popular imagination as the central icon of a glorious, if mysterious, ancient Britain” (ibid.: 99). This is taken up by some alternative tourism industry since a growing alternative community has been visiting Glastonbury in the last decades. These potential customers are provided through tourism suppliers, such as *Gothic Image Tours* or the *Isle of Avalon Foundation*, with specific alternative guesthouses, healing centres, and tours in and around Glastonbury, to satisfy their demands. (ibid.: 99f.) Within this understanding of Glastonbury representing an important heritage place, certain place-myths only serve the purpose of monument and heritage protection or are simply used for marketing reasons. Spiritual or religious references are only considered if they achieve an aim within these purposes.

As a third way on how to interpret Glastonbury in a rather traditional way I mentioned its Christian importance, since it is understood as the birthplace of British Christianity. Connected to that belief are various legends and traditions especially on Joseph of Arimathea. According to the New Testament he was a rich Jewish man, who secretly labelled himself a disciple of Christ and took responsibility for Jesus’ burial. All four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, talk of Joseph as the receiver of Jesus’ corpse from Pilate after his crucifixion and as the one who buried him afterwards in the sepulchre. Apart from these canonized stories there are many narratives concerning the figure of Joseph of Arimathea and his involvement upon a specific Christian history of Glastonbury. The main belief implies that he came to Glastonbury and founded the very first church of Britain (some claim even of all Europe) just

briefly after the crucifixion of Jesus. With him he allegedly brought along the Holy Chalice that was used in the Last Supper in Jerusalem and which was transfigured in the long term as the Holy Grail, “that mysterious artefact regarded variously as the chalice used at the Last Supper, the blood of Christ in some form, or phials containing the blood and sweat of Christ” (Bowman 2007: 19). Yet again another legend declares that Joseph of Arimathea visited Britain and Glastonbury already earlier in company of young Jesus, who at times is referred to Joseph of Arimathea as his nephew. This legend claims further, that Jesus may have even spent some time living in Glastonbury, possibly studying in the famous Druidic University of Glastonbury. (cf. Bowman 2005: 160f.; Bowman 2007: 19f.; Ivakhiv 2001: 100)

Bowman counts the belief of Christ in Glastonbury (either as a visitor or as a resident and student of the Druidic university) to the field of Christian vernacular religion. However, hardly any Christian believer follows this claim, but rather other denominations, such as the Sufi order *Naqshbandīyah*. For this denomination, the legends of Joseph of Arimathea and Jesus stepping on British ground create a sacredness towards Glastonbury and as a result transform it into a sacred place. (cf. Bowman 2005: 171, 177)

Many believers declare the *Holy Thorn Tree* as an evidence for the truth of the stories of Joseph of Arimathea. It is said that “[o]n arriving at Glastonbury Joseph [...] thrust his staff into the ground at Wearyall Hill, and according to local tradition this became the Holy Thorn” (Bowman 2007: 19), which is believed to grow until today at this very position¹⁰⁰. However, the special quality of this Thorn Tree inspiring people to transfigure it, may be found in its blooming, which happens *twice* a year: once in spring time and once around Winter Solstice or Christmas. Since it is believed that the Thorn Tree on Wearyall Hill in Glastonbury goes back to the very Thorn Tree of the times of Joseph of Arimathea it is known as the *Holy Thorn*. Despite the fact that the Holy Thorn Tree on Wearyall Hill was replanted in 1951, after the last Holy Thorn was cut down during the Civil War in the seventeenth century by some Puritan soldiers who saw it as a sign of superstition (as one may even read on the Abbey’s official website), believers stick to their conviction that it goes back to the times of Joseph of Arimathea (cf. https://www.glastonburyabbey.com/holy_thorn.php, 05.18.2018). Nowadays there are a couple of these Glastonbury Thorn Trees¹⁰¹, blossoming twice a year, which are still connected to Joseph of Arimathea.

¹⁰⁰ In 2010 the Holy Thorn Tree at Wearyall Hill was destroyed by unknown vandals whereupon only the stump remained, which is still cherished and decorated by locals and pilgrims (cf. Hallett, 2010).

¹⁰¹ One close to the ruins of the Abbey within its vast garden areal, one next to the Chalice Well, and another one in the churchyard of St. Johns church on the High Street.

Legends surrounding Joseph of Arimathea experience a wide range of variations depending on their interpretation and their recipients. However they may be used to explain the high importance which is put on Britain or Glastonbury regarding the roots of Christianity.

6.3.2. Glastonbury in between the Worlds

Some interpretations of Glastonbury may be classified as traditional as well as alternative. It is these place-myths that connect the traditional and the alternative *Glastonburys*, since both claim them to be part of their cultural property. Especially two place-myths are worth mentioning since they play a major part in a traditional and historical understanding of Glastonbury and since they have been reinterpreted by the alternative community of Glastonbury. We are talking of the place-myths of King Arthur, whose alleged burial place is to be found in Glastonbury, and Glastonbury as a centre of Celtic spirituality or a Druidic-Christian centre of reconciliation.

The mythical character and story of King Arthur is generally connected to the *Matter of Britain*, a body of medieval literature, especially focussing on Arthur and legends surrounding him. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 102) Since it is one of Britain's most popular legends, the story experienced many revisions and reproductions. Its beginning is in the fifth century AD, when the Roman province of Britain was threatened by the invasion of Saxon troops. As a result of the Romans' desertion, the local Britons had to create a defensive force by themselves which they successfully accomplished under the leadership of a mysterious military figure, now known and transfigured as King Arthur. Sir Thomas Malory presented with his *Le Morte D'Arthur* one of the earliest written sources of the mythological reinterpretation of the Matter of Britain. (cf. Barr 1988: iv)

The connection of Glastonbury with the legendary King Arthur may find its origin already in the twelfth century when his alleged burial place was *discovered* by the monks of Glastonbury Abbey. By means of this, Glastonbury received the status as the legendary *Avalon*, which "is the name given to the 'Otherworld' where the British hero finds his final resting-place" (Savage 1942: 405), or where he went for healing after his last battle. (cf. Bowman 2007: 19) This strategic step of locating Arthur's grave in Glastonbury was recorded on the one hand by William of Malmesbury, by mentioning the *Insula Avallonia* within his *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie*, and on the other hand by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who interpreted the *discovery* of Arthur's grave as a significant evidence for Arthur's real existence in the past. (cf. Savage 1942: 405; Carley 1983: 819) Today King Arthur is still instrumentalized by the

Abbey in order to rise the number of visitors. Within the ruins of the Abbey any visitor may visit the alleged grave of King Arthur, as well as the *original* burial ground, located slightly outside of the primary Abbey walls. However most contemporary interpretations label Glastonbury Tor as the *real Avalon* and link myriad Arthurian reinterpretations to it, concerning his return and *how* he will return. Concepts range from Arthur the Pagan hero or god, to a solar deity¹⁰², to a New Age warrior, or even to Arthur as a spaceman. (cf. Bowman 2005: 21f.)

In general, contemporary approaches to Arthurian myths are rather dealing with his return than with the historical impact he had on Britain. Arthur's re-emergence is linked to the hope, that he will reintroduce Britain to its lost Golden Age: "This longing for Arthur's return – the hope that a primal superhero might reinstate a golden age in which Britain's glory shines again – has been the archetypal British myth" (Ivakhiv 2001: 103). However, also the perception of a threatening danger to Britain's sacred sites and the "spiritual emergency" (Bowman 2007: 21) related to this danger, enforces that longing for King Arthur's return. (cf. *ibid.*)

Geoffrey Ashe and Katherine Maltwood have been two of the firsts to revive the Arthurian legends in the twentieth century and to connect it to the very belief, that King Arthur is going to instigate Britain as the leading world centre with Glastonbury as its starting point, its core, its New Jerusalem. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 104) According to Maltwood, by means of her *Glastonbury Zodiac*, Glastonbury's landscape shall be reinterpreted as the legendary Round Table of King Arthur. The *Glastonbury Zodiac*, as claimed by Maltwood, depicts a huge landscape zodiac in and around Glastonbury – a map of stars on a gigantic scale, formed by landscape features such as roads, hills, or streams. Maltwood argued that the *Glastonbury Zodiac*, meaning the landscape surrounding Glastonbury, functions as the material evidence, that the story of King Arthur and his Round Table had actually taken place in the greater Glastonbury area. Maltwood inspired again others to connect King Arthur with extra-terrestrials, since the Glastonbury Zodiac and the Round Table *must* have been constructed with help from above, from where the landscape as a whole can be investigated. (cf. Bowman 2007: 21f.) Geoffrey Ashe, on the other hand, is mainly responsible of implementing a crucial connection of Glastonbury, King Arthur's *Avalon*, and a potential rising Golden Age or New Jerusalem. His book *King Arthur's Avalon: The story of Glastonbury* (1957), which focuses

¹⁰² Also Rudolf Steiner incorporated this very interpretation of King Arthur as a solar deity. He believed in an Arthurian priesthood, which he described as a solar cult, since King Arthur himself allegedly was a British solar deity. (cf. Hale 2015: 184)

on Glastonbury's actual history, as well as its legends, had a great impact on Glastonbury's popularity, alike Michell's books; Benham even calls him "greatest of latter-day Avalonians" (Benham 2006: 3). In accordance with the *Avalonians*, though more objective, his "purpose was [...] the spiritual and cultural renewal of the British in the modern age, using Glastonbury as the main center for this work" (Hutton 2009: 319). This purpose harmonised with his aim of retelling the story of King Arthur and remapping Glastonbury within a spiritual context. Supplementary he found a grateful target group in the counter cultural crowd of the 1960s. (cf. Hutton 2009: 319f.; Ivakhiv 2001: 104)

Even the famous comic publisher *DC Comics* picked up on that very topic with its comic book *Camelot 3000* (1988). Content of this future prospect is King Arthur's return on grounds of a global emergency situation initiated by an alien invasion: The glory King Arthur himself and his knights of the Round Table reincarnate in order to save the world. Alleged sacred places, such as Glastonbury Tor and Stonehenge, take a prominent position within the story, namely Glastonbury Tor as the place where King Arthur's grave is secretly located and from where he resurrects; and Stonehenge as a sacred place built by Merlin the magician.

Summarizing, due to a great variety of interpretations or manipulations, there are many different *Arthurs* and related place-myths within Glastonbury, traditional and alternative alike: "Arthur has managed to be pagan, Christian and New Age hero in Glastonbury, and his Round Table has been connected with the Celtic cauldron of wisdom, journeys of self-discovery, and extra-terrestrials" (Bowman 2007: 29).

Another crucial identity marker is Glastonbury's Celtic past. The town is considered by many as a meeting point of early Christianity and Celtic spirituality. The term *Celtic spirituality* refers to a broad spectrum of belief systems connected to an alleged native Celtic faith, such as a pre-Christian Celtic religion, the Celtic Church, as a fusion of Celtic religion and Christianity, and a contemporary faith that embraces an assumed *pure* Celtic native religion. Especially *current* Celtic spirituality and Neo-Paganism, which are major players within the spiritual field in Glastonbury, vary significantly from the presumed predecessor. Devotees of these streams, which include a great variety of different spiritual seekers, follow the assumption that "the 'spiritual Celt', [was] inherently spiritual and intuitive, in touch with nature and the hidden realms." (Bowman 2007: 17; cf. Bowman 2005: 71f.) Therefore the pre-Christian Celtic religion is commonly understood as a faith system that predated any other belief system in Britain and thus defines the ancient native religion of all British ancestors. Within this romanticised view of the Celts "is the appeal to an allegedly more enlightened past, one in which the Celts take on the role of Britain's noble savage" (Ivakhiv 2001: 108). In

this context the term *noble savages* refers to the British Druids. Since the term is used frequently in an inaccurate manner, I am going to offer some definitions before proceeding. Devereux defines them as “the priests and priestesses of the Iron Age pagan Celts” (Devereux 2000: 60) and also mentions their transfiguration as idealised *noble savages*. Le Roux and Guyonvarc’h define a Druid as a members of “the priestly class” and “[a]s the holder of spiritual authority” (Le Roux & Guyonvarc’h 1987: 493). Moreover they “were the Celtic representatives of an Indo-European priesthood. Their name is explained by the Celtic [hypothetical] *dru-wid-es* (‘the very wise ones’) [...] the Celts were the only ones besides the Indians to possess a hierarchized and structured priestly class. The Druids were not any more pre-Celtic priests than they were mere philosophers; even less were they shamans or sorcerers” (ibid.: 494). Summarized, the Druids may be defined as members of a stratified Celtic society, in which they were holding the position of a high-ranking priest class that was connected to the important domains of knowledge, wisdom, ritual, and spirituality.

Celtic Christianity, which experienced its peak in between the sixth and the ninth century, united its devotees within the Celtic Church and combined Celtic with Christian features, however distancing itself from the Roman Catholic Church (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 101). It is believed that the syncretistic fusion of the old Celtic and the new Christian elements created a *pure* form of Christianity in a smooth and nonviolent transition. Commonly three reasons for this peaceful process are mentioned. First, Celtic Christians were able to resist corrupted and misguided proselytizing of their Catholic fellow believers; second, the belief in the integration of Druidic wisdom and esoteric knowledge into Celtic Christianity; and third, the belief of Jesus walking on English ground and studying within the great Druidic education centre in Glastonbury. (cf. Bowman 2007: 20)

The connection drawn from Celtic traditions to Glastonbury may be found already in the very name of the town. William of Malmesbury, as one of the earliest sources, mentioned in his *De antiquitate Glastonie ecclesie* a possible Celtic or pre-Saxon name for Glastonbury, namely *Ineswitrin*¹⁰³ – whereby *ynis* or *ines* means island and *witryn* means glass, so the *Island of Glass*¹⁰⁴. However, it is not unambiguous, whether the *Island of Glass* refers to Glastonbury as a whole or specifically to Glastonbury Tor, which frequently was depicted as an island, as I have discussed elsewhere¹⁰⁵. (cf. Grimmer 2003: 1; Ivakhiv 2001: 105) In the Celtic folklore,

¹⁰³ Different spellings occur, such as *Ynyswitrin*, *Yneswitherim*, or *Yneswitrin* (cf. Grimmer 2003: 4, 11).

¹⁰⁴ Another reference of Glastonbury as the *Isle of Glass* may be found in the twelfth century chronicle *The Life of Gildas*, where Glastonbury is mentioned as the *Town of Glass* (cf. Savage 1942: 406).

¹⁰⁵ See chapter 6.1.

