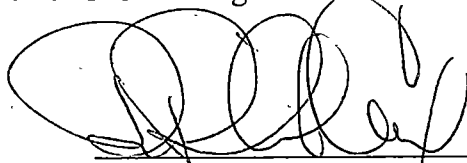


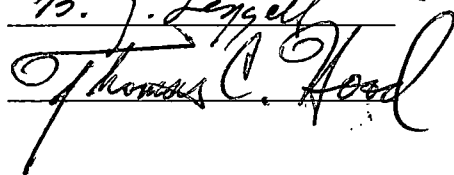
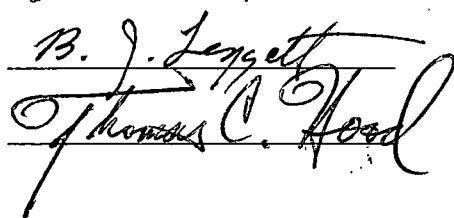
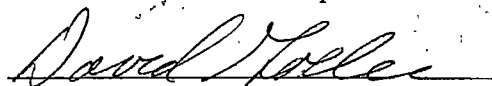
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sally Elaine Corran entitled "The Ghosts that Haunt Us: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Stories of the Supernatural." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.



Don Cox, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



Interim Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

The Ghosts That Haunt Us

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Stories of the Supernatural

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sally E. Corran
December 2000

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to
my mother.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the professors with whom I worked throughout my time at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am especially thankful for my Dissertation Committee: Don Cox, David Goslee, B. J. Leggett, and Thomas Hood. Their insight, support, and advice helped tremendously, and it has been a pleasure to work with them.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge my debt to my family. Their own work and joy for life inspired and motivated me, and their support was invaluable.

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's short stories of the supernatural in which he emphasizes the presence of forces beyond human knowledge and control. Using Todorov's notion of the fantastic and Freud's notion of the uncanny, I argue that Le Fanu presents spiritual, historical, and psychological forces as supernatural in order to warn his readers that there are powers in the material world working in ways that cannot be explained by science or rationalism.

Le Fanu challenges the increasing rationalism and materialism of the nineteenth century by creating stories that leave readers questioning the veracity of events depicted, the reliability of the narrators, and the causes of the seemingly supernatural events. However, he does present the reader with possibilities for interpreting the supernatural events. They might be caused by supernatural powers in a spiritual realm. Often, the mysterious events occur when a character ignores or denies the existence of a spiritual force, whether Christian or folkloric. Another interpretation is that many of the supernatural events occur because of a crime committed years ago by an ancestor or nation. In these cases, even the innocent are affected by the inexplicable events, much like Le Fanu and his family were affected by the repercussions of the Anglo-Irish wars a century earlier. The final explanation I discuss is psychological; the disturbed internal state of a character supernaturally affects the material world around him or her. These explanations depict the power of the spiritual, historical, and psychological forces that rationalism and science cannot explain. In Le Fanu's stories, though, the explanations are

ambiguous, and the reader is left doubting the veracity of any one interpretation.

Not only do these stories present the different forces at work in the material world, but because of the reader's hesitation, they are what Todorov would call fantastic. This quality creates an uncanny effect on the reader, and as Freud argues, the uncanny is the feeling created by submitting to an irrational belief. By creating this uncanny feeling in the reader, Le Fanu's stories haunt them with the feeling that there are powers beyond their knowledge and control.

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Introduction

Despite their presence in popular culture, ghost stories and stories of the supernatural receive little scholarly attention. In *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the Ghost Story*, Julia Briggs offers an explanation as to why fiction of the supernatural tends to be excluded from literary study: "Since the fear-inducing element [in supernatural fiction] is a primitive and primary function, more aesthetic considerations tend to be pushed into the background; this may be one reason why serious critics have usually avoided discussing the ghost story as a genre" (11-12). She continues, stating that the critic of ghost stories will irritate ghost story lovers by analyzing and demystifying the fiction and will annoy literary critics by giving credibility to something more primal and emotional than intellectual. Generally, both ghost story lovers and academic scholars spurn those who apply academic principles of study to stories of the supernatural; thus, there are only a few serious studies of supernatural literature in the academic arena. In *The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction*, Robert Geary notes that "it is not . . . from lack of acumen that so few studies do justice to the supernatural; rather it is because the criticism and the fiction often imply counter paradigms, each of which denies what is central to the other" (123). Despite these difficulties, there are a number of reasons why ghost stories do deserve to be studied on a literary level: the stories may give some insight into the reading population of their time, they may be responding to the intellectual or religious climate of their time, or they may mark a transition or change in literary styles during a specific period. In some cases, all of these reasons can be applied to a ghostly tale; in other cases, none of these reasons can be applied. Certainly, there are some ghost story

writers who write mainly to excite and titillate their audiences, but one should not dismiss all ghost and supernatural stories as merely tales to titillate. Writers such as Hawthorne, Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, Mary Shelley, Scott, Dickens, and Shakespeare, who interpolate supernatural tales into their more realistic or conventional stories, are studied extensively and certainly are considered canonical.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, writers began to use supernatural events as the basis of their works rather than as interpolated tales; this was the beginning of Gothic fiction, and most scholars point to Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otronto* (1764) as the first Gothic novel.¹ With the development of scientific experimentation and the emphasis on rational thought in the eighteenth century, many previously held superstitions and supernatural explanations were debunked; science and materialism filled the void. Although it was not until Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) that Christianity faced a widespread loss of belief in the existence of a supernatural God, spiritual and supernatural explanations for seemingly unexplainable events lost credence during the Enlightenment. The causes of illnesses, the motion of the planets, the changes in weather, the loss of animals and crops, and the noises that go bump in the night all could be explained. If the causes were not already known, given time and scientific experimentation, they could be discovered; physical

¹ In *Night Visitors*, Julia Briggs calls Walpole the "first truly Gothic novelist" (31), and Margaret L. Carter recognizes that the novel is "universally recognized as the first Gothic novel" (10). Briggs, however, in one chapter traces the development of the supernatural in literature beginning with Lucian. She notes occurrences of the supernatural in Medieval literature, references to supernatural tales in Shakespeare and other Renaissance writers, and the development of the supernatural through the eighteenth century.

laws could explain almost everything. As this philosophy developed, many in the nineteenth century came to believe there was not a controlling God who had a divine purpose; there were only indifferent laws of nature. It was, according to Geary, this "specter of a chilling, purposeless materialism [that] confronted many . . ." (104).

Because of the rational, scientific discoveries of the Enlightenment, Geary argues, stories of the supernatural were "no longer a threat to Christianity" (104); the main threat to religion would come later, not from the supernatural stories but from science. No longer a threat to the established church, supernatural and Gothic literature could develop more freely. In fact, supernatural literature seems to have helped to ease the loss of belief in the supernatural. In *The Fantasy Book*, Franz Rottensteiner notes that "fantastic literature developed at precisely the moment when genuine belief in the supernatural was on the wane" (13) and that it came "as a revolt against an all encompassing reason that seemingly robbed nature of all its mysteries . . ." (12).

The Romantics reacted to the Enlightenment by turning to nature and seeing the mystery of the human mind reflected in nature. In doing this, the Romantics were able to express internal experiences as outward events: Wordsworth associates the passage of his life with the landscape of Tintern Abbey and Keats associates his longings for death with a nightingale. Briggs also recognizes that Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and other Romantics attempted to create in the reader a supernatural feeling of "terror and wonder" (35) by externally representing internal emotions and fears, much as the later Victorian ghost story writers did. As George Haggerty explains in *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, Gothic novelists and the writers of supernatural stories who followed these Gothic

writers focused on internal experience and perception, but they didn't express it as a private, subjective experience; it became an objective reality (7). In *The Supernatural in Fiction*, Peter Penzoldt also writes that as the "reasonable age" progressed beyond fearing "imaginary physical dangers," the "terrors of the soul seem to have increased" (39), and it seems that the "terrors of the soul" are more clearly recognized because of this inward turn.

Realizing that subjective experience was as potent as objective experience, Victorian writers of the supernatural continued to write objectively about subjective experiences that could not be explained by science. In fact, Geary notes that "a central motif in much Victorian supernatural fiction is that the enlightened world of science . . . offers an incomplete picture of reality: there is another realm—perhaps higher, certainly more encompassing, maybe more terrifying, but not restricted to the prevailing confines of what passes for truth" (105). The more one denies and represses by science or reason this other realm which is experienced subjectively, the more noise it makes, casting doubts on the ability of science and natural laws to explain everything. The harder one tries to offer physical explanations for supernatural events, the more powerful the evidence for a non-material force causing the supernatural events becomes.

In supernatural and ghost stories at the beginning of the Victorian era, ghosts and supernatural occurrences were presented as more pressing and more real than they had been in earlier fiction.² Writers began to make the transition from the Gothic spirits of the

²Authors such as Robert Geary, Julia Briggs, Gary William Crawford, Victor Sage, Margaret Carter, Peter Penzoldt, and Jack Sullivan recognize the transition from the non-material ghost of the eighteenth century to the material and physical apparitions of

eighteenth century to what, in 1917, Dorothy Scarborough termed “the modern ghost.” In literature prior to the Victorian period, the “specter was usually a pallid, helpless shade,” but in Victorian and modern ghost stories, the ghost usually is “active” (Penzoldt 34, 35) and is manifested as a physical presence in the material world. Despite this more material presence, the ghosts still have a supernatural quality, but their powerful presence marks a more vigorous intrusion of the supernatural into the material realm, impressing the reader with the importance of recognizing these non-material forces. Scarborough notes that Victorian authors who were influenced by the Gothic tradition understood that to create this powerful effect, they needed to write short stories rather than long, three-decker novels because “the ghostly tale that is too long loses in impressiveness . . .” (82). In order to create terror, the presence of the ghost must be impressive, and if the reader is given too long to contemplate the reality of the ghost, he or she will begin to question its power. Just as these structural changes were emerging in Victorian Britain, Edgar Allan Poe wrote about the importance of brevity in “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846): “. . . the brevity [of a work of literature] must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect . . .” (197). Thus, according to Poe, if a ghost story is to affect the reader and impress upon him or her the intensity of the supernatural experience, it should be able to be read in one sitting. In Victorian ghost stories, then, the brevity of the tales enables

the nineteenth century. Although the authors vary in their explanations for this change, some identifying it with political history, some with a change in the religious climate, some with a development in science and intellect, and some with a combination of these causes, like Dorothy Scarborough, they all recognize a transition from Gothic tales and novels to the modern ghost story. These authors’ explanations for this transition and their comments on Le Fanu’s place in the development of the modern ghost story and supernatural tale will be discussed in more detail in individual chapters.

the writer to focus on the supernatural events, and the ghosts become more intense with an immediate presence in the stories, differing from their Gothic predecessors who drag the supernatural events through long novels in which the focus was on the plight of the heroine rather than on the mysterious occurrences of ghosts appearing in rooms or wandering the moors.

In Britain, the transition from the Gothic supernatural to Modern short stories of the supernatural occurred when periodicals and periodical publication flourished. This venue catered to the short story as well as the three-decker novel. Writers and editors could publish a number of short stories in a periodical and circulate it widely without much expense. *The Dublin University Magazine* was one such periodical, and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was one such writer and editor. In *The Dublin University Magazine* in 1838, Le Fanu published his first short story, "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter," a story about an Irish bone-setter who turns from his sinful ways when he sees a ghost. After Le Fanu's death, this story was published as a part of *The Purcell Papers*, a three-volume collection of Le Fanu's short stories connected by the presence of Father Purcell. With these and other stories like them, Le Fanu drew on his writing abilities, declined his call to the Irish Bar, and began his literary career. In 1840, he bought the newspaper *The Warder*, which he did not sell until 1870. Le Fanu also bought *The Dublin University Magazine* in 1861 and had partial interest in three other Irish newspapers.³ His stories,

³Although most critics have accounts of Le Fanu's career as owner and editor of Irish newspapers and magazines, Crawford's *Bio-Bibliography* lists a helpful chronology, and McCormack's *Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* offers insight to Le Fanu's career as a newspaper and magazine owner and editor.

often published anonymously, appeared in his own magazines and journals as well as many others.⁴

Born in Dublin on August 28, 1814, this clergyman's son lived as a member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendency at the Royal Hibernian Military School in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Even as a youth, Le Fanu developed conflicting feelings toward the Irish. His mother's sympathy for the Irish rebels and Le Fanu's appreciation for the Irish peasant's life-style created within him an admiration for the Irish. However, when he was twelve, he was shocked by a move to Abingdon, county Limerick, where his father was appointed parish rector and Dean of Emly, and the family was met with hostility from the Irish-Catholic people of the parish. Similarly, the Tithe War (1831-1838) also contributed to these conflicting feelings. As William Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan's brother, writes in *Seventy*