Glastonbury Tor represents a gateway to the *Otherworld*, a place “where the veil between this world and the ‘other world’ is at its thinnest” (Bowman 2005: 159). This interpretation of the Tor, as a centre between this world and the next, replies for Celtic and for contemporary Celtic spirituality alike. Parallels may be discovered to the Tor’s and Glastonbury’s other interpretation as an island, namely as the *Isle of Apples*, *Avalon*, which likewise symbolizes a gateway to the other world. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 105)

6.3.3. Alternative Glastonbury

Those place-myths which are supported by a recently established and continuously growing alternative community are very much focused on counter cultural, esoteric, and New Age topics. Especially the legacy of the *Avalonians* as well as the counter cultural influences of the 1960s increased the development of alternative place-myths. John Michell’s writings on Glastonbury’s mysteries and their reinterpretation introduced innovations on this very topic: “Michell’s writing (1969, 1972) typified the new genre of writing about Glastonbury, drawing on the growing fascination with Neolithic science and ancient knowledge, numerology, gematria, earth energies, and ley lines” (Ivakhiv 2001: 82). Ivakhiv points out four major place-myths connected to an alternative understanding of Glastonbury: the major centre of British Earth Mysteries and ley lines, Glastonbury representing the *centre of light* or the *heart chakra* of the earth, Glastonbury as a major Goddess worshipping site, and the counter cultural festival and travelling scene in and around Glastonbury.

Earth Mystery is a very broad expression that allows a great variety of implications and interpretations. Usually the faith in Earth Mysteries is explained by three main theories, namely of ley lines or energy streams, that create a pattern of sacred places all over the world; of sacred geometry, that reveal hidden numeric insights; and of the belief in an ancient esoteric knowledge that may be discovered through the pattern of sacred places, through sacred geometry, and through alleged relics of high culture in the landscape and within megalithic sites. Glastonbury functions within Britain as a major Earth Mystery player, due to its importance in creating a distinctive Earth Mystery Movement. Commonly it is also presented as the foundation or source that allowed an Earth Mystery Movement to emerge from it. In this manner Hutton emphasizes Glastonbury’s role in the development of the Earth Mystery Movement: “The modern Earth Mysteries movement may be proposed to have arisen from two independent points, [...] by the work of Alfred Watkins, [...] and [...] [t]he second point of origin for the Earth Mysteries movement, it may be suggested, lay in Glastonbury”

(Hutton 2009: 316f.) Another reason for its importance within the field of British Earth Mysteries, is to be found in its very location, namely at the alleged crossing point of some¹⁰⁶ crucial ley lines, like the St. Michael¹⁰⁷ ley line. Eventually some elements of Glastonbury's place-myths and *Avalonian* inventions or interpretations were incorporated into the Earth Mysteries' programme. The most influential incorporations are the belief in landscape figures or zodiacs surrounding Glastonbury, such as Katherine Maltwood's *Temple of the Stars*; the hidden insights of the sacred geometry of Glastonbury Abbey, as Bond explored and interpreted it; Glastonbury Tor, including its surrounding labyrinth, as an alleged energy hotspot; and megalithic architecture, such as stone circles, in the immediate surroundings of Glastonbury. (cf. Hutton 2009: 317f.; Ivakhiv 2011: 110f.) All these aspects were understood by members of the Earth Mystery Movement as evidences for two qualities, which they imposed on Glastonbury: Modern-day Glastonbury as the successor of a permanently existing ancient culture of high wisdom, spirituality, and technology; and Glastonbury as a sacred place on a global and local scale that possesses potential as the starting point for the rising of a Golden Age, commonly illustrated through the concept of a Heavenly Jerusalem on English Ground¹⁰⁸. The Earth Mystery Movement in Glastonbury has been active until today.

The popular concept of Glastonbury representing the *heart chakra* of the planet earth is very well received particularly among New Age devotees. This concept refers to the system of *cakra*¹⁰⁹, which originates “in Hindu religious practice (*pūjā*) or in meditation, as symbols of the deity, and sometimes as a name for sacred enclosures where rites are performed” (Padoux 1987: 4). *Cakra* is Sanskrit and means *wheel*, *discuss*, or *circle*, however it is as well interpreted as *centre*. Within Hindu and Buddhist traditions¹¹⁰ there is a three-folded division of each living being in a physical body, a subtle body, and the self or the spirit. The *cakra* system applies to the subtle body and divides it into centres. Besides its centres and *cakras*, the subtle body consists further “of a web of seventy-two thousand arteries or channels (*nāḍīs*) through which the cosmic and vital energy (*prāṇa*) circulates [...]” (ibid.). The number of *cakras* varies greatly depending on the religious tradition, but the most common one is the system of the *ṣaṭcakra*, which acknowledges six different *cakras*. In Hindu traditions *cakras*

¹⁰⁶ Theories on the actual number of leys crossing Glastonbury vary from four to up to over a hundred ley lines (Ivakhiv 2011: 108).

¹⁰⁷ Sometimes referred to as St. Michael and Mary ley line.

¹⁰⁸ Discussed in detail in chapter 7.4..

¹⁰⁹ The different spelling is intended in order to distinguish between a traditional interpretation and a reinterpretation in the West.

¹¹⁰ There are many different schools interpreting the *cakra* system in various ways.

do not possess a physical existence, instead they act as “both symbols and stages of an inner experience that is at the same time corporeal, mental, spiritual or religious, and cosmic” (ibid.: 5; cf. ibid.: 4f.)

Within a New Age context, this traditional concept of the *cakras* experienced reinterpretation on a global as well as on a local scale. The global perspective concerns the earth as a living organism¹¹¹, similar to the human body which possesses, corresponding to the traditional system, seven chakras:

“The base/root and ‘initiatory’ center is Mount Shasta; the sexual center is Lake Titicaca in South America; the solar plexus is Australia’s Uluru; the Glastonbury-Shaftesbury area constitutes the heart and ‘culminating’ center; the Great Pyramid, together with Mount of Olives is the throat center; the ‘Immortal Shamballic Focus’ is mobile; and the crown is located at Mount Kailas in Tibet” (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 264).

On a local scale Glastonbury is explained as part of a *chakra* system that applies exclusively to Britain. Within this system Glastonbury shifts from the *heart chakra* to the *solar plexus*, Avebury in turn becomes the *heart chakra*, another sacred place in Cornwall representing the *root chakra*. The St. Michael ley line, which is understood to connect these sacred places, like the *nāḍīs* do, allows an alleged connection alike the chakra system of the human body. (cf. ibid.: 110) In other words, the ley lines correspond to the cannels or *nāḍīs*, and the sacred places along crucial ley lines, such as the St. Michael ley line, correspond to the centres or *cakras*. Hence the place-myth of Glastonbury as the *heart chakra* of the earth (or as the *solar plexus* of Britain), merge with the place-myth of it constituting the major centre for Earth Mysteries and ley lines.

Whether focusing on an exclusively local or global scale, these chakras need to be *activated* in order to *work*. *Activation* may be attained through various spiritual methods such as meditation, visualization, any kind of prayers, or magical invocations; or by simply visiting these places may participate in its activation. (cf. ibid.: 114, 116) As a result of this *activation*, Glastonbury’s locally generated (healing) energy streams are radiated all over the world, namely through ley lines, through megalithic stone circles, or through crop circles, and connect thereby the small town with all global energy patterns. Thus this place-myth implies an explicit global connotation and interconnectedness of the small town, since its local *activation* leads to a different global balance or a spiritual impact, namely the healing of the

¹¹¹ As discussed within the Gaia hypothesis by Lovelock. See chapter 4.3.

earth. (cf. Bowman 2005: 185f.) In a British New Age perspective, the proper goal, regarding Glastonbury's *activation*, must be to establish a *New Jerusalem*¹¹². Various New Age writers, among them John Michell, who are associated with this specific place-myth of Glastonbury, agree that "Glastonbury is the New Jerusalem, a zodiacal phoenix rising from the ashes" (Ivakhiv 2001: 116). Beside its description as the global heart chakra and New Jerusalem, they understand Glastonbury as part of a British *energy triangle*, consisting of Findhorn (Scotland), Iona (Scotland), and Glastonbury (England); as a "crucial link in the 'etheric network' of 'power points'" (ibid.: 114); as "a universal Cosmic Beacon" (ibid.: 115), emitting and receiving streams of energy, light, or simply magic. (cf. ibid.: 114f.)

In the last decades Glastonbury gained the status of a major Goddess worshipping site, although the establishment of an interpretation of "the town's history and landscape from a spiritual feminist perspective" (ibid.: 116) has been relatively recent. Many Goddess believers assume that Glastonbury, with all its legends, is a sacred place for feminine and Goddess spirituality and relate it to an ancient, sacred site of Goddess worship. (cf. Bowman 2007: 25f.) Main beliefs of Goddess devotees include "connections between landscape features, Celtic myth, and speculations on ancient goddess religion" (Ivakhiv 2001: 117). Therefore the Goddess movement can be defined as part of the Earth Mystery Movement, thus following the belief that landscape depicts sacred or ancient wisdom, which amongst other features may lead to salvation. Similar to Maltwood's interpretation of Glastonbury's landscape as a celestial map, Goddess devotees understand its landscape, especially its hills and springs as *obvious* elements of a lying Goddess or as a swan, which is known as the sacred bird to the Goddess. (cf. ibid.: 116ff.) Main institutions of the Goddess movement are the Goddess Temple, as well as the more recent Goddess Hall, and the Goddess House, which all offer a great variety of courses, workshops, lectures, therapy sessions and cleansings, conferences, processions, and even special rooms to let. Broad topics ranging from the Goddess, fairies, femininity, Gaia as Mother Earth to perceptions of sacred nature, are covered within the program of these locations. One may also complete a Goddess priest / priestess of *Avalon* training, celebrate weddings and funerals. (cf. Oracle Magazine, 2018) It seems like mystical Glastonbury serves as a perfect location to Goddess worship: "For spiritual feminists, then, Glastonbury is a site where the hidden heritage of women's spirituality is sought out and found, in the potent imagery of the Grail, the Goddess, and the landscape with its dragon energies, sacred springs, and hills" (Ivakhiv 2001: 119). Therefore, among all those numerous

¹¹² Since the belief in the rising of a New Jerusalem plays a major role within Michell's Sacred Place Theory, I am going to observe this matter comprehensively below, precisely in Chapter 7.2.4.

diverse spiritual streams within Glastonbury, the Goddess worship counts to the most active and ever-present alternative believing systems. In 2003 the Glastonbury Goddess Temple got registered as an official Goddess Temple (first of its kind in England) and the Goddess Conference has been a fixed event in Glastonbury since 1996. (cf. Bowman 2007: 26)

Another representative group of Glastonbury concerns the travelling and counter culture scene. They are rooted in the Stonehenge People's Free Festival and in the first editions of Glastonbury Fayre, which today is known as Glastonbury Festival¹¹³. They had an interest in Glastonbury as a sacred place, especially focused on the Tor as a "safe, free, sacred zone" (Ivakhiv 2001: 97), but in general pilgrimaged to Glastonbury due to its counter cultural and alternative character and atmosphere. There is a remarkable difference between the travel culture of the second half of the twentieth century and nowadays, and its perception by locals. Britain used to be the country in Western Europe with the largest travelling population, whereas mainly young people of urban origin travelled over the countryside in vans or trucks, reaching a high quantity of approximately fifteen to twenty thousand travellers all over Britain. (cf. *ibid.*: 89) Once a collective identity was built up, it manifested itself by means of a free-festival counter culture. To outsiders this alternative group of travelling people was soon labelled by names such as hippies, "freaks" (Hexham 1983: 3), or "postmodern refugees" (Ivakhiv 2001: 119), who lived a nomadic lifestyle with a flexible New Age ideology and a collective identity that was shared and experienced at gatherings, like the Stonehenge Free Festival¹¹⁴. This New Age ideology was an important aspect of their collective identity, shared by festival attendees, though not perceived as a defined or static body of beliefs and rituals. On the contrary, this ideology was very fluid and flexible, integrating concepts of leys, UFOs, sacred space, and Earth Mysteries to mention but a few. (cf. *ibid.*: 86)

Due to tightened laws and police force many travellers eventually sought a permanent home, wherefore quite a few ended up in Glastonbury, which experienced its peak of arrivals around 1989 and 1990. After all, not many stayed for good, but the impact they had on Glastonbury town was significant – much to the regret of the locals, who felt threatened by this wave of newcomers who looked and acted different. (cf. *ibid.*: 89f.) "At the time of the Glastonbury Fayre in 1971, local hostility against the freaks had reached an all-time high" (Hexham 1983: 10), and "No Hippies Allowed signs appeared in local restaurants and shops" (Ivakhiv 2001:

¹¹³ Even though it takes place in Pilton, a small village neighbouring Glastonbury.

¹¹⁴ The last official free festival at Stonehenge took place in 1984 with an estimated amount of 40.000 people attending (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 89).

83). In the 1970s and 1980s the attitude towards the festival and counter culture in general was very negative. Nowadays the situation has changed, since Glastonbury Festival is the most-known feature of Glastonbury, and for many British people “it is the Glastonbury Festival which places the town on the map of contemporary England” (ibid.: 120). Thanks to the festival and its consuming attendees, fame and economic prosperity changed the local attitude towards the event and towards its counter cultural visitors: “The freaks had created an image which was seen as good for tourism” (Hexham 1983: 10). Anyway, nowadays the greatest pilgrimage to Glastonbury happens in the course of Glastonbury Festival and many people make good money with the modern freaks.

6.4. Conclusion

This short summary of Glastonbury’s place-myths does not claim to be complete since they are permanently reinvented, forgotten, reinterpreted, dropped, re-insisted, and so on. However my aim was to show Glastonbury’s potential of myth-making, which appears as one of its essential characteristics. Bowman calls the *Avalonians* “story dwellers” (Bowman 2007: 29), Geoffrey Ashe talks of the “Glastonbury Madness” (Ashe 2007: ix) referring to the incessant birth and rebirth of its legends, and Benham believes, that “the landscape [...] allow[s] our myth-making faculties full rein” (Benham 2006: 1). Quite accurate, Ashe further quotes in his preface to the fiftieth anniversary edition of his *King Arthur’s Avalon* a monk of Downside Abbey: “You have only to tell some crazy story in Glastonbury and in ten years’ time it’ll be an ancient Somerset legend” (Ashe 2007: ix).

After all it is important to mention, though, that most of the place-myths introduced in this chapter, refer only to a very small minority of British culture. Today this minority, believing in Glastonbury’s alternative place-myths, even decreased compared to its heyday in the ending sixties, beginning seventies Nevertheless there is still people, who celebrate their belief according to these place-myths. In the next chapter I am going to present those two major place-myths, which were instrumentalized by John Michell in order to prove Glastonbury’s centrality within his Sacred Place Theory.

7. Michell’s Sacred Place Theory

As I have just discussed, there is a great quantity of myths connected to the town of Glastonbury as well as to its surrounding landscape. In order to understand it as *the* pattern of

Michell's Sacred Place Theory, I shall discuss Glastonbury now as the intersection point of two central place-myths that play a major role in Michell's theories and in New Age concepts alike. That is Glastonbury's connection to various perceptions on Atlantis and its future vision of the New Jerusalem rising within it. I shall first present the two concepts independently, after that add Michell's reinterpretation, and subsequently merge all of them with Michell's concept of Glastonbury as the spiritual hub.