⁴The prolificness of Le Fanu's anonymous works is determined by both internal and external evidence. Most often, he revised his anonymous short stories as novels and published them in his name. For example, *Uncle Silas* (1864), set in England, was adapted from "Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess" (1838), and "A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family" (1839) was revised into *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869). *Loved and Lost*, serialized in 1868, is attributed to Le Fanu by McCormack (*Victorian Ireland* 280-289) based on its likeness to *Willing to Die* (1872). Although there is some controversy over a few of Le Fanu's stories and novels, most critics agree on the main canon of Le Fanu short stories. Because this study of Le Fanu is not intended to determine the number of stories Le Fanu published, I will refer to those stories attributed to Le Fanu upon which critics agree. The primary stories about which there is some question are "A Night at the Bell Inn" (1850) and "The Legend of Dunblane" (1869). This disagreement occurs because authorship has been determined on internal evidence, and, as Crawford notes in the bibliography, the settings for both stories (England and Scotland, respectively) are uncommon for Le Fanu stories when they were written (20). Both "A Night at the Bell Inn" and "The Legend of Dunblane" have some aspects that are similar to Le Fanu's style, yet they lack the intensity and the narrative elements that mark Le Fanu's works. August Derleth contributed to the skepticism surrounding authenticity of Le Fanu tales when, in his introduction to *The Purcell Papers* (1975), he admitted to having written "The Churchyard Yew" after having claimed to have found this lost tale by Le Fanu.

Years of Irish Life, once, rock-throwing Catholics nearly killed the two young brothers because they were representative of the Anglo-Irish ruling class. In 1832, Le Fanu was able to leave Abingdon for Dublin and Trinity College, and in 1837, he received honors in Classics. Le Fanu remained in Dublin where his Anglo-Irish ancestry was not such a threat to his life, and in 1843, Le Fanu married Susanna Bennett, a lawyer's daughter. When Susanna's father died in 1856, she suffered emotionally, and two years later, she also died. Although Le Fanu had been writing consistently, it is around the time of his wife's death that his literary output rose and he began publishing more novels.

Because not much is known about Le Fanu's private life, there are rumors and speculation about his relationship with his wife, his own theological and philosophical ideas, and his state of mind. In *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu, and Others*, S. M. Ellis dramatizes the last stages of Le Fanu's life. Certainly, Ellis is correct in stating that Le Fanu was called "The Invisible Prince" because of his withdrawal from society after his wife's death, but as both McCormack and Crawford note, Le Fanu did not disappear completely from society as Ellis suggests. Le Fanu still met with his close friends, including Charles Lever, corresponded with his British publisher, Bentley, and worked on his newspapers and magazines. Ellis also misstates that Le Fanu died on February 7, three days earlier than the correct date of Le Fanu's death, February 10, 1873, when he died of a heart attack at his home. Perhaps because of Le Fanu's supernatural stories and gothic novels, Ellis also includes information on Le Fanu's nightmares about an old, decaying house. Although there is no evident substantiation of this, the report of the doctor's words at Le Fanu's death, "I feared this. The house fell at last," do add a haunting touch to the

death of one of the best ghost story writers.⁵

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu is an author whom many critics mark as a major transitional writer between the Gothic novel and the modern ghost story. Gary William Crawford believes that Le Fanu “may be properly called the father of the English ghost story” (“Landscape” 94). Similarly, Robert Geary also attributes Le Fanu with contributing to the transition from Gothic to ghostly tales. Not only is Le Fanu marked as an important transitional writer of the supernatural, but he is also recognized as one of the best writers of supernatural tales. M. R. James, an early twentieth-century writer of ghostly tales, considers some of Le Fanu’s ghostly stories to be the best ever written (“Remarks” 170), and in his book on the English ghost story, Jack Sullivan uses Le Fanu’s “Green Tea,” a fictional case study of a man who is haunted by the specter of a monkey after drinking too much green tea and studying pagan religions, as the “archetypal ghost story” (11). In a 1923 article, Edna Kenton acknowledges Le Fanu’s impact on other writers of the Victorian period, arguing that the Brontës were influenced by Le Fanu’s stories.⁶ It is evident that other Victorian writers read Le Fanu’s stories, too, and conversely, Le Fanu was familiar with their works. Some of Le Fanu’s later stories

⁵The most current and insightful bibliographical information on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu can be found in McCormack’s *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* and Crawford’s *Bio-Bibliography. Seventy Years of Irish Life* by William Le Fanu has some interesting anecdotal stories about Joseph Sheridan, but it is primarily about William.

⁶Kenton remarks that many of the names in the Brontës’ novels are similar to names in Le Fanu’s stories. Also, she notes that Charlotte Brontë’s Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* seems to be modeled on the blind woman who is apparently Lord Glenfallen’s legal wife in Le Fanu’s “A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family.”

were published in Dickens's *All the Year Round*, and there are similarities between elements in the works of Bulwer-Lytton, Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Bram Stoker and elements in the works of Le Fanu.⁷ Thus, not only his position as a transitional writer, but also his position in the literary circle of his day makes Le Fanu an interesting subject for study.

There have been a number of works, most notably the already mentioned *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu, and Others* by S. M. Ellis, that have commented on Le Fanu in the context of other writers of the period. Following Ellis's lead, Peter Penzoldt, in *The Supernatural in Fiction*, places Le Fanu among other authors such as Collins, Stoker, Scott, Bulwer-Lytton, and Poe as major writers who stimulated the literary transition from Gothic novel to ghost story. Although Ellis had written *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu, and Others* in 1931, Crawford notes that Ellis's erroneous biographical information of and "superficial commentary" on Le Fanu persisted until the 1970s (*Bio-Bibliography* 75). Penzoldt's study draws upon some of the incorrect information in Ellis's book, leading Penzoldt to the conclusion that Le Fanu's stories developed primarily from a neurosis and "abnormal" character in his later years (74). Despite some of these errors, Penzoldt's respect for and treatment of Le Fanu's stories as worthy of critical study helped to

⁷Crawford's bibliography of Le Fanu's works lists the journals and magazines in which his stories first appeared. As well as appearing in *All the Year Round* and his own *Dublin University Magazine*, Le Fanu's stories appeared in *Cassell's*, *London Society*, *Temple Bar*, *Once A Week*, and *Belgravia* (edited by Braddon). Participating in the same publication processes as other well-known Victorian authors contributed to the influence, whether noted or not, that Le Fanu had on other writers. Similarly, Le Fanu had access to these magazines and likely was influenced by the authors he read in them. Although an extensive study of the influence Le Fanu had on other Victorian writers and their influence on him would be interesting, it is beyond the scope of this study.

develop an interest in the forgotten author.

Although a number of critics have noted that his works deserve scholarly attention, very few books have been written about Le Fanu. In 1951, Nelson Browne published a short book on Le Fanu, and the next book to be solely about Le Fanu is by Michael Begnal, published in 1972. Ivan Melada published a study on Le Fanu in 1987 for Twayne's English Author series, and Crawford's *J. Sheridan Le Fanu: A Bio-Bibliography* was published in 1995. The books by Browne, Begnal, Melada, and Crawford are helpful introductions to Le Fanu and his works, but they are just that, introductions. W. J. McCormack's *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* (1980) goes beyond merely introducing the reader to Le Fanu and connects his works with the political and religious climate of Ireland in the nineteenth century. Despite the dearth of books on him, there are a number of critics who have written chapters or essays on him. These fall into two main categories: genre studies (ghost story, Gothic story, or psychological story) and historical studies. As has already been noted, because of the nature of ghost stories and supernatural literature, critics must approach the subject precariously if they want to be considered serious academics, hence the primarily genre-oriented and biographical books that study Le Fanu as a part of a movement rather than as an individual writer. Yet, his stories do deserve to be studied for their own merit, not simply as transitional literature.

When studying Le Fanu's supernatural stories for their own merit, one discovers an underlying theme running through them. Although his stories are meant to excite the reader's fears and imagination, they also serve another purpose; Le Fanu's stories

emphasize the existence of non-material forces that have power in the material world and the dangers of ignoring these forces. Although there is no evidence that he believed in the reality of the supernatural events in his stories, he did have an understanding that there are forces beyond human comprehension manifested in the material world. Without an awareness and understanding of these forces, people may commit acts that have harmful effects not only on themselves but on others, even generations later. Thus, Le Fanu warns his generation of the prevailing materialism and skepticism toward forces beyond the knowledge of science and rationalism.

The forces with which Le Fanu is concerned are spiritual, historical, and psychological. Even though the term “psychological,” did not come into widespread use until almost a century after Le Fanu was writing, I apply it to his writings because many of his stories focus on the mental states and consciences of his characters. I call the first of these forces “spiritual” rather than labeling it God or a supernatural being because it is not associated with an identifiable being. Unlike the traditional Christian God, it does not interact personally with the characters and often is manifested malevolently. In “The Familiar,” Captain Barton is pursued by what he believes to be the ghost or resurrected body of a man he has killed. After being tormented by this ghost who appears to be human and whom others see clearly, Barton cries out to a clergyman:

Whatever may be my uncertainty as to the authenticity of what we are taught to call revelation, of one fact I am deeply and horribly convinced, that there does exist beyond this a spiritual world. . . . There is a God—a dreadful God, how I have been convinced!—a [*sic*] system malignant, and

implacable, and omnipotent, under whose persecutions I am, and have been, suffering the torments of the damned! (60)

Often, this passage is cited as the basis for the theme underlying the stories of *In a Glass Darkly*, Le Fanu's most popular collection of stories published in 1872. However, Barton's speech shows only one facet of the spiritual force. Barton calls it God, but there are others in Le Fanu's stories who recognize and believe in a benevolent God. Le Fanu is not using Barton as a mouthpiece, here; rather, Barton can describe only his experience of the spiritual force; he does not, and perhaps cannot, experience the benevolent God to whom others pray. Therefore, I am reluctant to use the terminology that Le Fanu has Barton use. By avoiding religious terms for these forces, I also hope to avoid any confusion that may be created; the term "God" would inevitably bring up connections with the Protestant God of Le Fanu's Anglo-Irish heritage and with the Catholic God of Ireland. Although the spiritual force in Le Fanu's fiction may share similarities with both, Le Fanu also refers to fairies and demons, which keeps this force from being identified with traditional Christian imagery.

In order to differentiate these non-material forces, the spiritual, the historical, and the psychological, from the unexplained events in the material world, I use the term "supernatural" to refer to events or beings in the material world that cannot be explained by the physical laws of the material world or by rational thought. It is through these supernatural events and beings that the existence of these non-material forces is felt. Each force may work in a number of ways. Its invasion into the material world may be obviously supernatural as it is in "Madame Crowl's Ghost," in which an elderly Miss

Jolliffe tells the story of her encounter with the ghost of the woman for whom she worked. Just after Madame Crowl's death, the young Jolliffe sees her ghost groping at something inside a door that Jolliffe had never seen. Although she is the only one to see the ghost and is telling the story almost sixty years later, the ghost's existence is not doubted by others in the story. Certainly, the young Jolliffe was able to point to the door of the closet in which were the remains of the boy Madame Crowl had killed years before. In this case, the spiritual force of life-after-death, the historical force of Crowl's murderous actions a generation earlier, and the psychological force of Crowl's guilty conscience are manifested in the material world through the supernatural appearance of Madame Crowl's ghost.

However, the forces in Le Fanu's stories do not always work supernaturally; sometimes they are manifested in individuals as a struggle with conscience or as a moral crisis, and the non-material force may be seen in the material world preternaturally. A preternatural event may not be explicitly other-worldly or inexplicable, but it has a mystical quality which indicates that a seemingly ordinary occurrence may not be a coincidence. What I call the preternatural is described by Jane Eyre when she relates these circumstances:

When I was a little girl, only six years old, I, one night, heard Bessie Leaven say to Martha Abbot that she had been dreaming about a little child; and that to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble, either to one's self or one's kin. The saying might have worn out of my memory had not a circumstance immediately

followed which served indelibly to fix it there. The next day Bessie was sent for from home to the deathbed of her little sister. (222)

These are natural circumstances that can be explained by coincidence. Nothing explicitly supernatural occurs here, but there is a hint of some unexplained power that can be explained away if one chooses to do so, just as one, if one chooses to do so, can explain away Rochester's voice that Jane hears when St. John is pressuring her to marry him. Similar to the preternatural elements in *Jane Eyre* and other Victorian novels such as *The Woman in White*, some of the events in Le Fanu's stories are not explicitly supernatural but have qualities which natural laws cannot explain. In "A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family," a story in which a woman marries a man who already has a foreign wife (one of the stories Kenton points to as influencing Charlotte Brontë), the black veil, an omen which appears only to Lady Glenfallen, cannot clearly be explained by science, but it is not an explicitly supernatural phenomenon. Rather it has more of a preternatural quality to it. However, even the preternatural events are connected to spiritual, historical, or psychological struggles, implying that there is something outside of the material world causing these preternatural occurrences. Because of this connection, events that at first seem merely coincidental may be more closely identified with the supernatural—the presence of non-material forces in the material world.