7.1. Atlantis

Among countless concepts of ancient civilisations, lost countries or continents, and forgotten sources of great wisdom, Atlantis occupies a prominent position. Beside Atlantis, there is also references of *Lemuria*, *Cordemia*, *Lumania* or *Mu*, which are similarly described as "ancient civilizations which were superior to ours both in spiritual and in technological knowledge" (Hanegraaff 1998: 309), by members of various groups dedicated to modern Western esotericism, occultism, and theosophy alike. (cf. *ibid.*: 309f.) Godwin offers in his book *Atlantis and the Cycles of Time: Prophecies, Traditions and Occult Revelations* (2011) an overview of *occult Atlantology* and of the wide range of beliefs on where to locate this *lost civilisation*.

Atlantology may be opposed to a sceptical approach towards the historical existence of Atlantis, which was mainly represented by natural and historical sciences; and defined as the analysis of a potential ancient empire, whose appearance, proportions, culture, and collapse are precisely discussed by Plato. Among *Atlantologists* it is often believed, that Atlantis represents a sort of *mother culture*, and hence has become a potential source for any advanced civilisation to follow. *Atlantology* belongs to the spectrum of the so called *parasciences*, which further includes marginalised belief systems, such as astrology, ufology, geomancy, and alike. In contrast to most of the other *parasciences*, *Atlantology* has a dateable source of beginning, namely Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*. (cf. Ruppert 2001: 14; Magin 1995: 36f., 42f.)

Notions on the location vary from the Atlantic Ocean, to various European countries (especially Greece, Turkey, but also Britain), to Antarctica or to an omnipresent¹¹⁵ or absent location. Theories on Atlantis were discussed by prominent representatives of Theosophy and Anthroposophy, such as Helena P. Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner, and Alice Bailey; by Traditionalists, such as René Guénon and Julius Evola; and by occultist and New Age

¹¹⁵ Worldwide culture with its remains spread all over the world.

representatives, such as Edgar Cayce, Shirley MacLaine, Dion Fortune, Geoffrey Ashe, and John Michell. Godwin dedicates a whole chapter on British theories and concepts concerning Atlantis, which implies Britain's prominent position in this myth-making process. A special focus is laid on Michell's and Fortune's specific *Atlantology*.

However, since any Atlantis theory is linked to and based on Plato's account on Atlantis, which he rather described as a city than a continent, I shall first of all present his theory.

7.1.1. Plato's Atlantis

The story of the lost city of Atlantis first appeared in the Socratic dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*, that were written around 360 BC for a speech during festivities in honour of Athena (Gill, 2018). While *Timeaeus* is a completed account on cosmology, on the origins of humankind, and on individual morality, most of *Critias*' content has never been finished or got lost. The few pages of *Critias* deal mainly with civil society and how it may work or fail. The focus is laid on a contraposition of the city of Athens and the city of Atlantis, whereby Athens serves as the virtuous and Atlantis as the sinful counterpart. Hence relations may be drawn to Plato's earlier Socratic dialogue *Res Publica* (Republic), which deals mainly with justice among manhood and states. Crucially in this matter, *Res Publica* further provides remarks on the ideal city, as may be found also in *Timaeus*, as well as in Plato's *De Legibus* (Laws). (cf. Gregory 2008: lvif.)

According to the dialogues, all information of Atlantis was provided by Egyptian sources, which the Greek statesman Solon (ca. 640 – 561 BC), an alleged ancestor of Plato himself, learnt of an Egyptian priest, when staying in the city of Sais, Egypt, in about 560 BC (cf. Ruppert 2001: 1) Accordingly, in *Timaeus* it says: “All right, then. Socrates, you're about to hear a story which, for all its strangeness, is absolutely true, with its truth affirmed by Solon, the wisest of the seven sages. Now, Solon was a relative of my great-grandfather Dropides, and the two of them were very close” (Plato, *Timaeus* 20e)¹¹⁶.

Within the body of *Timaeus*, only at the very outset the story of Atlantis is mentioned. In this part Critias describes Solon's encounter with the Egyptian priest. Moreover a description of the city of Atlantis, its approximate location and its destruction is provided.

“ ‘Our [Egyptian] records contain many impressive and admirable exploits performed by your city, but there's one above all that stands out for its importance and courage. Our documents record

¹¹⁶ Translation drawn from Waterfield (2008): pp. 7f.

how your city once halted an enormous force that was marching insolently against not just the whole of Europe, but Asia as well, from its base beyond Europe in the Atlantic Ocean. I should mention that in those days the ocean there was navigable, since there was an island in front of the strait which, I've heard you say, your people call the Pillars of Heracles. The island was bigger than both Asia and Libya combined, and travellers in those days used it to get to the further islands [...]. Everything this side of that strait is like a narrow-mouthed harbour, but that is the true sea, and the land which completely surrounds it truly deserves the name 'mainland'. ‘ “On this island of Atlantis a great and remarkable dynasty had arisen, which ruled the whole island, many of the other islands, and parts of the mainland too. They also governed some of the lands here inside the strait — Libya up to the border with Egypt, and Europe up to Etruria. Once upon a time, then, they combined their forces and set out en masse to try to enslave in one swoop your part of the world, and ours, and all the territory this side of the strait. This was the occasion, Solon, when the resources of your city, its courage and strength, were revealed for all to see; it stood head and shoulders above all other states for its bravery and military expertise. [...] ‘ “Some time later appalling earthquakes and floods occurred, and in the course of a single, terrible day and night the whole fighting-force of your city sank all at once beneath the earth, and the island of Atlantis likewise sank beneath the sea and vanished. That is why the sea there cannot now be navigated or explored; the mud which the island left behind as it settled lies a little below the surface and gets in the way.” (Plato, *Timaeus* 23e – 25d)¹¹⁷

In the dialogue *Critias*, on the other hand, the city of Atlantis is explained in detail. Especially its relation to the God Poseidon, who established the city, and hence its divine origin, as well as a particularised picture of its cityscape, that is a detailed description of its society structure, its monuments, and its technical and cultural achievements, are mentioned. Also its degradation takes a prominent position within *Critias*. Yet, due to *Critias*' abrupt ending, no proper conclusion on possible consequences of Atlantis' immoral behaviour are offered. (cf. Ruppert 2001: 2)

So according to Plato's two crucial dialogues on this matter, the vibrant and successful city or island-state of Atlantis sank due to natural powers, namely earthquakes and floods, however, as a result of its imperialistic and immoral notions. Thus, Plato's story of Atlantis shows on the one hand, how a state, that does not keep to uprightness and justice, may be defeated and fall. On the other hand, Atlantis was used by Plato in order to show Athens' greatness and justness: “A small but just city (an Ur-Athens) triumphs over a mighty aggressor (Atlantis). The story also features a cultural war between wealth and modesty, between a maritime and an agrarian society, and between an engineering science and a spiritual force.” (Gill, 2017).

¹¹⁷ Translation drawn from Waterfield (2008), pp. 12ff.

Consequently, despite Atlantis is firstly described as a city of high culture, prosperity and morality, even as a *sacred* city due to its divine relations (cf. Plato, *Critias* 115b)¹¹⁸, eventually it represents *the* image of a failed state and therefore an instruction on how mankind should *not* build up their societies. Plato's account has fascinated people ever since, and especially the coexisting combination of precise description and broad room for interpretation, led to countless theories and reinterpretation on that very topic.

7.1.2. Plato's Legacy

Opinions differ(ed) greatly on the question, whether Plato's account on Atlantis is a mere utopian description, or whether it actually is based on some links to an ancient culture. Thus, it allowed an opposing discourse to evolve: Those, who saw Plato either as a dreamer and his Atlantis as a metaphorical illusion; and those who saw in him an initiate of ancient wisdom, carried further on from Egyptian esoteric knowledge. Especially representatives of modern western esoteric groups transfigured Plato's Atlantis as an idealized lost paradise, comparable to Biblical Eden. (cf. Magin 1995: 42f.)

The first, to state an opposed opinion, was Plato's pupil Aristotle (384 – 322 BC), who declared Plato's Atlantis as a fiction and invention of a dreamer. Further classical resonances to Plato's description are just known by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (ca. first century BC), describing Atlanteans as the most noble men; and by the Greek philosopher Proclus (412 – 485 AD) who even mentioned other sources apart from Plato, that gave indication of Atlantis' existence. (cf. Devereux 2000: 24; Ruppert 2001: 2)

For unknown reasons, there was a long break of any Atlantis discourse hereafter and only during the Renaissance two aspects contributed to the revival of Atlantis: Firstly, the discovery of the *New World* by Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506) in 1492, which then proved for many the actuality of Plato's Atlantis-myth; and secondly, the newly established literary genre of utopian writing, initiated by Sir Thomas More's (1478 – 1535) novel *Utopia* (1516). Since *Utopia* is describing an imagined ideal island state, references to Plato's Atlantis are obviously not far to seek. In More's tradition and following Plato, Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) published his utopian novel *New Atlantis* (Nova Atlantis) in 1623 and described a futuristic version of Plato's ancient society. (cf. Ruppert 2001: 3) In 1665, the first map, depicting Atlantis' location in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, was published by the Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher (1602 – 1680), whereby his hypothesis of location was in

¹¹⁸ Translation drawn from Waterfield (2008), p. 113.

conformity with Egyptian sources and Plato's description. (cf. Godwin 2011: 1) This very map or hypothesis of the location finally influenced in turn Ignatius Donnelly (1831 – 1901), who wrote the popular book *Atlantis: the Antediluvian World* (1882). Donnelly's diffusionistic¹¹⁹ Atlantis approach led to a great shift towards a popularization of the Atlantis-myth, and further initiated the dawn of modern esoteric perceptions on Atlantis (cf. Ruppert 2001: 4):

“He was a strict diffusionist, treating all cultural phenomena as imports rather than as indigenous inventions. Given that, the similarities on the eastern and western sides of the Atlantic had to have a common source. Donnelly spread his net to include not only pyramids and flood legends, but also metallurgy, agriculture, shipbuilding, language, alphabets, religion, and mythology. Consequently he found so many parallels that he assumed they must have all originated in the vanished continent” (Godwin 2011: 2)

Hence, Plato's legacy on the modern Atlantis discourse was vividly apprehended, even though his description experienced adjustments, in the sense that those aspects, which fitted the specific perception, were incorporated, and those, which appeared to be inappropriate, got neglected. (cf. *ibid.*: 7)

7.1.3. Atlantis within Esotericism

Again, Donnelly's impact on the modern esoteric Atlantis discourse should not be underestimated, even though his *Atlantis: the Antediluvian World* was designed as a popular fictional novel. Especially the two foremost aspects of today's discourse, namely the actual existence of Atlantis in former times, and Atlantis representing the cradle of civilisation, derived from his book, and influenced all esoteric perceptions on Atlantis to follow; particularly the one of the mother of Theosophy, Helena P. Blavatsky (1831 – 1891) and her theory of the *root races*, as discussed in her *Secret Doctrine* (1888). According to her theory, the Atlanteans were the fourth of a total of seven *root races*. Emigration waves of the Atlantean *root races* led to a global dispersion. Thus, according to Blavatsky, a perception of the influence of Atlantis' high culture may be perceived on a global scale, traceable at first to

¹¹⁹ Diffusionism is a concept used mainly within the disciplines of Anthropology and Religious Studies, and denotes „the theory that certain similar practices, inventions, etc. that exist among different cultures or peoples are solely or primarily the result of diffusion as opposed to independent discovery or development” (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/diffusionism>, 10.21.2018)

its expansion and eventually, after Atlantis' destruction, to its diaspora. Rudolph Steiner, the initiator of Anthroposophy, took up the same issue and dealt with it in a similar manner. (cf. Magin 1995: 42; Ruppert 2001: 5,7)

The emanation theory of Blavatsky was pursued by Stewart Farrar (1916 – 2000), a prominent figure within English Neo-Paganism. He assumed three major emigration waves, which he called *rays*, namely an emigration wave to Northern Europe and Asia (*power ray*), another wave crossing Central Europe with India as its final destination (*wisdom ray*), and finally an emigration wave crossing Northern Africa in order to reach Egypt (*love ray*). By proposing this theory of cultural influences through emigration waves of Atlanteans, Farrar offers an alternative history of religion, that implies diffusionist perspectives and cultural hierarchies. As many others within esoteric and occult circles, Egypt is transfigured as the “spiritual heir of Atlantis” and it “is described as the fountain of wisdom from which have sprung the great monotheistic religions” (Hanegraaff 1998a: 312). Once the former existence of Atlantis was commonly agreed by most devotees of alternative new religious movements, an innovative approach experienced popularization: to gain insights of Atlantis and its culture through altered states of consciousness. Especially the so-called method of channelling, divination, and autohypnosis enjoyed great popularity. The US-American psychic Edgar Cayce (1877 – 1945), known as the *Sleeping Prophet*, depicted a whole new Atlantis through insights, which, according to him, were gained in course of autohypnosis and so-called remembrance of reincarnations. Cayce's Atlantis was a place of very high technology, using even nuclear power (which eventually led to its destruction), a place where healing was realized through the power of crystals and the place where the *perennial philosophy* took root. However, he followed the theory of Atlantis as the former centre or cradle of human civilisation and of three stages of emigration or destruction. On account of conformable methods, also the actress Shirley MacLaine unveiled similar descriptions of Atlantis, namely of crystal pyramids, crystal walkways and the ability of telepathy. (cf. *ibid.*: 309ff.; Ruppert 2001: 5)

As Atlantis (and other alleged lost continents) has been a major topic within esotericism since Donnelly's revival of the topic, this presentation may be perceived as a mere overview. However, in light of the main topic of this paper, I shall now present the Atlantis discourse in Britain, followed by John Michell's approach to Atlantis.

7.1.4. Britain

Some theories locate Atlantis on the British Isles, namely in Cornwall (Land's End) or on the Isle of Man (cf. Godwin 2011: 10f.). However none of them seemed convincing enough to be carried on by British Atlantis devotees. Instead, theories were postulated, concerning Atlantis continuous survival within Britain. Accordingly, Atlantis has been a major topic within British esotericism and New Age in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The most influential figures within British *Atlantology* are unequivocally Dion Fortune, Lewis Spence, Brinsley le Poer Trench, and John Michell; whose theories on Atlantis I shall briefly discuss now.