It is that in fiction which is unusual but which can be explained by nature or science that Tzvetan Todorov calls the "uncanny" (41). The uncanny may be an exceedingly strange or coincidental experience, but at the end of the story, there is no doubt that it is not supernatural. In *The Fantastic*, Todorov refers to the works of Ann

Radcliffe and Clara Reeve as stories in which events appear to have a supernatural quality but are discovered to be completely natural. On the other hand, Todorov calls an explicitly supernatural occurrence in fiction the "marvelous" (42). The marvelous can be found in such works as *The Monk*, by M. G. Lewis, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, by Maturin. In between the uncanny and the marvelous lies the "fantastic," which Todorov defines as "the possibility of hesitation between" a natural and a supernatural explanation (26). However, it is not only a character's hesitation that is important: "The fantastic . . . implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters. . . . *The reader's hesitation* is therefore the first condition of the fantastic" (31). Many events in Le Fanu's stories take on the quality of Todorov's fantastic. Often, when there seems to be a possible natural explanation for events, the explanation does not account for all of the strange phenomena in a story. For example, in "Mr. Justice Harbottle," an unjust judge is tried and sentenced to hanging by a ghostly judge and jury. It is possible that Justice Harbottle only dreams of his trial by Justice Twofold, but his ankles are sore when he awakes and other members of the household claim to see ghostly visitants the night Justice Harbottle hangs himself from the stairway railing. Similarly, in "The Familiar" it is possible that Captain Barton only imagines that the man following him is the man he killed. However, this explanation does not account for the strange appearance of the owl at Barton's deathbed or for other characters seeing the man Barton claims to be the "watcher." The owl may be coincidental and the man the others see may be a passer by, but the coincidence, the very real fear expressed by Barton, and the eerie quality of the owl all point to a supernatural explanation; the reader hesitates. As Michael Begnal

comments, "Le Fanu is a master at the creation of supernatural event and narrative, and he can usually at least partially convince his reader that what is being witnessed might possibly be true . . ." (34). Begnal's use of qualifiers such as "at least partially" and "might possibly" also point to the fantastic quality of hesitation and doubt in Le Fanu's stories about the non-material forces. It is this quality of hesitation, the fantastic as Todorov defines it, in these stories that forces the reader to think more carefully about the events in the story and attempt to find an answer to the question, "Was it real?" By making the reader spend more time questioning the events in a story, Le Fanu is able to do more than just excite his readers for a moment. He starts them thinking about the possibility of the presence of something that cannot be explained by the physical laws of nature or rational thought.

However, because "uncanny" is a term often associated with Freudian psychology, and Le Fanu's stories do lend themselves to a psychological reading, Freud's definition of the term can hardly be dismissed from Le Fanu's works as they are "uncanny" in so many ways. Differing slightly from Todorov, Freud defines the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220). When referring to the uncanny in literature, Freud cites from E. Jentsch's "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen":

One of the most successful devices for easily creating uncanny effects is to leave the reader in uncertainty whether a particular figure is a human being or an automaton, and do it in such a way that his attention is not focused directly upon his uncertainty, so that he may not be led to go into the

matter and clear it up immediately. (227)

Freud, not satisfied with remaining in ambiguity, attempts to determine how this uncertainty works on the mind in order to create an uncanny feeling. Of course, he attributes it to something familiar that has been repressed, often emerging in literature as "the double." This repression is not only repression of an individual's desires or experiences, but also of a community's. Thus, although a community may have dismissed its earlier beliefs in ghosts and the living-dead, those beliefs still exist, but they are repressed. When an event occurs that appears to validate those repressed beliefs, an uncanny feeling is created. That which was familiar has resurfaced. Although Freud's definition of the uncanny seems to share some similarities with Todorov's because it is something that can be explained or rationalized, Freud's uncanny has qualities that make one question the rationalization; there is hesitation. Therefore, Freud's uncanny is more akin to Todorov's fantastic. Despite Freud's attempts to identify what causes uncanny feelings, Rottensteiner recognizes that psychoanalysis "has not succeeded in explaining [our impulses to believe the irrational] away" (25). It may be clear that the fears which emerge from uncanny experiences can be caused by the difficulty of determining the veracity of one belief system over another, but it does not erase the feeling that the uncertainty creates. Although Freud and Todorov differ in their use of terms and definitions for these terms, one aspect remains consistent: uncertainty. However little Freud allows for the presence of supernatural forces, the feeling to which he refers certainly may be generated within the reader as well as within a character. Whereas Todorov allows for the possibility of the supernatural, Freud does not necessarily, but

what the reader experiences when faced with a story of the fantastic is the psychological sense of the uncanny that Freud describes.

In order to understand this difference, it is helpful to turn to Noël Carroll's definition of horror stories in *The Philosophy of Horror*. In Carroll's definition, stories that do not definitively point to a "fearsome and disgusting" supernatural entity or monster are not horror stories (150). Although there may be elements of uncertainty in a story indicating it is of the fantastic genre, at the end of a horror story, "the readers/viewers and/or the characters admit that some supernatural (or sci-fi) entity, which defies the compass of science as we know it, exists, and that it is causing all our troubles" (145). Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* would fall into this category. Carroll's horror is like Todorov's marvelous. Carroll notes that he is deviating from Todorov's argument by including science fiction in his definition of the horror story, thereby identifying science fiction with the supernatural. However, he also lumps the readers and characters together. What he does not account for is that if a character is in an altered state of mind, a natural explanation of events may elude him completely although the reader can finish the story uncertain whether the events were natural or supernatural. In "Green Tea" for instance, Dr. Jennings finally disbelieves any rational explanation for the monkey that haunts him. However, Dr. Hesselius believes that there is a medical explanation for the ghost. Neither view seems completely believable. Even though each character has decided upon an explanation for the events, the reader is left doubting the veracity of either one and hesitates between a natural and a supernatural explanation: Is the event an example of Todorov's uncanny (an event that seems supernatural but has a

rational explanation) with a viable medical explanation, or is it an example of Carroll's horror story and Todorov's marvelous in which the event is definitely supernatural? This hesitation is the fantastic. For the purposes of this study, I am more concerned with the doubt created in the reader of Le Fanu's stories. In many cases, though, it is the character's hesitation that helps to create this doubt in the reader. Even in Le Fanu's stories where the effects are preternatural or natural rather than supernatural, there is reference to past crimes, moral retribution, or a spiritual struggle, indicating the interference of a non-material force. Especially in Le Fanu's stories derived from Irish folklore and history, there is a rational explanation for the events which occur; yet the reader is left with the sense of the presence of a supernatural force penetrating the material realm. Again, the reader is uncertain about the true nature of the forces at work. Whether one labels Le Fanu's works as supernatural, ghost, uncanny, horror, fantastic, or Gothic stories, the origins of and explanations for the preternatural and supernatural events in them are ambiguous.

The ambiguity created by the possibility of a natural explanation when a supernatural one seems plausible is the "loophole" that M. R. James mentions in his introduction to *Ghosts and Marvels*.⁸ This loophole, which offers a natural explanation for seemingly supernatural or preternatural events, should not be completely believable,

⁸Nelson Browne, Gary William Crawford, Peter Penzoldt, Robert Tracy, and Jack Sullivan all note that Le Fanu's stories allow for the "loophole" which James claims is an integral part of the ghost story. These and other critics also note that Le Fanu's stories reflect what James calls a ghostly "atmosphere" and "nicely managed crescendo" (vi). Since James was influenced by Le Fanu, it is not surprising that Le Fanu's stories would fit James's definition of the ideal ghost story.

though. In fact, James states that it should be “so narrow as to not be quite practicable” (iv). In Le Fanu’s stories, the “loopholes” and ambiguities work to demonstrate that the rational and materialistic explanations for supernatural and preternatural occurrences are possible but not always plausible, creating hesitation in the reader of these stories of the fantastic. Even with a rational explanation, there are other, perhaps minor, details that cannot be rationalized. As Crawford notes in his essay “Sheridan Le Fanu and *In a Glass Darkly*,” Le Fanu “detaches himself from the supernatural events and refuses to assert their validity at the same time that he refuses to explain them away” so that “none of these explanations is satisfactory” (25). In a period when intellectuals were skeptical of supernatural events and superstitious beliefs because of the development of science, Le Fanu taps into that skepticism and applies it to rational thought. Even though he does not note specifically that Le Fanu’s skepticism is directed toward science and materialism, in *The Unappeasable Host*, Robert Tracy remarks that it seems Le Fanu “recognized that Dickens’s skeptical narration could be used not to undermine a supernatural story but to enhance it, to make it more mysterious and perhaps more terrifying” (58). Although many characters and narrators in his stories doubt the existence of unexplained forces at work in the material world, the stories create a doubt in this type of materialistic belief. It is this skeptical attitude that differentiates Le Fanu from earlier Gothic writers and indicates he is a major contributor to the transition from Gothic fiction to ghost story. By creating stories with concrete manifestations of the supernatural, Le Fanu shows that the material world is inhabited and directed by spiritual, historical, and psychological forces. The presence of these forces heightens the reader’s inability to decide between rational

explanations and supernatural explanations for the events in his stories. Thus, the reader “hesitates” when reading these stories, doubting the ability of materialism to explain everything. In Le Fanu’s stories of the supernatural, this doubt does not serve merely to thrill the reader while he or she finishes the story; rather, the effect of Le Fanu’s stories is to create a doubt in the reader that continues after the story has been finished and the book closed.

In this study, I will analyze Le Fanu’s stories of the supernatural and explore the relationship between the supernatural and the material in them. By doing this, I intend to show that Le Fanu’s stories of the supernatural have an underlying theme, developed through his use of the fantastic and positing the necessity of recognizing and acquiescing to the power of non-material forces at work in the material world. In *The Victorian Short Story*, Harold Orel also understands the close relationship between the material and the supernatural in Le Fanu’s stories, and he remarks that one of Le Fanu’s primary concerns is the “continuity between the natural and the supernatural modes of existence” (50).

Because of the ambiguity of the continuity between the supernatural realm and the material realm in Le Fanu’s stories, however, supernatural beings have many different manifestations: they can emerge specifically from another world based on superstition or religious beliefs as fairies or devils; they can emerge from an historical event as ghosts from the past; or they may emerge as what seem to be projections of the psychological state of a character. Throughout Le Fanu’s stories, then, spirits, the past, and the human psyche are manifested in the present material world. These elements of the supernatural are less than the sum of the whole, though, and the readers are left to question these

manifestations and to experience uncanny feelings.

The first chapter of this dissertation will focus on the specifically religious elements of Le Fanu's stories and how they relate to the supernatural. The second and third chapters will explore his stories for an explanation of the connection between the past and the supernatural and the conscience and the supernatural, respectively. The final chapter will then turn to study Le Fanu's stories in context with other Victorian writers, his own life, and his readers, showing how the supernatural emanations he portrays affect the material world and warn his readers of the dangers in ignoring them. Although many critics break Le Fanu's works into categories and topics such as Irish fiction and English fiction, in his article, "Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: The Prince of the Invisible," Jean Lozes identifies three specific categories of his stories: "humorous Irish stories, realistic stories and stories of the irrational . . ." (93). I take a slightly different approach, and in some of the chapters of this dissertation, I divide Le Fanu's career chronologically into three parts: early (1838-1842), middle (1843-1863) and late (1864-1873). Although I do not want to imply that this division is rigid, I choose to divide them this way so that the progression of the themes which are present in his works throughout his career can be seen.

Chapter One

The Spiritual

As I have noted in the introduction, belief in science and rationalism began to replace belief in God and religion during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Science offered physical and material explanations for occurrences previously believed to be supernatural, and many believed that, with time, all unexplained phenomena would be found to have very rational and material explanations. Therefore, people no longer needed religion or superstition to explain apparently supernatural events. God was not at work in the world; the physical forces of nature were, and spiritual aspects of life were ignored or rejected in favor of a more material and rational existence. Superstition and religion were for the uneducated.

Although this was the prevailing attitude, there were some people and authors who challenged this notion. In his short stories, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu challenged the materialism of the nineteenth century by writing ghostly tales about forces that cannot be explained by physical science. The spiritual is one such force, as are the historical and the psychological, which will be discussed in chapters two and three, respectively. In the short stories of Le Fanu, the spiritual force is manifested as ghosts, demons, spirits, and other haunts. By creating these ghouls, Le Fanu manages to represent the immanence of a spiritual presence, which is felt more strongly in his works than in everyday life. He does this in order to impress upon his readers the importance of recognizing the spiritual powers at work in the world.

Although there is no evidence suggesting Le Fanu believed in the presence of

ghosts and devils, he did believe in God and the presence of evil in the world. Throughout his life, Le Fanu seems to have believed a spiritual struggle was taking place on earth. He recognized this spiritual force and the danger of denying it, and his stories point to the belief that when the spiritual aspect of life is ignored or denied, the consequences can be disastrous. In order to warn his generation of this danger, Le Fanu heightened the presence of the supernatural and the power of evil in his stories to emphasize the threat materialism posed.