Dion Fortune was a seminal figure among the proponents of Atlantis and its continuous influence into present days. As discussed above¹²⁰, she described herself as an *Avalonian*, which implied an involvement in an alleged incessant spiritual tradition based in Glastonbury and dating back to legendary Avalon *and* Atlantis. Already in her early books she focuses upon Atlantis and follows the common theosophical attitude on the emigration waves of Atlanteans across the globe, like Blavatsky and Farrar have pointed out. Again, the talk is of three *rays* or emigration movements, whereby Fortune was mainly focused on the third *ray*, being the emigration wave that allegedly established the Egyptian culture, which she considered as her own tradition. Fortune believed, that she herself is a reincarnation of an Atlantean priestess and therefore possesses knowledge in the secret interconnection of Atlantis and today's Britain. Through her medium-ship she had been given insights into an association of King Arthur and Atlantis. So, according to Fortune, through studying the legends of King Arthur, reinterpreted by her, one may receive access to information on Atlantis. Further connections have been drawn between Atlantean priests and ancient British Druids. (cf. *ibid.*: 173ff.) In general, Dion Fortune's account on Atlantis, namely its emigration to Egypt and its relation to native British legends, is quite characteristic for similar Atlantis perceptions among British theosophical and occult streams.

A very influential figure, worth mentioning, was the Scottish Lewis Spence (1874 – 1955), who mainly worked as a journalist with a nationalistic colouring, but also dwelled deep in occultism and mysticism¹²¹. Especially Atlantis was one of his main fields of interest and he wrote three major books on his theories, which may be related to Donnelly's approach;

¹²⁰ See chapter 6.2.

¹²¹ He was, however, an antagonist of theosophical teachings. He endeavoured to strengthen or even revive ancient Druidry in order to establish an alternative to *Easternization* brought along by Theosophy. (cf. Hale 2011: 87f.)

whereby Atlantis was portrayed as an ancient highly developed civilization, that actually existed. As a fervent nationalist he inspired further believers of a link between Atlantis and modern Britain¹²², transfiguring today's Britons as reborn Atlanteans. (cf. *ibid.*: 4f., 187ff.; Hale 2011: 87f.)

Another strong advocate of a British link to ancient Atlantis was Brinsley Le Poer Trench (1911 – 1995). His theories combine a “mixture of historical speculation, British patriotism, Avalonian ideals and Atantean lore” (Godwin 2011: 201), which indicates that he gave credit to Dion Fortunes and other *Avalonians*¹²³, and therefore put Glastonbury in the centre again. According to Trench's *Men Among Mankind*, not all parts of Atlantis got lost, since Britain is the surviving Atlantean civilisation, where the so-called *Sky People*¹²⁴ managed to redevelop a civilisation after Atlantis' destruction. This gave a very high notion on Britain in its ancient past, since it was part of Atlantis, as well as in its contemporary position, since it was chosen by the Atlantean *Sky People* as the place to re-establish a society and civilization pursuant to Atlantis. Glastonbury plays a major role, as its Zodiac, depicted by Katherine Maltwood, served as a communication tool between Britons and *Sky People*. “Britain was sacred even in Atlantean times. It was there that the Glastonbury Zodiac was created as a landmark for the Sky People” (*ibid.*: 202; cf. *ibid.*: 202f.).

Trench's account may be defined as an *Avalonian* perspective on Atlantis. That is to say, that Britain, with a special focus on Glastonbury, represents a sacred place, forasmuch as it is believed to be the initial point for the revival of a lost ancient high culture. Dion Fortune's description corresponds to that, however in a less futuristic manner. Trench's *Sky People* continued their mission through John Michell's *Flying Saucer Vision* and his *View Over Atlantis*.

7.1.5. Michell's Reinterpretation

Plato was Michell's great idol and influenced him on various topics. Accordingly, Plato's accounts on the perfection of ideal cities¹²⁵, and especially his numerological and geometrical approach, made a deep impression on him. Theories on Atlantis' actual location never greatly

¹²² For instance Daphne Vigers' *Atlantis Rising* (1952), and crucially also John Michell.

¹²³ Especially Katherine Maltwood's Glastonbury Zodiac took a prominent position (cf. Godwin 2011: 202).

¹²⁴ Trench describes the *Sky People* as those Atlanteans, who managed to survive on other planets and kept on visiting planet earth in order to look for any suitable country and its people to restart civilization (cf. Godwin 2011: 202f.).

¹²⁵ Mainly in *Laws*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus* and *Critias*.

mattered to Michell, however, he mostly followed either Plato's suggestion of its situation within the Atlantic ocean, or theories locating Atlantis *everywhere*. (cf. Godwin 2011: 204) From as early as his first book, namely *The Flying Saucer Vision* (1967), Michell picked up the topic of Atlantis, and continuously applied it; above all within his *The (New) View Over Atlantis* (1969/1983), *City of Revelation* (1972), *Dimensions of Paradise* (1988), and *How The World Is Made* (2009). However, unlike the continuous use of the concept, the attached importance to the concept of Atlantis had changed steadily within Michell's theories. Basically, there are two opposed streams of Michell's Atlantis perception. On the one hand, he portrayed Atlantis in the fashion of Plato, namely in its destructive and imperfect interpretation; and on the other hand he commonly used Atlantis as a positive metaphor of a rich heritage as within the narrative of a primordial Golden Age.

Michell put a special focus on Plato's descriptions of measurements and perfect geometrical patterns¹²⁶. Hence, he followed Plato's faith of a sacred *Canon* of numbers, upon which all cosmology depends. Michell was certain, that Plato's numerical approach actually represented the "esoteric core of the philosopher's work" (ibid.: 30), and further contents were only of secondary importance. Plato allegedly derived his esoteric numerology from the secret Pythagorean tradition, of which he was an initiate, since this tradition relied only on the principles of the sacred *Canon* of numbers. According to Plato (and Michell), this *Canon* of number must be used and honoured at all times, otherwise destruction and punishment might occur. (cf. Brown 2009: 45; Harte 2012: 207) When observing the basic principles of any sacred city, its perfection and divineness are based upon their most crucial feature: the squared circle within its ground plan¹²⁷. The squared circle corresponds to the timeless and ideal model of the Heavenly City and to the sacred *Canon* of number. Now, the story of Atlantis and its disastrous downfall, was interpreted by Michell as an explicit reminder of the consequences, which may arise, when the timeless principles of the *Canon* are neglected in the course of planning a sacred city. For Atlantis was built upon geometrical and numerical mistakes in its basic pattern, that is to say, it was established upon the numbers five and ten, instead of the *heavenly* number twelve¹²⁸. This means, that the squared circle of its ground pattern appeared slightly flawed, since its basic numerology was wrong: "In the original formula and foundation plan of Atlantis lay the seeds of its eventual destruction" (Godwin

¹²⁶ Especially towards the end of his life Michell refused any truths except the one claimed in Platonic geometry (cf. Harte 2012: 209).

¹²⁷ I shall examine this concept more closely in the next chapter.

¹²⁸ The significance of the number twelve shall be discussed below, in chapter 7.3.1.

2011: 31). Thus, Plato's explanatory model for this weighty planning error of Atlantis' geometry focuses on its foundation source, which was merely half divine¹²⁹, and on its sinful polity¹³⁰. (cf. Brown 2009: 45; Michell & Brown 2010: 260ff.) In his last book, Michell, with the help of Allan Brown, tried to create a detailed diagram of Atlantis, based on Plato's specific dimensions. The result was the expected flawed squared circle within the bigger geometrical pattern. Michell finds Plato's conclusion hence proved, that the squared circle fails in perfection since it is based upon the numbers five and ten. Thus, Atlantis was meant to be based on the sacred *Canon* and the archetype of the sacred city, yet it simply remained a close imitation, since the geometry and numerology of the sacred *Canon* were misapplied within Atlantis' ground pattern and consequently had to fail. (cf. Godwin 2011: 31; Michell & Brown 2010: 259)

The other perspective of Atlantis contrasts that merely negative interpretation of the Atlantis myth, as Atlantis is portrayed as a highly developed ancient civilisation, richly provided with knowledge on spiritual matters and sciences, such as megalithic science, landscape codes, sacred measurements, or the *Perennial Philosophy*. This perspective on Atlantis corresponds greatly with Donnelly's, as well as the *Avalonian* view on Atlantis, as the cradle of civilisation or as *the* primordial Golden Age. (cf. Hutton 2012: 319) As a result of these glorifying approaches by esoteric, occult and New Age circles, a certain *Atlantis nostalgia* developed. This nostalgia mainly implied the wish of the possibility of returning to Atlantis, that is to say, to recreate an Atlantis in contemporary society. So this definitely turns Plato's Atlantis upside down, which was *the* paragon of imperfection. Accordingly, it gives quite an contradictable impression, when Michell claims at one point, that "[t]he Atlantis described by Plato was the last manifestation of the Golden Age on earth" (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 109). But after all, Michell fancied any anti-establishment discourses, and in the 1960s Atlanteans simply carried less baggage from established beliefs than other potential inhabitants of ancient civilisations, wherefore he supported this general veneration among New Agers and Earth Mystery Movements. (cf. Hutton 2012: 320) Thus, many common

¹²⁹ Atlantis may be considered as sacred, since it was founded by the God Poseidon. However he married a mortal woman and the island state of Atlantis was then divided by their *ten* offspring. Hence Atlantis' divinity suffered from the mortal bride of Poseidon, as well as from the amount of their heirs, which did not correspond to the sacred *Canon*, that is based on the number *twelve*. (cf. Michell & Brown 2010: 260)

¹³⁰ Brown suggests, that the sinful attitude of the Atlanteans did not merely lead to its destruction, but was rather predetermined as a result from the awry geometrical pattern: "Atlantis is based on the pentagram, five – traditionally that's us, human beings – but, as it is built on human desires and reasoning, it must ultimately collapse" (Brown 2009: 45).

narratives concerning Atlantis' superior position actually originated in Michell's oeuvre; such as that the ley system had originated in Atlantis, that terrestrial zodiacs represent a manifestation of Atlantean wisdom and power, or that the rising of Atlantis may be perceived at sacred places, such as Glastonbury. (cf. Hutton 2009: 317, 320; Martin, 2009) However, Michell's positive interpretation of Atlantis must be rather understood as a symbol or metaphor for ancient lost sciences and lost knowledge: "The 'Atlantis' of the title of Michell's book was not the ancient lost continent, sunk beneath the ocean, but this forgotten science of our ancient ancestors" (Lachmann 2009: 40). Hence, the rising of Atlantis in Michell's way equals the resurrection of lost sacred knowledge; and this very equation closes the circle, for Michell felt certain that Platonic geometry is the only way of accessing this lost knowledge. (cf. Harte 2011: 209)

In summary, it may be stated, that Michell's approach to Atlantis is neither simply positive nor simply negative. He relates it to geometrical knowledge and to the origin of the sacred *Canon*, wherefore it symbolizes for him a "primordial homeland of Traditional society" (Hale 2011: 83), which he aims to re-establish in modern days. Hence Atlantis is the blueprint of the cosmic revelation, yet flawed. The immaculate imitator of Atlantis is interpreted by Michell as the timeless Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem.

7.2. New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem is mainly a theological concept, describing the prophecy of an eschatological and ideal City¹³¹, which is imagined to rise either at the end of an era or at the end of time. Therefore it may be labelled as part of a millenarian¹³² as well as a millennial belief system. The City is ideal in the sense, that the Messiah will return and God will dwell together with human kind on earth. Further, oppositions, such as good and evil, dark and bright, heaven and hell will dissolve. I shall now present various concepts regarding traditional and contemporary perspectives and beliefs on the New Jerusalem rising, to finally conclude on John Michell's perspective on this topic.

¹³¹ Since I am referring to a specific concept of an imagined city-model, I am capitalizing the term *city* when used for the City of New Jerusalem.

¹³² Millenarianism is the belief of the approaching end of the world, which will be replaced by a new and better world, led by Jesus Christ (cf. Schwartz 1987: 521).

7.2.1. New Jerusalem in the Bible

The concept of the New Jerusalem or the Heavenly Jerusalem firstly appears in *The Book of Ezekiel* (40 – 48) in Jewish tradition and in *The Book of Revelation* (21) in Christian tradition. Both descriptions are similar accounts on the expected character and measurement of this eschatological City, yet differ on the concern of a temple or its divine attributes within. However, both accounts share two crucial aspects: the sacredness of its squared character and the stress on the number twelve.

Within Jewish-Christian tradition, the structure of the ideal, godly shaped City must be square, since “[t]he central fact of the ideal city of the Bible is its squareness” (Lewis 2016: 19). The symbol of the square in relation to a city appeared initially as the Egyptian hieroglyph *niwt*, which depicted abstractly a city, through the symbol of a cross in a circle. Within the Bible any model city or settlement, such as Ur, Uruk, Jerusalem, or the camp of the Twelve Tribes in the Sinai during their exodus, possessed the crucial element of squareness. Originally the square was reserved for the holy places of the temple or the palace, since they were understood as holy places and therefore holding sacredness. By squaring entire cities, then, it was possible to not just sacrifice the temple within, but to entitle the city in sum as holy as well. (cf. *ibid.*: 19f.) Therefore, holy cities may commonly be described as *five-square cities*¹³³, meaning that their shape is depicted as a square, existing of four corners, with an additional fifth focal point depicting the temple within. (cf. Kim 2014: 198) This can be already observed in the biblical prototype of the ideal City, namely in the mobile encampment of the Twelve Tribes during their exodus in the desert of Sinai, which was arranged in the shape of a square: “These were neatly aligned to the cardinal directions, so that the east, south, west, and north side each held three tribes, forming a well-ordered square. At the center was the main gathering tent” (Lewis 2016: 21). Now the ideal squared City in the Bible, “is the New Jerusalem, described by both John of Patmos and the prophet Ezekiel as a twelve-gated walled square” (*ibid.*: 19). Whereby a common Christian interpretation reads the sacred square as representing Jesus and the twelve gates as representing his Twelve Apostles, or in a Jewish manner YHWH and the Twelve Tribes. (cf. *ibid.*: 22)

¹³³ This concept is based on James Dougherty’s research, which is laid out in his book *The Fivesquare City: The City in Religious Imagination* (1980) (cf. Kim 2014: 198).

In *The Book of Ezekiel* the location of a potential rebuilt Temple¹³⁴ in the New Jerusalem is not utterly clear, meaning that opinions differ on the question, whether its Temple is located in the centre of the City, whether it is located outside, or whether the whole City is the Temple (cf. Kim 2014: 194f.). The notion of the City creating a bridge from the profane to the sacred, as “a transitional space from the holy place to the common world and vice versa” (ibid.: 193) suggests though, that there is no Temple within. However, if this concept shall be accepted, the New Jerusalem differs dramatically from its two predecessors¹³⁵, which are essentially defined through their Temple, accordingly called *Temple-City*. Additionally, the question on “how the City can be called a holy city and belong to the *Terumah*¹³⁶ if it does not embrace the Temple, the very presence of YHWH” (ibid.: 196), necessarily appears. I have stated, that sacred cities are *five-squared cities*. However the described City in *The Book of Ezekiel* is consisting of only four focal points, since its fifth point, the Temple, may be situated outside. Kim presents the theory, that the Temple is removed from the City to a physically exalted position, in order to protect the Temple and in order to intensify the Temple’s magnifying influence on the City from *above*. (cf. ibid.: 196ff.)

So we may suggest that the City of New Jerusalem according to *The Book of Ezekiel* is defined as holy or sacred, though missing the Temple within its expanse, due to two reasons: Firstly, since the City functions as a gateway and “indeed the City is the gateway by which the holy presence of YHWH can be accessed” (ibid.: 207). Secondly, since the Temple wields direct influence on the City, and therefore may be judged as part of it anyway:

“In sum, the new City does not completely lose the Temple, but gets the holy aura from the Temple at the more transcendent level in a pyramid structure, by placing the loss of the Temple as the fifth focal point outside it. Furthermore, the City imitates the Temple by having the square shape, walls, and open space [...] not only by being located in close proximity to the Temple, but also by being similar in appearance. Thus, the City – which does not have the Temple in it but has a fifth focal point in a virtually and symbolically related space – can still be called a ‘holy’ city” (ibid.: 199).

¹³⁴ The prophet Ezekiel wrote around the sixth century BC, a time when the First Temple was already destroyed (587 BC), though the Second Temple was not built yet (70 AD) (cf. Lewis 2016: 26).

¹³⁵ Pre- and post-exilic concepts of Jerusalem.

¹³⁶ Translated from Hebrew, *Terumah* means *contribution* or *portion*. In this specific context it may be understood as a separating space, used for higher purpose, such as offerings. (cf. Kim 2014: 190f.)

This characteristic element of the New Jerusalem representing a gateway to the holy realm or to the Temple where the divine dwells, is also clearly recognizable by its presumed new name: *YHWH Shammah*, which literally means “God is there”. Thus, God is not *here* or in the City, but He is *there*, meaning in the Temple, which is just off the squared City. So the rebuilt Temple is a presupposition of the New Jerusalem, however its location differs from the first two Temples, which were situated according to the common architecture of holy cities, namely in the very centre. Further, the rebuilt Temple is situated on a hill or mountain, which allows it to be a metaphor for the divine realm. (cf. *ibid.*: 199)

In *The Book of Revelation* on the other hand, no Temple *per se* is mentioned, rather God Himself appears instead of it: “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Rev 21:22). Further the New Jerusalem is pictured as a magnificent City, made out of gold and various crystals or precious stones, a heaven on earth, a truly divine City:

„And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God“ (Rev 21: 1 – 3).

John further describes in detail the measurement of the New Jerusalem, whereby the number twelve plays again a crucial role; such as the remarks of twelve gates, twelve foundations of the City wall, and the connection to the twelve apostles. Precisely in Rev 21:16 the dimensions of the New Jerusalem are expounded, appearing as if the City shall be a perfectly shaped cube: “And the city lieth¹³⁷ foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he [the angel] measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs¹³⁸. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal” (Rev 21:16).

In comparing these accounts, the common threads, as discussed above, squareness and the crucial number twelve (mainly connected to a wall or the city’s outline), may be supplemented by the element of *interlocking rectilinearity*, meaning that the small units of the

¹³⁷ To be situated (-eth is an archaic third-person present tense suffix).

¹³⁸ A furlong is an old measure of distance, one furlong equating about 201 metres.

whole City represent, through their squareness, the whole square and therefore the sacredness. (cf. Lewis 2016: 22f.)

7.2.2. Christian Reinterpretation

Certain Christian denominations devoted themselves especially to eschatology or the concept of the prophetic City of the New Jerusalem and developed their own interpretation of the original vision in *Ezekiel* and *Revelation*. *The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing*, mainly known as *The Shakers*, put special focus on the divinity of squareness and rectilinearity. Along these lines, they built perfectly straight footpaths, they cut their meat perfectly squared, and they worshipped God by dancing in a specific geometrical order, dedicated to rectilinearity: "Shaker dance recapitulated divine rectilinearity in terms of movement" (Lewis 2016: 30). Now, these practical implications referred to the kind of divine order, which was expected to be realised in the distant future in the Heavenly City. Certainly, they believed, that divine order and Heavenly City alike, are going to be structured in squares. The Shaker artist Polly Jane Reed drew a geometrical diagram of the holy City, which consists out of circles and squares. Within this diagram, the number twelve plays a crucial role, since the big outer circle has twelve gates through which the City of squares and circles may be entered. It was designed by Reed as a precise spiritual map of the holy City, as the future vision of the ideal City to rise in a messianic age. (cf. Lewis 2016: 29f.; Cotter, 2001)

Another Christian denomination, that reinterpreted the biblical ideal eschatological City, is called British Israelism or sometimes Anglo-Israelism. The group firstly appeared in the beginning of the nineteenth century in England, whereby its main propagation happened in the twentieth century, and still happens today on US-American ground. The group's main claim deals with the alleged connection of British people to their putative origin in Israel, precisely among the Twelve Tribes of the bible. A radical advocate of British Israelism was John Wilson (1799 – 1870)¹³⁹. Among his various claims, he held the belief, that the present-day British people are "the literal offspring of the 'lost tribes' of ancient Israel" (Ingram 1995: 119). He further advocated that Britain is actually Israel, "that it has been the *true* Israel since the crucifixion, for Joseph of Arimathea brought both Jesus and the Holy Grail to England, and that the British [...] are the Chosen People and one of the twelve [...] tribes of Israel" (Hale 2011: 90). The group lives a radical ethnical and racial elitism, since most of its

¹³⁹ His major work was *Our Israelitish Origin: Lectures on Ancient Israel, and the Israelitish Origin of the Modern Nations of Europe* (1840).

members are born into a *white* upper middle class, and celebrates biblical fundamentalism, nationalism, and racism against non-whites and Jews. (cf. Ingram 1995: 119, 121; Moshenska 2008: 6) When talking about future prospects of a second coming of Jesus and a potential New Jerusalem, within the context of British Israelism, it becomes clear, that this City is only meant for the *chosen people*, namely the *white* English-speaking world, with the other (*white*) tribes of Israel. (cf. Ingram 1995: 121) Devotees of British Israelism believe in an apocalyptic millenarianism connected to the so-called *Pyramid Prophecy*. That prophecy is used “to divine the destiny of the British people and their Empire” (Moshenska 2008: 5). In other words, it concerns the divine aspect of the British people and therefore its right to be in power in an expected messianic age. Additional to a fusion of alternative archaeology, beliefs in hyperdiffusionism, and hidden knowledge to be found in pyramids, they refer to *Genesis* and *The Book of Revelation*, in order to prove their theories. A popular method among British Israelites is “to tentatively propose a link between the measurements encoded in the pyramids and the British as the descendants of the Lost Tribes” (ibid.: 8), wherefore “the pyramid prophecy is a myth of predestination [...], in which the destiny of the British has been literally set in stone” (ibid.: 9). The future prophecy of British Israelism possesses therefore a scriptural as well as a *pyramidological* quality. (cf. ibid.: 9f.) Due to their strong belief in *Pyramidology*, namely the hidden knowledge encoded in Egyptian pyramids, it is not utterly surprising, that British Israelites imagine the New Jerusalem as a pyramid and further depict it as a Zodiac. In order to *proof* their claim on the New Jerusalem as a pyramid, they are referring to different parts of the bible, such as *Exodus*, *Revelation* or *Ephesians*. By means of bible references and reinterpretation of some crucial quotes, the New Jerusalem or the *Huge Multi-Colored Pyramid* is described in detail:

“New Jerusalem (the Zodiac) comes ‘down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband’ (Gen. 2:18-24) (Virgo rotating down to the horizon) (21:2). [...] ‘New Jerusalem’ is a PYRAMID rather than a cube because in addition to having a ‘foundation of the apostles and prophets’ it has Jesus Christ as the ‘chief corner stone’ (Eph. 2:20-22). The only type of building which has one chief cornerstone is a PYRAMID. Babylon's four ancient walls were 120 stadia long each (Herod. 1:178). In the midst of Babylon was a PYRAMIDAL tower one furlong square rising tier above tier to the temple at the top which contained only the throne of Bel and the bride of Bel (Her.1:181). Each tier was a different color dedicated to a different planet. [...] New Jerusalem is 100 times as great -- equal dimensions of 12,000 stadia (1500 miles) in length, width and height. If set down in Europe, its four

corners would cover Gibraltar, Greece, St. Petersburg and the Hebrides and it would soar 100 times higher than the Himalayas -- unless the 12,000 stadia are the circumference in which case we divide by four. The throne of God and the Lamb is at the summit so the river of life can flow down from it. [...] This New Jerusalem is composed mainly of JASPER which emphasizes the fact that Godly wisdom, knowledge and understanding will be the governing and controlling factor throughout the life of this CITY.” (<http://www.british-israel.us/71.html>, 09.27.2018)

Through this quote I tried to show how some original quotes from the bible are used and reinterpreted by British Israelites in order to *proof* how their vision of the New Jerusalem fits their nationalistic, *pyramidological* and alternative values.

7.2.3. The New Jerusalem in a British Context

By discussing the British Israelites’ reinterpretation of the Bible’s accounts on the New Jerusalem I have already presented one British belief system towards the New Jerusalem. However, nowadays British Israelites mainly act from the United States and hardly influence British behaviour, as they have done in the nineteenth century. The major past *and* contemporary influence on this very topic is beyond all doubt William Blake.

The great poet and visionary William Blake (1757 – 1827) was one of the firsts¹⁴⁰ to popularize the thought of a British Jerusalem and revived the belief of Jesus walking on English ground. As mentioned above¹⁴¹ the belief of Jesus visiting England is closely connected to the legends surrounding Joseph of Arimathea, who allegedly brought his nephew Jesus with him on one of his business trading trips to England. Speculations call Jesus then a student of the former reputable Druidic University of Glastonbury; and further suppositions circulated around Joseph of Arimathea bringing along the Holy Grail, after the crucifixion. Besides Celtic Christian devotees, also counter cultural and alternative religious (such as Earth Mystery groups), as well as nationalistic approaches (such as the British Israelites, or John Michell) tend to fancy these speculations. On a related note, Blake further raised the topic of another prominent aspect of British spirituality, connected to prophetic as well as nationalistic tendencies, namely to the *Matter of Britain*. The desperate wish for the return of

¹⁴⁰ In 1740 William Stukeley came up with the theory, that Druids or Celts in general, arrived in Britain shortly after the Great Flood, establishing a society based on their Abrahamic faith, though not defining themselves as Jews (cf. Hale 2015: 179).

¹⁴¹ See chapter 6.3.1.

the legendary King Arthur equals the wish for a Golden Age, in terms of the British Jerusalem, to rise. (cf. Ivakhiv 2001: 103) Therefore, King Arthur, transfigured as a nativist British solar deity, plays an equally important role in stressing an alleged primordial British sacredness (that is meant to be continued) and in the instrumentalization of “Britain as a promised land originally blessed by Christ himself” (Hale 2015: 183). Thus, Blake helped revealing on the one hand a direct line between Jesus’ visit in England and the New Jerusalem; and on the other hand declared Glastonbury as King Arthur’s alleged resting place from where he shall rise in union with the New Jerusalem. (cf. Hale 2011: 89f.; Hale 2015: 182ff.)

Especially two of his poems helped flourishing the beliefs of Jesus in England and of the future vision of a New Jerusalem to be established in England, or more precisely in Glastonbury: *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804 – 1820), and especially *And did those feet in ancient time*, frequently referred to as *Jerusalem* (1804):

“And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England’s mountains green
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England’s pleasant pastures seen

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold
Bring me my arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of Fire!

I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England’s green and pleasant land” (Blake, in Roberts 1978: 176).

Jerusalem was designed as the preface to Blake’s *Milton: A Poem*, and is much shorter than his *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*. However, both address the central myths,

mentioned above, namely England's or Glastonbury's representation as the future Jerusalem and the belief of a bygone visit by Jesus; additionally the crucial British topic of *Albion* is concerned. *Albion* refers to the principal myth on how Britain was inhabited by giants in primordial times; accordingly *Albion* refers to Britain's legendary original name and further represents the transfigured and romanticised vision of a (lost) Golden Age. In the poem *De origine gigantum*¹⁴², the story of the earliest settlement of Britain is described. According to the poem, twenty-nine disgraced daughters of a Greek king were chased away on a boat and eventually reached an uninhabited island. The oldest one of the daughters was called Albina, and it was her, who declared the island as her possession, and thus called it *Albion*. The poem further narrates on how the sisters consorted with local demons, creating a race of giants, which are transfigured as the very first local inhabitants of Britain. (cf. Carley & Crick 1995: 41f.) This "society of giants" (Johnson 1995: 19) existed until the very arrival of Brutus, who "establish[ed] a 'civilized' human society there based on an agrarian economy, with a capital city and a code of law, having cleared the land of its only inhabitants (twenty-four giants)" (ibid.). The island, on which Brutus had established his new society, was thenceforward called by him Britain, his fellowship called Britons. (cf. ibid.: 19f.) So whenever there is the talk of Britain embodying *Albion*, or of the wish to return to *Albion*, simultaneously there is also a subtle talk of a mysterious British Golden Age, that existed prior to industrialization and urbanisation, and in lack of any depravity. Accordingly, a New Jerusalem may be imagined in terms of an idealised British past, whose values are accumulated in the expression *Albion*: "Jerusalem is the perfected and completed Albion which will be reached only by spiritual enlightenment" (Hale 2015: 182). In that sense, *Albion*, often just referred to as the legendary giant, experienced reinterpretation as the personification of a spiritual destiny for Britain. (cf. Benham 2006: 4)

Blake was among Michell's greatest inspirations on British mystic nationalism, that is to say, his faith in *Albion* raising as the New Jerusalem upon English ground, in its sacred heart, which is Glastonbury. I shall discuss now Michell's perception of the complex and multifaceted future vision of the New Jerusalem.

¹⁴² Latin translation of the Anglo-Norman poem *Des Grantz Geanz* (cf. Carley & Crick 1995: 41).

7.2.4. Michell's Reinterpretation

Michell's whole worldview found its inspiration in the belief of a highly idealized ancient civilisation, superior in science and knowledge. Like a true *Arcadian*¹⁴³, Michell believed, that in the *good old days*, harmony and spirituality dwelled on earth, based on esoteric wisdom, shared by those initials, who guarded the maintenance of their harmonious co-existence. Due to unknown, yet disastrous reasons¹⁴⁴ stability and wisdom of that ancient civilisation got lost and has not been re-established ever since. Michell's life aim was indeed to reveal the secret key on how to re-establish those heavenly conditions of that mystical ancient civilisation. He imagined the re-emergence of divine order and a balanced *modus vivendi* in terms of the foundation of a Heavenly City on earth, namely the New Jerusalem. British nationalist as he was, naturally he predicted the establishment of the New Jerusalem upon English ground: "While he believed that the restoration of divine order must take place on a universal scale, he was quite confident that Britain has a particular role in this restoration as the Holy Land of Europe" (Hale 2011: 87).