Although Le Fanu's ideas and arguments remain consistent through his short stories, the metaphors he used varied as he matured. When he began to publish his stories in 1838, he still had close ties to the Irish countryside. Thus, his earlier writings, especially those in *The Purcell Papers* (1880),⁹ reflect the presence of a spiritual force in the material world through Catholicism and Irish folklore. Although some argue that Le Fanu incorporates these elements to patronize the Catholics, his attitude toward them is more warm-hearted than condescending. As Patricia Coughlan recognizes in "Doubles, Shadows, Sedan Chairs and the Past," when Le Fanu refers to Irish-Catholics and Irish folklore in his stories, he "characteristically avoids the condescension sometimes shown . . . by his contemporaries. . . . He clearly finds in it a mode of vision alternative and analogous to his own . . ." (21). During the middle of his career, Le Fanu turned from using rural Irish-Catholics in his stories and began focusing on the conversion of materialists and atheists, not to Protestantism or any clearly recognized religion, but to an

⁹Although *The Purcell Papers* was published posthumously, the stories collected in it were written in the first stages of Le Fanu's writing career, prior to 1841.

awareness of spiritual forces at work in the world. Toward the end of his career, Le Fanu turned to metaphysics, combining the physical and transcendent, as a way to emphasize the presence of a spiritual force. In order to trace this development, I have divided this chapter into six sections. The first section summarizes the religious influences on and religious experiences of Le Fanu in order to present some of the background for his interest in spiritual matters and the methods through which he chose to convey that interest. The next three sections, "Catholicism and Irish Folklore," "Materialism, Atheism, and Skepticism," and "Metaphysics," are divided in the same way that I have divided Le Fanu's writing career, and they focus on the material he used in each stage of his writing career to present his ideas. Lastly, I have included a section labeled "Warnings" to develop the connections throughout Le Fanu's works and to exemplify the way in which he warns his generation of the dangers of denying the presence of a spiritual force.

Religious Influences and Experiences

In Dublin on August 28, 1814, Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu was born to Emma Lucretia Dobbin and Thomas Philip Le Fanu. He was born into both a literary and a religious tradition. His father's uncle was Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose writing desk Joseph Sheridan inherited (Crawford *Bio* 4), and he was a distant cousin to Sheridan Knowles, a popular actor and dramatist in the first half of the nineteenth century. Both Le Fanu's father and his maternal grandfather were Church of Ireland clergymen, and from his youth, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu understood the difficulties of religion in Ireland. For

the first twelve years of his life, Joseph lived happily at Phoenix Park, Dublin, where his father was the chaplain of the Royal Hibernian Military School. However, in 1826, Le Fanu's father became Dean of Emly and rector of the parish, moving his family to Abingdon, county Limerick, where many of the people were Catholic and hostile to an Anglican rector. The troubles of being Protestant in a mostly Catholic area could not fail to have an effect on a young boy whose father was at the center of the strife. As well as being influenced by the religious strife surrounding his father's profession, Joseph Sheridan had access to his father's library full of Gothic and supernatural books: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, *The History of the Devil*, a tract entitled "Scripture Revelations concerning the future state," and *The Mummy: a Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*. There were also books by authors such as Boccaccio and Donne who had strong Catholic leanings, and it is likely that Joseph read and was influenced by many of these books.¹⁰

Although not much is known about Le Fanu's private life and thoughts, it is clear that religious doubts and spiritual struggles were an integral aspect of his life. Even as a child, Le Fanu seems to have recognized and keenly felt some of the religious questions with which people have been struggling for years. According to William Le Fanu in *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, in an early sketch Joseph drew a balloon "floating high in the air, though two aeronauts were tumbling towards the ground. The caption read: 'See the effects of trying to go to heaven'" (2). Critics agree that, despite these religious anxieties,

¹⁰In *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, McCormack lists these among some of the other books to which Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu would have had access.

"Le Fanu was a very religious man with a certain belief in Heaven and Hell" (Crawford "*In a Glass Darkly*" 25). It is uncertain, however, what exactly that belief was.¹¹

Le Fanu's wife, Susanna Bennett, also had spiritual doubts, and each one's doubts affected the other. In *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, McCormack reprints sections from Le Fanu's diary and letters that offer some insight into his relationship with his wife and how her doubts affected him. In one entry, Le Fanu writes, "A little before the death of her beloved father . . . my darling's mind was harrassed [*sic*] with incessant doubts about the truth of revealed religion. . . . It grieved me to see my darling's faith unsettled & obscured . . ." (127). After her father's death in 1856, Susanna's faith seems to have been even more troubled. Another excerpt from Le Fanu's diary is quoted in Crawford's bio-bibliography of Le Fanu:

It was the nature of her mind always to despond about the accomplishment of any object on which she specially set her heart—If she took leave of anyone who was dear to her, she was always overpowered with an agonizing frustration that she would never see them again. . . . (7)

Although one can never ascertain certainties about an author's private life from his works, the similarities between Le Fanu's situation as noted in his diary and the situation of the characters in his story "The Mysterious Lodger" (1850) is too close to ignore.¹²

¹¹Other authors who emphasize the importance of recognizing Le Fanu's religious beliefs are McCormack, Lozes, Penzoldt, and Rottensteiner. Although there is no clear proof, some critics such as Penzoldt and Rottensteiner argue that Le Fanu did believe in the existence of ghosts.

¹²Le Fanu wrote "The Mysterious Lodger" before the deaths of his father-in-law and wife. Because of its earlier date, the story indicates that Le Fanu had been struggling

Both McCormack (*Victorian Ireland*) and Lozes ("A Couer Ouvert") recognize that, in "The Mysterious Lodger," the anxiety of the atheist narrator when his Christian wife is tormented with doubts reflects Le Fanu's anxiety over his wife's doubts.