Within Michell's oeuvre various expressions of the expected Heavenly City are to be found. Most commonly, as I have already mentioned, Michell speaks of the *New Jerusalem*, whereby his main reference in that matter is William Blake's discussion on the rise of *Albion* rather than St. John's *Revelation* on the Heavenly City¹⁴⁵. Michell further refers to Atlantis' positive counterparts, namely Plato's Athen or *Magnesia*. Correspondingly, Michell's approach to the subject matter is dominated by two streams. On the one hand it is led by a mystical nationalism, in the fashion of Aubrey, Stukeley, and naturally Blake; and on the other hand, it is Plato's presentation on social order and on sacred numerology, which determines Michell's view on the ideal City. I shall discuss now both streams, in order to approach Michell's own interpretation.

According to Michell, Blake gained major insights into a specific British nativist spirituality, which attributes divinity to Britain or England, and hence follows the belief, that the "divine rule on earth would first be re-established in England" (Michell, in Godwin 2015: 47), due to

¹⁴³ Harpur, a fellow *Fortean*, described Michell as an *Arcadian*, whereby he referred to the Greek myth of an unspoiled, utopian ancient Greek landscape, where everyone used to be happy and in peace. Michell in his position as an *Arcadian* took the task to "recruit us imaginatively into [his] Eden where everyone is happy and loveable" (Harpur 2009: 44).

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 7.1.5.

¹⁴⁵ Although Michell utilized the biblical account as another confirmation of the Heavenly City's importance and universal character.

“the special, millenarian destiny of Albion’s native land” (ibid.: 48; cf. Hale 2011: 82). Consequently, William Blake laid the foundation of a majority of Michell’s nativist topics, such as the sacred character of the English landscape; the necessity of a spiritual and moral rebirth of England, since the legendary giant of *Albion* was forced back; and, crucially, Glastonbury as the place where the English Jerusalem shall rise. (cf. Hale 2011: 89) *Albion* represents the harmonious *status quo* of a mystical English golden past. In the tradition of Blake, also Michell refers to *Albion* as this native state of harmony and as the sacred origin of England. However, the link to this paradise-like condition of *Albion* was lost, resulting in England’s degradation and lack of virtue¹⁴⁶. Hence, the Golden Age necessarily needs to be re-awakened in terms of *Albion*:

“William Blake understood the secret of the landscape giants¹⁴⁷. Chained within the hills and valleys of his native realm, the great spirit, Albion, lay powerless in fetters of iron morality, his form obscured by the encroaching fog of grey enchantment, his kingdom usurped by a host of petty tyrants. Like Stukeley, Blake foresaw an end to the enchantment, a glorious resurrection of the holy spirit in Britain by the reconciliation of all her people” (Michell 1983: 19).

At times Michell referred to *Albion*’s re-emergence concerned England, or even Britain as a whole, and again at other times, he simply connected Glastonbury with it. However, Michell (and Blake) definitely favoured Glastonbury as the site of the proclamation of a New Golden Age:

“While some esotericists [...] interpret the idea of the New Jerusalem as metaphoric, Michell, inspired by mystical nationalist interpretations of the work of William Blake, believes that the restoration of Glastonbury as a site of spiritual significance is part of the key to establishing the New Jerusalem on earth, and that [...] William Blake was a prophet of the British New Age” (Hale 2011: 89).

Also Michell’s procedures, the *Avalonians*, held a corresponding opinion on Blake’s impact. They equally believed, that Glastonbury must be restored as the British sacred centre or as the New Jerusalem, and prepared the topic for Michell. (cf. ibid.: 90)

¹⁴⁶ The degradation has already begun prior to industrialization.

¹⁴⁷ Certain natural features in the landscape are believed to depict so-called *landscape giants*. A prominent advocate of this theory was Katherine Maltwood, who interpreted the landscape surrounding Glastonbury as a map of stars, illustrating the signs of the zodiac. (cf. Michell 1983: 19)

The second major inspiration for Michell's perception of the New Jerusalem, was Plato's perfect city of Magnesia¹⁴⁸. (cf. Brown 2009: 45; Michell 1990: 101) As I have already outlined, Plato's examination of Atlantis had a great impact on Michell. But Plato's treatises on ideal cities are not limited to the failing state of Atlantis, as he opposed it with the magnificent and perfect city of Magnesia. In his *De Legibus*¹⁴⁹, Plato describes Magnesia as a city, which was established on the grounds of a former town by armed philosophers; all inhabitants of that town were killed by the invading philosophers. Hence, the perfect city of Plato, which was portrayed as the positive counterpart to Atlantis, actually originated by means of violence. Yet, the follower's of Plato's vision have justified that act of violence by the alleged necessity of "bring[ing] imperfect humanity into harmony with the higher realm of the eternal" (Harte 2012: 207). Most likely, Michell would have agreed to such a sacrifice in order to re-establish the Heavenly City and consequently divine order. Nevertheless, Michell's main interest was meant for the city's perfect shape. (cf. Godwin 2011: 30; Harte 2012: 207) Allan Brown calls the story of Magnesia "a parable about number and geometry" (Brown 2009: 45), which suggests, that all those geometrical imperfections of Atlantis accomplished perfection in the city of Magnesia. First of all, it was built upon the crucial number twelve, which allows harmony and perfection in all proportions – opposed to Atlantis' five and ten. Moreover, Magnesia's perfection derived from its geometrical shape. Plato described its ground plan as divinely revealed in the shape of the perfectly squared circle. Like a subtle Idea within Plato's *Theory of Form*, Magnesia initially existed in its heavenly, circular form; subsequently it was materialized in its terrestrial, squared form. Magnesia thus conforms the ideal pattern of the Heavenly City, which allows a perfect relationship between heaven and earth and represents the perfectly balanced universe. Plato suggested, that the key to this divine perfection and balance may be found in the timeless principle of the sacred *Canon*, that governs the squared circle. Michell was truly convinced that Plato gained access to the secret knowledge on how to re-achieve an *Edenic* condition on earth and hence interpreted his magnificent Magnesia as an archetype for the new implementation of the Heavenly City on earth. Consequently, the New Jerusalem, as imagined by Michell, must correspond to this archetypal sacred city and to the specific code of numbers, which are revealed as the sacred *Canon* "that once held every island and nation in a blessed enchantment" (Godwin 2015: 8; cf. Michell 1978: 159).

¹⁴⁸ Plato commonly described Athens and Magnesia as the perfect city (cf. Michell & Brown 2010: 259).

¹⁴⁹ Plato referred to the topic of the ideal, yet unpleasant city of Magnesia also in his *Republic* (cf. Harte 2012: 207, 210).

According to Michell, that crucial insight, concerning the employment of sacred geometry so as to establish the heavenly order on earth, was certainly not contrived by Plato or his predecessors, rather it “is ready-made and comes from above. [...] It is not invented but invoked” (Michell 1990: 168). This implies, that the New Jerusalem is in no way coincidental, but follows the universal and sacred scheme of the Heavenly City: “The New Jerusalem is not planned by human architects and lawyers, and its elements are not selective, for they comprehend the universal scheme” (Michell 1983: 188). Michell’s second approach towards the New Jerusalem was thus a numerical one, derived from Plato’s theory on Magnesia’s geometrical ground plan. (cf. Hale 2011: 90; Godwin 2011: 31; Michell 1990: 166ff.)

Along these lines, we may conclude, that Michell referred to the New Jerusalem in two different ways. On the one hand, he approached it as the re-emergence of *Albion* according to Blake’s vision. That implies, its potential location in Glastonbury, due to its connection to Jesus¹⁵⁰, and a general superiority of Britain as the “spiritual leader of a degraded Europe” (Hale 2011: 88). Thus, Michell adopted by Blake not only a millennial perspective of Britain, namely its rise as the New Jerusalem, but also an explicit nationalistic one, namely its pre-eminence as the spiritual authority after redemption. On the other hand, Michell referred to Plato’s ideal state of Magnesia in terms of social order and its ideal pattern. The sacred pattern, which is believed to be based on a pre-existing sacred code of numbers, precisely the *Canon*, represents an archetypical model for the expected New Jerusalem.

It is quite safe to assume, that Michell indeed expected a New Jerusalem to rise within the near future, whose reflections he saw in former, similar paradises, such as the biblical Garden Eden, or the wandering Tribes, traversing the ancient landscape of *Avalon*. As a result of these reflections and the future prospects, announced by Plato and Blake, Michell embraced the idea that it is simply the world’s *destiny* to have a Heavenly City established upon its ground: “As all metals, according to the alchemists, aspire to become gold, so the earth’s destiny is to become the perfect reflection of the heavenly paradise. As agents in the fulfilment of that destiny the human race was created” (Michell 1983: 191; cf. Michell 1990: 167). He might have assumed his own agency within this destiny, as its prophet; and many of his fellow *Arcadians* claimed him this privilege, such as Godwin, who suggests, that “[i]t is not too much to say that John Michell was a prophet” (Godwin 2015: 1).

¹⁵⁰ According to John’s *Revelation*, Jesus is going to be the initiator of the New Jerusalem. Now in the perspective of British nativists, Britain as the holy land of the future shall be initiated by Jesus, as he did it with the first British church in Glastonbury. Hence Jesus will re-appear in Glastonbury and launch a New Golden Age. (cf. Hale 2016: 179)

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the crucial place-myths of Atlantis and New Jerusalem. By presenting general assumptions, as well as Michell's specific view, I laid the foundation for further examinations on Michell's Sacred Place Theory, at whose heart lies Glastonbury as the New Jerusalem. Before I examine Glastonbury's role as the point of intersection within Michell's Sacred Place Theory, I shall observe its practical dimension.

7.3. Sacred Engineering

Michell's Sacred Place Theory contains also a practical aspect, namely Sacred Engineering. He labelled it as the ancient practise of arranging the whole world "according to a cosmic scheme" (Michell 1983: 188). In *The (New) View Over Atlantis*, he devoted a whole chapter to it, where he observed the requirements, that must be fulfilled, in order to re-establish heavenly conditions upon English ground. Hence, the practise of Sacred Engineering may be understood as a sort of manual on how to re-enchant the landscape, re-sacrifice the ancient sacred places, resurrect the ancient lost knowledge, and re-establish the *Canon* as the underlying principle of the revived Golden Age to come. Corresponding to this practical dimension, Michell defined England or Glastonbury as the precise area of application.

In order to give a comprehensive overview, I shall first discuss Michell's approach to sacred numerology and sacred geometry; thenceforward I shall present his New Jerusalem Diagram, which acts as the main source for the re-awakening of Glastonbury as the Heavenly City.

7.3.1. Michell's Numerology

For Michell everything reveals in numbers. He considered numbers as the source of creation and geometry as a way on how to unveil the secrets of heaven. However, as a pupil he detested mathematics; interest in numbers raised only in the course of his examination on sacred geometry: "I knew nothing of maths or geometry until I taught myself – insofar as it needs teaching" (Michell, in Nicholson 2009: 47; cf. Marshall 2009: 48). This quote indicates, that Michell considered numbers and their theories as self-explanatory concepts, which are ready to be revealed to anyone. However, his initial point of inspiration was Greek philosophy and its geometrical examinations. Geometry may be defined as the field of earth measurement, derived from the Greek terms *gaia* or *gē*, for 'the earth', and *metrein*, for 'to measure'. Especially Pythagoras and Plato have proved to be very fruitful for Michell's conclusions on geometry, whereas Euclid's *Elements*, which is usually credited as the most

influential book on (sacred) geometry¹⁵¹, was of no influence. (cf. Marshall 2009: 48; McClain 1987: 514, 519)

Michell subsumed these numeric revelations under what he called the *Canon* of number. According to him, he firstly came across the *Canon* in William Stirling's treatise¹⁵² on that topic; however, Plato and Freemasonry are discussed as earlier witnesses of this revelation. He remains vague in the description of that numeric and esoteric concept, he simply calls it "a code of number – a universal code" (Michell, in Marshall 2009: 48), or, as Harte puts it, the "universal truth of number, measure, and spiritual experience, which could be read in the world of nature" (Harte 2012: 207). Michell insisted, that the *Canon* was not invented by humankind, but divinely revealed: "Universal traditions emphasise that the ancient system of knowledge [the *Canon*] did not come about in the course of evolution, but first appeared in its highest and most perfect form as an instant revelation from the gods¹⁵³" (Michell, in Nicholson 2009: 41). Accordingly, he supposed, that the *Canon* is of mysterious and antiquarian origin and difficult to access fully, due to its esoteric character and the common practise of passing it on exclusively to initiates, such as Plato. Hence, he counts it to the vast body of ancient lost knowledge. From the moment, that Michell *re-discovered* that ancient code of number, it dominated and, in his view, supported all his theories. (cf. Harte 2012: 207; Marshall 2009: 48; Michell 1978: 159; Rickard 2009: 39; Screeton 2010: 43)

A crucial belief of Michell concerned his suggestion, that numerical revelations may enlighten the receiver on the measurements of heaven; that is to say, sacred knowledge on the shape of heaven may be reflected in geometry and numerology. Thus, insights on the numeric reflection of the cosmic scheme, the *Canon*, may consequently help to establish a Heavenly City on earth. (cf. Hale 2011: 85) However, according to Michell, that cosmic scheme is based upon ancient metrology, and hence its application to the establishment of a Heavenly City may only show corresponding results, if traditional measurements, such as the mile, the foot, the inch, etc. are utilized. As I have stated above¹⁵⁴, defending those traditional measurements against modern metrical systems was for the antiquarian Michell a matter of

¹⁵¹ McClain points the religious importance of Euclid's *Elements* out: "[I]t was long assumed to be as certain a guide to geometry as the Bible to absolute truth. God, it was confidently asserted, is a geometer" (McClain 1987: 520).

¹⁵² *The Canon. An Exposition of the Pagan Mystery Perpetuated in the Cabala as the Rule of All the Arts* (1897).

¹⁵³ Michell does not give precise information on *who* revealed the *Canon*. Usually he simply ascribed the Gods as the originators, which he referred to in various ways, such as "deities, twelve gods, representing the sections of the zodiac, twelve cosmic forces, ten Jungian archetypes" (Screeton 2010: 43).

¹⁵⁴ See chapter 5.1.1.

the heart; however, he also believed, that only through the maintenance of those traditional measurements the re-establishment of an earthly cosmic scheme would be achievable. (cf. Godwin 2011: 30) In other words, only with ancient, traditional measures the numeric revelation, that unveils the shape of heaven, makes any sense in its practical dimension.

Apart from the correct measures, also the choice of the *right* numbers are crucial. Michell truly believed in the sacred character of the number twelve and was convinced, that all matters, that are based upon this number experience a perfectly balanced *status quo*. That is to say, that the number twelve acts as the guarantor of geometrical and proportional harmony, which Michell equaled with divinity. Moreover, he acknowledged the number twelve as the red (or golden) thread running through plenty of historical and religious examples, that apparently *prove* its superiority to other numbers. In ancient times the pantheon consisted of twelve Gods, nations were divided in twelve clans, such as the twelve-fold division of the biblical tribes, landscapes were separated according to the twelve signs of the Zodiac, or, crucially, cities were designed and divided on the basis of the number twelve, and so on¹⁵⁵. (cf. Hale 2011: 85f.; Screeton 2010: 36) According to Michell, the prospective City of the New Jerusalem seemed to combine all these *truths*:

“St. John in Revelation followed the Essene tradition with his depiction of the New Jerusalem as a city with twelve gates, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel and to other twelve-fold systems. His visionary city, like Plato’s twelve-tribe city-state of Magnesia, was an image of the traditional cosmology, the numerically codified model of God’s creation which has inspired all the examples of twelve-tribe, zodiacally ordered nations throughout history” (Michell 1990: 101).

Michell further discussed Glastonbury in terms of the number twelve, and in the course of that, related it to the measures of the Heavenly Jerusalem:

“In Somerset a hide of land measured 120 acres. The ancient ‘twelve hides of Glastonbury’ would have totalled 1440 acres and if this area is reckoned as a square its side would be twelve furlongs in length. Twelve thousand furlongs is the length given in by St. John in Revelation 21 as the side of the transcendent New Jerusalem. In the physical Glastonbury landscape the twelve-furlong square forms a perfect, proportional microcosm to its vast heavenly counterpart” (Michell 1978: 166).

¹⁵⁵ Especially within the book *Twelve-Tribe Nations and the Science of Enchanting the Landscape* (1991), co-authored with Christine Rhone, Michell majorly dealt with the number twelve and its correlations.

These dimensions of Glastonbury and its surrounding landscape conform with Michell's claim of the ideal numeric scheme, since they are based on the number twelve and equipped with the rightful ancient measurements. However, the most crucial aspect of these dimensions of Glastonbury, are their alleged proportionality to the so-called New Jerusalem Diagram.

7.3.2. The New Jerusalem Diagram

Michell's life aim referred to the creation of a mystical cosmology, as I have stated elsewhere¹⁵⁶, which implied the re-emergence of divine conditions and the re-establishment of the Heavenly City on earth. Eventually Michell contended, that he had found the key for the execution of those attempts within Plato's numeric and geometrical examinations. He gave it the name New Jerusalem Diagram.

Michell saw himself crucially in the tradition of a long line of initiates, who possessed a specific secret knowledge of the numeric creation of the world. The originators of this knowledge on the numeric character of cosmology were either unknown or divine, however a group of initiates could carry it on, and made it available to further initiates, such as Plato, St. John, or members of the Celtic Church in England. Now, this numeric cosmology is believed to be based upon the New Jerusalem Diagram, which was now apparently *re-discovered* by Michell. The Diagram hence "reveals the cosmology that upheld the ancient world" (Michell 1978: 160), and represents symbolically the ideal universe by means of a "cosmological pattern" (ibid.: 161). Michell was convinced, that this cosmic scheme had been derived from the numerical implications of the *Canon* and its corresponding geometrical shapes. Under certain conditions and at certain sacred places the New Jerusalem Diagram might then acquire earthly shape. Consequently, Michell suggested that the New Jerusalem Diagram conduces as the common denominator of all earthly sacred places, such as Glastonbury, the Great Pyramid, or Stonehenge. (cf. Martin, 2009; Michell 1978: 166f.)

Once Michell had established that theory, he tried to support it with various examples and sources in order to point out the universality of the cosmic scheme as depicted by the New Jerusalem Diagram: The dimensions of the ground plan of Stonehenge; dimensions provided by Plato in his *Republic* on the ideal city of Magnesia; dimensions given in St. John's

¹⁵⁶ See chapter 5.3.2.

Revelation on the holy City of the New Jerusalem¹⁵⁷; dimensions of the Celtic Christian foundation at Glastonbury; or dimensions received by revelation to F. Bligh Bond of the measurements and the sacred geometry of Glastonbury. For Michell, these examples and sources showed unambiguously that the Diagram is not solely an “artificial product of human genius. There is an archetypal or pre-existent quality about it that makes it reappear at various times, suggesting that it is in some way inherent in both the macrocosm and human nature” (Michell 1978: 167; cf. *ibid.*: 166; Michell 1983: 176).

So the New Jerusalem Diagram occupies a crucial position within Michell’s Sacred Place Theory, namely the link between heaven and earth. It further plays a crucial part within the practical dimension of the Sacred Place Theory, that is to say, within the method of Sacred Engineering. This method is defined by Michell and his fellowship, as an ancient method on how to harmonise all contents of the universe. Especially pre-historian megalithic builders are credited with the ancient knowledge on how to sacralise all earthly matters, by means of the numerical implications of the *Canon*, and hence by means of its major tool, the New Jerusalem Diagram. Accordingly, all ancient sanctuaries or monuments, such as the Great Pyramid, Stonehenge, Glastonbury Abbey, stone circles, and megalithic structures in general, are built according to the principles of Sacred Engineering with the New Jerusalem Diagram as their basic component. So due to his *re-discovery* of the *Canon* and the corresponding New Jerusalem Diagram, Michell saw himself crucially as the switchman of a cosmological revolution, with Glastonbury as its epicentre and the New Jerusalem Diagram as his means of revelation. (cf. Michell 1983: 14; Michell 1990: 29; Nicholson 2009: 41f.)

I shall discuss now Glastonbury’s position as the prospective English Jerusalem, whose re-establishment is expected to happen in the context of Michell’s mystical cosmology and by means of Sacred Engineering.

7.4. Glastonbury as the Spiritual Hub

The small Somerset town runs like the spine through all of Michell’s works. He truly believed, that if the ideal cosmology of the ancient Golden Age shall rise again, it must launch in Glastonbury; for this small earthly town corresponds in various ways to the heavenly pattern, described as the New Jerusalem Diagram. I shall expound now, why Michell

¹⁵⁷ Michell argued, that he named the Diagram in accordance with its development “from the given form and dimensions of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21” (Michell 1978: 160).

believed, that Glastonbury town and its surroundings have the potential to bring the flawed Atlantis to perfection, in terms of the New Jerusalem.

Michell visited Glastonbury in 1966 for the first time, and in the course of the time he became a frequent visitor in the small Somerset town (cf. Martin, 2009). From as early as his first visits, he connected with its common reference as the sacred heart of England. In books like *New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury* (1990), or *The Traveller's Guide to Sacred England: A Guide to the Legends, Lore and Landscapes of England's Sacred Places* (2003), Michell credited Glastonbury with a continuous sacred history, that leads back to ancient times, when the whole world was laid down according to the cosmic scheme. By means of that sacred history, as well as Glastonbury's various place-myths¹⁵⁸, he proclaimed its spiritual superiority and intensity: "Glastonbury is a place of great spiritual intensity. That is a fact of nature, confirmed by every age and generation, from the earliest times up to the present" (Michell, in Benham 2006: xiv). Accordingly, Michell defined Glastonbury as the centre of his Sacred Place Theory. That implies on the one hand its interrelationship with a lost Golden Age, transfigured as Atlantis, Magnesia, or Albion and with a prospective Golden Age, transfigured as the New Jerusalem. On the other hand, Glastonbury's perception as a sacred place conforms to the major elements of alternative sacred place theories, which I have discussed above¹⁵⁹, such as the belief in ley lines or earth energies, the belief in the earth as a living entity, the notion of centre, as well as various speculative beliefs of Earth Mysteries and *astro-archaeology*. Michell utilized these crucial guiding threads in order to highlight Glastonbury's fundamental quality of representing the *axis mundi*, the "cosmological world-centre" (Michell 1978: 159), its prehistoric origin, and in order to re-consolidated its alleged claim to rise as the English New Jerusalem, in the tradition of Blake's prophecy. I shall discuss now the major guiding threads aiding Michell in his proclamation of Glastonbury as the core of a British Sacred Place Theory.

When observed chronologically, Michell firstly attributed Glastonbury's significance as a sacred place to its superiority as *the* major centre of ley lines in England. Especially *his* St. Michael ley line took a prominent position in his claim. In the course of his life-long examinations on that topic, Michell eventually came to the conclusion, that ley lines or earth energies are not merely indicating its sacred pre-eminence, but rather shedding light on the numerical pattern underlying Glastonbury and its surrounding. In this sense, Glastonbury's ground plan, which consists of countless leys and their intersections, corresponds

¹⁵⁸ See chapter 6.3.

¹⁵⁹ See chapter 4.5.

proportionally to the pattern in its surrounding landscape, which is caused by means of these very leys and its landmarks. Now, the town centre of Glastonbury represents the core of this landscape pattern, yet only in terms of the landmarks the pattern may be discerned. Thus, the Glastonbury ley lines and their landmarks, may be defined as Michell's guidelines, that aided his alleged *discovery* of this crucial pattern in and around Glastonbury. According to Michell, these landmarks were *meaningfully* distributed in terms of the ancient method of Sacred Engineering, by means of esoteric numerology and the New Jerusalem Diagram; and for the very purpose of inscribing Glastonbury's sacred superiority upon its landscape in an esoteric manner. Hence, Michell suggests to *read* the Glastonbury landscape and its ground plan like an ancient document, which is available to those, initiated in the wisdom of the so-called lost knowledge. This ancient document is the New Jerusalem Diagram, and its reconstruction is believed to enable the ancient wisdom to flourish again. (cf. Michell 1983: 186)

However, Michell believed, that not only Glastonbury town as a whole, as well as its surrounding landscape, but also its major features, namely Glastonbury Abbey and Glastonbury Tor, conform the cosmological pattern laid down in the New Jerusalem Diagram. Especially Glastonbury Abbey took a prominent position within Michell's theory, as he interpreted it as the reflection of Glastonbury and its surrounding on a smaller scale. Michell argued, that the measurements or "geometric harmony" (Michell 1978: 162) of the Abbey, and especially of its Lady Chapel, represent the ground plan and dimension of the Heavenly City, as outlined within St. John's *Revelation*. Hence, the Abbey and its Lady Chapel are a "microcosm of the New Jerusalem" (ibid.: 161; cf. Lachman 2009: 40; Marshall 2009: 47f.). Accordingly, the geometry inscribed in the Abbey's ground plan was discussed by Michell as a carrier of meaning, namely of the New Jerusalem Diagram: "[T]he dimensions of the St Mary Chapel provide the inner figure of a geometric scheme [...] – the geometers' image of ideal cosmology. It is the scheme which lies at the foundation of temples and sacred cities in the ancient world; and inseparable from it is the philosophy and science in which the ancient civilisations were rooted" (Michell 1983: 172). He achieved support for his claims on the Abbey's esoteric geometry from Bligh Bonds involvement in the excavation of Glastonbury Abbey. Additionally to his excavation work, Bond applied alternative methods, namely gaining revelations by means of automatic writing. Michell believed, that Bond and his co-worker "received in outline the ancient cosmological formula [The New Jerusalem Diagram] which was unknown in their time" (Michell 1978: 163; cf. ibid: 162). Consequently, by means of the Abbey and its connection to sacred geometry, Michell finds another *proof* of his suggestion that Glastonbury is going to rise as the New Jerusalem:

“No wonder Glastonbury is called the English Jerusalem! The very same prophecies are cherished by the Jews about the Temple at Jerusalem: that when the Temple was destroyed and the rituals therein ceased, the world fell out of balance and declined in fertility; that one day it will be rebuilt, and the divine rain of wisdom will fall again to earth, bringing in a new age of prosperity” (Michell 1983: 170).

Conclusively, Michell credits Glastonbury the significance of representing the earthly prototype of the cosmic scheme, wherefore Glastonbury is not merely depicting the centre of England, but represents the world-centre, the axis around which the whole world is rotating. However, only if Glastonbury meets all the requirements of the New Jerusalem Diagram, the world axis may rotate harmoniously and continuously. So the renewal of Glastonbury’s ancient attribution as the Heavenly City on earth represents the necessary precondition for the global well-being. (cf. Lachman 2009: 40; Screeton 2010: 37)

Now, what does it mean, to meet all requirements of the New Jerusalem Diagram, in terms of Glastonbury? As I have stated above, the two basic preconditions for the accomplishment of the New Jerusalem Diagram is the correlation of the landscape disposition and the ground plans to the significant number twelve, and to the cosmic scheme of the sacred *Canon*. That implies, in terms of Glastonbury, that the arrangement of its surrounding landmarks, such as hills, churches, megalithic monuments, and alike, as well as its major sites, such as Glastonbury Abbey and Glastonbury Tor, fulfil these numerical requirements, in due consideration of traditional measurements. According to Michell, these preconditions are met, since Glastonbury represents the “great wheel of number, containing all the numerical patterns of creation, which the ancients adopted as a model of the universe [...] the most sacred possession of the ancients, the key to their high culture and stability” (Michell 1983: 186).

Another requirement, Glastonbury must meet, in order to conform the suggested heavenly condition, is its prehistoric condition. Michell’s general assumption concerns the equality of a prehistoric Golden Age and its Heavenly City and a prospective Golden Age and its Heavenly City. Now, if Glastonbury is aiming to occupy the position of the prospective Heavenly City, it must necessarily also claim its incorporation of its ancient counterpart. Michell imagined the physical outline of the prospective New Jerusalem and its landscape as correlating with the universal model of the sacred landscape. Michell suggests, that this universal model was already established around two millennia before Christ, and conformed then the cosmic scheme of the New Jerusalem Diagram; that is to say, it implied a twelve-fold division of the

city and its surrounding landscape. Now, this very ancient landscape equals, according to Michell, the landscape surrounding Glastonbury, which “implies that the New Jerusalem pattern had been imposed on the Glastonbury landscape long before the Christian foundation, when the ideal of Paradise on Earth was reinstituted in the mysteries of the esoterically oriented Celtic church” (Michell 1978: 166; cf. Hale 2011: 85f.). So by stressing Glastonbury’s prehistoric origin, Michell tried to highlight Glastonbury’s affiliation or equalization with Atlantis, which for Michell, after all, does represent a lost Golden Age; flawed, yet superior, since humanity lived according to the divine law. Now the restoration of this divine order must be universally implemented, however, Britain is going to play a particular role within this process, namely as “the Holy Land of Europe” (Hale 2011: 87); and Glastonbury, which meets all the requirements of the New Jerusalem Diagram, shall be the venue for the re-establishment of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, or as Michell puts it, “the perfect reflection of the heavenly paradise” (Michell 1983: 191).

In this chapter I have firstly discussed the two major place-myths of Michell’s Sacred Place Theory, namely Atlantis and the New Jerusalem. Subsequently I have moved on to Michell’s practical dimension of his Sacred Place Theory, that is his esoteric numerology, which consists of the sacred *Canon* of number and the New Jerusalem Diagram. Finally, I have elucidated Glastonbury’s importance as a spiritual hub referring to Atlantis as its predecessor and spiritual source and to the New Jerusalem as its successor and future vision. By showing the interconnectedness of these three seminal *places*, I intended to highlight Glastonbury’s unique position in Michell’s Sacred Place Theory and cosmology.

8. Conclusion and Outlook

In this paper I forged the bridge from Flying Saucers to Sacred Numerology, from prehistoric megalithic monuments to apocalyptic upheavals, from eco-spiritual Hippies to nationalistic Traditionalists. It all finds space within the oeuvre of John Michell, who dedicated his life to eccentric and radical peculiarities. The *leitmotif* throughout all his creative activity was indeed the Heavenly City, and his basic vocabulary interconnectedness, resurrection, and radical Traditionalism. By means of this vocabulary and *leitmotif*, Michell had established his Sacred Place Theory, which he put on a level with his own cosmology. That is to say, origin, evolution, and fate of earth and heaven are represented by the image of the Heavenly City. This implies further the interconnectedness of past, present, and future; of the divine and the profane; of the global and the local; and of nature and city (cf. Bowman 2005: 181f.).

From Michell's very early speculations of holy lines running through the English countryside, to his terminal conclusions on the numeric quality of the entire cosmos, it all condenses in his assumption of the importance of sacred places. His Sacred Place Theory refers to two levels, namely the distribution of sacred places, and the quality of sacred places as such. Again both levels are deeply interrelated, however, the first level was mainly examined by Michell in the course of his deep involvement of alternative archaeology and Earth Mysteries; the second level, on the other hand, was observed from the perspective of esoteric numerology. I have extensively discussed the topic of alternative archaeology in combination with the ley line theory, which helped Michell to establish his own theories on the distribution of sacred places across the British landscape. Further, I have discussed his approach to sacred geometry and numerology, and which conclusion he drew from it, namely the New Jerusalem as the archetype or prototype for any sacred city. Especially the second level not only had a great impact on his considerations on cosmology, but also on his deliberations on cosmogony, namely the *Great Geometer* assuming the creation of the cosmos.

Apart from Michell's Sacred Place Theory, I have presented two other influential Sacred Place Theories, Mircea Eliade's theory and an alternative approach to sacred places as experienced by New Age *nature religion* devotees. As I have argued throughout this study, Michell lived in two opposing worlds, an alternative and a Traditional one. I examined this claim by observing his most dominant means of influence, namely alternative religion and Traditionalism. By providing two approaches to sacred places, which run along these opposed lines of Traditionalism and alternative religion, I intended to further strengthen the claim of Michell's dichotomy.

I have argued, that Eliade's concept of sacred places determined the latter. His definition of sacred places is qualified by three crucial elements of sacred places, namely the opposition of sacred and profane, hierophanies as their precondition, and the notion of centre. When comparing Eliade and Michell, especially two parallels are striking: Eliade's claim on the possibility of experiencing the repetition of cosmogony at sacred places, and his concept, which he labelled as *nostalgia for paradise*. Whilst Eliade attributes the repetition of hierophanies for the re-experience of cosmogony, Michell ascribes this quality to the repetition of the geometrical cosmic scheme, the New Jerusalem Diagram. Both are to be understood as a revived divine experience. On the other hand, Eliade points out, that paradise, in whatever appearance, represents the archetype of any sacred place, and suggests, that believers are reminded of this very archetype at sacred places. Hence, the longing for *paradise lost* is believed to be satisfied, or at least stemmed. Accordingly, at sacred places,

cosmogony and paradise may be re-experienced. Michell's *paradise lost* is the Heavenly City, adorned by ancient wisdom and eco-spiritual awareness. Opposed to Eliade's claim on the infinity of centres and sacred places, where the *nostalgia for paradise* may be satisfied, Michell limited this possibility to Glastonbury. He did imagine the prospective New Age as offering this vey infinity of sacred centres, yet the venue to initiate this possibility is to be located in *the* major sacred place, in Glastonbury. Thus, Michell and Eliade's Sacred Place Theories conform in many ways, however Michell concentrated precisely on an English application of his theory.

Michell may not entirely be labelled as a *nature religion* devotee, whose sacredness is exclusively centred in nature, since he greatly emphasized on urban space as well. However, he fancied the romanticised vision of *nature religion* representing the innocent and most noble religion of a former Golden Age. As I have stated extensively, Michell desired the revival of such a religion. On the other hand, he hardly agreed with the notion of nature as mother or with the idea, that the revival of *nature religion* equalizes the longing to return to mother nature's womb. When comparing the alternative Sacred Place Theory of New Age *nature religion* devotees and Michell's equivalent, similarities as well as variations are detectable. Many of the contents of this alternative Sacred Place Theory are crucial elements within Michell's body of thought, such as the belief in energy lines or ley lines, which connect sacred places; or the belief in the immanence of certain energies or wisdom within sacred places. Both theories embrace the persuasion, that this wisdom may be acquired, when visiting the sacred place, ideally upon its energy lines. Yet, Michell is only peripherally implying the individualistic aspect of such a *power trip* to a *power places*, which on the other hand is crucial for New Age devotees; and again, he refused the notion of equality of all sacred places. However, for the most part and in most matters, Michell's approach to sacred places conforms alternative approaches, based on their shared counter cultural colouring, their eco-spiritual claims, and their speculative Earth Mystery theories.

Among the variety of sacred places accepted by Michell, Glastonbury is beyond doubt *the* centre of a world, which he restructured and re-measured in compliance with his belief system. The attempts of him to re-sanctify England could be only realised when launched in Glastonbury: "Glastonbury is the English Jerusalem, the traditional and preordained centre for the resurrection of the lost universal science" (Michell, in Screeton 2010: 109). I have thoroughly discussed Glastonbury's crucial role in Michell's endeavour to initiate a cosmological upheaval. This radical change involves Atlantis, as Glastonbury's potential predecessor, and the New Jerusalem, as its potential successor. Accordingly, all three seminal

places of Michell's Sacred Place Theory are crucial conditions for the proclamation of the renewed Golden Age and run like the spine through Michell's entire body of thought. Their interrelatedness is, however, not limited to their common context of the Heavenly City and the Golden Age. It is their common geometrical ground plan and numeric structure, which combines all three *places*. By means of esoteric numerology and sacred geometry, Michell believed to possess the keys for disentangling and resurrecting the lost knowledge on the Heavenly City. This knowledge precisely concerns on how to *square the circle*. Atlantis' collapse was due to its flawed geometrical ground pattern, its imperfect squared circle. Michell truly believed, that if he would be able to square the circle, to call perfect divine geometry into existence, that the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, would supersede the flawed Atlantis. And the only place on earth, where he saw the facility for this endeavour, was indeed Glastonbury.

His cosmology was strongly embraced by various groups, such as New Age devotees, counter cultural Hippies, Traditionalists, nationalists, eco-spiritual Pagans, or simply anti-establishment proponents. However, especially the Earth Mystery Movement labelled Michell as their thought leader and populariser; and is still doing so until today. As I have pointed out in my introduction, the Glastonbury based conference *Megalithomania* strengthened and confirmed my assumption, that John Michell has not ceased to act as a determining factor upon the Earth Mystery Movement. Further researches on the specification of this influence are still needed in order to gain a more comprehensive picture. Another crucial stream, which benefitted from and was biased by Michell's body of thought, was the Traditionalistic European New Right. I have touched the topic throughout my examinations on Michell's ideology, however, given its importance and relation to vast unexplored territories, further researches may be vital. Apart from Amy Hale's article *John Michell, Radical Traditionalism, and the Emerging Politics of the Pagan New Right*, as well as Jeremy Harte's marginal employment of the topic within his review article *Eccentric Life and Peculiar Notions: A Retrospect of John Michell*, no credible avenues of research approach have been introduced. Michell's Radical Traditionalism comprises a great variety of open questions in terms of content, interactions with contemporary New Right positions, or concealed and latent racial policy. An interesting feature of the latter are Michell's remarks on the significance of the affiliation of people and *their* land. The repatriation of minorities and tribes to their original homeland was interpreted by Michell as another component of fulfilling the cosmic scheme and hence a crucial precondition for the coming of a Golden Age: "Every race had its part in the divine scheme and the capital of every country was to its inhabitants the centre of the

world, for each capital was the nucleus of a cell in the terrestrial body, complete in itself yet also a member of the greater entity” (Michell 1983: 192). However, he treated the topic of minority repatriation and racial superiority alike with caution, so as not to be judged or even sentenced. Therefore, he insisted, that his thoughts on segregation found their source of inspiration within his firm conviction, that each *racial* group plays an individual role in the greater picture of divine order and necessarily must stay in its homeland for its own, as well as for universal well-being. Amy Hale addresses Michell’s reasoning within her article and correspondingly points out, that “the coming of the New Age is tied to each group being settled in their rightful place, in their divinely ordained territories in order to maintain and nurture their special connection with the energies of the land” (Hale 2011: 84); and calls this reasoning a “‘separate but equal’ philosophy” (ibid.: 85; cf. ibid.: 84f.). Yet, the topic of the relation of people and their *assigned* homeland is a marginal example of a multitude of similar examples, which are waiting to be unveiled. Furthermore, I have concentrated only on a handful of books and articles within Michell’s vast oeuvre. A comprehensive overview and interpretation of Michell’s literary corpus, his transforming attitude towards certain topics, as well as reasons for and manners of revisions, are further research gaps to be filled.

My concluding remarks on this thesis reveal in my mind’s eye in the shape of numbers, squares, and circles, and I wonder if I succeeded in my own attempt of squaring the circle, namely penetrating Michell’s mind. Partly I wonder, since Michell applied a specific foreign language, by means of demonstrating his arguments. Yet, to a great deal I am lacking the skills of this language, that is to say, the language of numerical and spatial conditions, the language of mathematics. My friend Mike York, who was of tremendous help throughout my stay in Glastonbury, asked me once, if Michell’s mathematical applications are actually accurate. Then, as now, I did not feel competent enough to decide, whether Michell’s numerical implementations are, as Harte puts it “mathematical legerdemain” (Harte 2012: 207), or if they are insights of an inspired mind. Thus, I have to admit, my squared circle might be slightly flawed, and to some extent I am still walking on Atlantean ground.

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Abstract – English

John Michell (1933 – 2009) occupied an outstanding position within the alternative religious landscape of Britain. He aimed by means of his Sacred Place Theory to re-sanctify the English landscape, and to launch a revived Golden Age with Glastonbury as the point of departure. Dwelling deep in both, Radical Traditionalism and the counter cultural Earth Mystery Movement, Michell's thematic antagonisms are mirrored by his opposing fellowships, such as devotees of the New Right, and of New Age *nature religion*. This study is offering a comprehensive presentation of his biographic and ideological eccentricities, as well as of his influential body of thought. Particularly his Sacred Place Theory is held in high esteem, since it is believed by Michell's fellowship to reveal the key on re-proclaiming heavenly conditions upon English ground. Commonly, Michell equals this Theory with the elaboration of his cosmology, whereby they are linked in terms of the concept of the Heavenly City. The application of this classic image, which certainly represents Michell's centrepiece, promoted his veneration as a prophet and visionary among his devotees. The image of the Heavenly City is reified by Michell's seminal triumvirate of the lost Atlantis, the contemporary Glastonbury, and the prospective New Jerusalem. The present study intends to show the interconnectedness of these fundamental *places*, as well as their significance for Michell's English Sacred Place Theory. Furthermore, Michell's Theory is expounded on a large scale, namely as part of the religious discourse on this matter. Accordingly, Michell's examination is discussed in relation to Mircea Eliade's approach, as well as to contemporary eco-spiritual theories on sacred space, place, and nature. However, in order to complete the picture, the microcosm of Michell's cosmology is explored as well. This involves its major ingredients, such as alternative archaeology, esoteric numerology, or sacred geometry; and its means of application, namely the concept of Sacred Engineering.

Keywords: John Michell, Sacred Place Theory, Glastonbury, Atlantis, New Jerusalem, esoteric numerology, Traditionalism, New Age.

Abstract – German

John Michell (1933 – 2009) nahm in der alternativreligiösen Landschaft Großbritanniens eine herausragende Position ein. Er beabsichtigte, mit Hilfe seiner *Sacred Place* Theorie, der englischen Landschaft einerseits wieder Sakralität zuzuschreiben und andererseits ausgehend von Glastonbury ein wiederbelebtes Goldenes Zeitalter einzuläuten. Michell identifizierte sich sowohl mit dem Radikalen Traditionalismus, als auch mit der gegenkulturellen *Earth Mystery* Bewegung. Diese thematischen Gegensätze spiegeln sich in der Varietät seiner Anhängerschaft wieder, wie etwa in den Gruppierungen des *New Right* oder der *New Age nature religion*. In dieser Abhandlung wird sowohl auf exzentrische biographische und ideologische Aspekte, als auch auf das einflussreiche Gedankengut von Michell eingegangen. Seiner *Sacred Place* Theorie wird besonders hohe Wertschätzung entgegengebracht, da ihr eine Schlüsselposition in Bezug auf die Wiederbelebung himmlischer Zustände in England zugeschrieben wird. Michell setzt seine *Sacred Place* Theorie häufig mit seiner eigens etablierten Kosmologie gleich, wobei das Konzept der Himmlischen Stadt als wichtigster Berührungspunkt fungiert. Die Verwendung dieser bedeutsamen Metapher stellt ohne Zweifel das Kernstück seines Werkes dar und führte in weiterer Folge zur Verehrung seiner Person als Prophet und Visionär. Michell bemühte sich das abstrakte Konzept der Himmlischen Stadt zu konkretisieren, was in Form seines fundamentalen Dreieckes gelang. Dieses impliziert das untergegangene Atlantis, das gegenwärtige Glastonbury und das zukünftige Neue Jerusalem. In dieser Abhandlung soll nun einerseits auf die unverzichtbare Vernetzung und Verbundenheit dieser drei Orte und andererseits auf deren Bedeutung für die englische *Sacred Place* Theorie von Michell eingegangen werden. Als weiterer Schwerpunkt soll seine Theorie in den entsprechenden religiösen Diskurs des Themas eingegliedert werden. Dementsprechend wird der Zugang von Michell in Relation mit jenem von Mircea Eliade, sowie mit gegenwärtigen ökospirituellen Theorien zu Raum, Ort und Natur, besprochen. Ergänzend wird außerdem auf die Mikroebene von Michells Kosmologie eingegangen. Hierbei werden die wichtigsten Bestandteile, wie etwa alternative Zugänge zu Archäologie, Zahlenmystik oder Heilige Geometrie, sowie die vorrangige Verwendungsweise, nämlich *Sacred Engineering*, vorgestellt.

Schlagwörter: John Michell, Sacred Place Theorie, Glastonbury, Atlantis, Neues Jerusalem, Zahlenmystik, Traditionalismus, New Age.