In the story, the narrator begins by claiming he was an "infidel" (333) although his wife was a believer. This difference does not bother him as much as it does his wife, and he treats her beliefs as "childish." However, when the narrator is looking for a lodger and turns away a cleric in favor of a man in poor health with green goggles, a scarf covering his nose and mouth, and a respirator, the family is tormented. His children die under strange circumstances, and the lodger, capitalizing on the children's deaths, gnaws at the faith of the narrator's wife. Despite his atheism, the narrator is distressed by his wife's loss of faith and realizes that her faith had sustained him also. Eventually, through the help of another mysterious stranger, the narrator comes to believe in God and recognize that it is not God who is tormenting him, but the powers of evil. Although nothing quite so drastic occurred in Le Fanu's life and there is no evidence that Le Fanu was ever an atheist, the story does seem to resemble his relationship with his wife. Similar to the way he describes the spiritual state of the narrator's wife in "The Mysterious Lodger," Le Fanu describes the spiritual state of his wife in a letter to his mother upon his wife's death:

I prayed to God for Christ's sake to accept her. She had true religion in her heart, & was always yearning after God & Christ, but so lowly in her

with religious doubts prior to the trauma caused by the deaths. Marie Noelle-Zeender uses this story to argue that Le Fanu was interested in Swedenborg prior to his wife's death, again indicating Le Fanu's interest in spiritual matters and his spiritual doubts prior to 1858.

thoughts of her spiritual state, that she was always asking me—unworthy—to pray for her. (qtd. in McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 128)

Le Fanu did receive some spiritual comfort from Susanna before her death, however. In another letter, he recounts her dream after her father's death. She saw her father in this dream, and he eased her fears, telling her that she would "win the race" and that there was "room in the vault" for her (qtd. in McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 133-34). The continual struggles with doubt and faith that the Le Fanus underwent did not keep them from believing in God, though.

As well as his diaries and letters, Le Fanu's stories offer insight into his religious struggles. Although the religious philosophies of his characters do not necessarily reflect Le Fanu's religious beliefs, they do reflect the religious ideas with which Le Fanu was familiar. One such philosophy is Swedenborgianism, which appears in a number of Le Fanu's later stories and novels. Emmanuel Swedenborg was a Swedish mystic during the eighteenth century whose ideas influenced writers and mystics such as Blake and the French Symbolists. Although, as McCormack notes, "accounts of Swedenborgianism . . . must take second place in an analysis of Sheridan Le Fanu's fiction" (*Victorian Ireland* 186), a study of it can help one to understand some of the religious symbols and theories with which Le Fanu was familiar and of which he made use in his stories. One reason that Swedenborg's character is so fitting for supernatural tales is that he claimed to have had direct revelations from angels who made him aware of the secrets of heaven and hell, and he claimed that the spirit world was opened to him because he had a strong sense of guilt for his humanness. In *Swedenborg: Life and Teaching*, George Trobridge explains that

Swedenborg knew God had separated the material world and the spiritual world for a reason and it is only by God's decision that there can be intercourse between the two (224-25). Although according to him the spiritual and the material are two different worlds, Swedenborg states that "one would swear the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world" (qtd. in Johnson 107). It is after death that the spirit of a human moves into the spiritual world; however, to the recently dead, the spiritual world looks the same as the physical world, and the recently dead often refuse to believe they are dead (Trobridge 191). In this spiritual state, a person becomes the true essence of what he or she was while in the material world. Even if the person acted charitably while alive, if the true nature of the soul was to achieve great admiration and honor, that person's vanity would be reflected clearly in the spiritual world. It is during this state that the spirit moves toward a heavenly realm or toward a hellish one. In fact, as McCormack clarifies, according to Swedenborg, all angels of heaven or hell were once human, and a spirit's performance in "mortal life [is] crucial in deciding whether a spirit is related to heaven or hell" (*Victorian Ireland* 178). Critics tend to disagree about the extent to which Swedenborgianism influenced Le Fanu's life and religious beliefs, but the extent to which Le Fanu was familiar with Swedenborg's philosophies indicates that religious studies were an integral part of his life and that he searched for answers to religious questions in many different, and sometimes unconventional, places.

In *The Supernatural in Fiction*, Peter Penzoldt argues, "Le Fanu believed that men were constantly surrounded by preternatural powers, and that in certain abnormal physical and psychical conditions they could establish direct contact with the other world" (86).

Penzoldt recognizes that this is Swedenborgian, but he fails to distinguish between the author and the stories. It is obvious that Le Fanu knew a great deal about Swedenborg, yet it is unclear at what point in his life he became familiar with and to what extent he accepted Swedenborg's philosophy. Only after his wife's death in 1858 do his tales begin to refer to Swedenborg directly. However, Marie-Noelle Zeender argues that, based on Swedenborgian traits in his earlier stories, Le Fanu "was influenced by him long before . . . [the] painful event" of Susanna's death. Although some of his later works such as *Uncle Silas* (1864) and the stories from *In a Glass Darkly* (1872)¹³ seem to be based on Swedenborg's philosophies, Le Fanu did not adhere to Swedenborgianism. In *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, McCormack claims that the "success [of *In a Glass Darkly*] . . . is intimately connected with [Le Fanu's] reading of Swedenborg's theology" (6), but that Le Fanu "never had any institutional commitment to the New Jerusalem Church [of Swedenborg] and he never corresponded with its functionaries" (242). As already noted, the information on Le Fanu's private life is scarce, but there are a few letters or fragments of journals that support McCormack's argument. In a recent publication of a description of Le Fanu's notebooks, William Le Fanu, a great-grand-nephew of Joseph Sheridan, explains that Le Fanu's notebooks "show him to have been an orthodox Protestant churchman, depressed and introspective but not a sectarian mystic" (39).

¹³"The Familiar," the second story from *In a Glass Darkly* is the earliest story in the collection; there is a previous version of it, "The Watcher," dating back to 1847. It contains no direct mention of Swedenborg although the presence of the malignant spirit hints at Swedenborgianism. The other stories from *In a Glass Darkly* date from 1869-72.

In fact, Le Fanu's treatment of Swedenborg's philosophies in *Uncle Silas* does not seem to support Swedenborgianism. Austin Ruthyn, father of the heroine, Maud Ruthyn, is Swedenborgian, and he is distant from Maud. Upon his death, he places Maud in a potentially fatal position by appointing his brother, Silas, as her guardian and executor of her money until she is of age. Austin does this in order to clear Silas's name. Years before, Silas had been accused of murdering a guest because Silas owed him a large sum of money, and throughout the story, it becomes clear that Silas still is willing to murder for money to clear himself from debt. The voice of understanding and insight comes from Monica Knollys, a member of the Church of England. The tall, dark Swedenborgian minister offers help to Maud, but his help is neither effective nor comforting. At the end of the story, Maud retains some of her father's Swedenborgian principles: "this world is a parable—the habitation of symbols—the phantom of spiritual things immortal shown in material shape," but she claims that angels wear "these beautiful forms of earth" (424). That is, she believes people are the forms of angels whereas Swedenborg claims that the angels he sees are not in this world and that interaction between angels and humans is rare.¹⁴ Thus it seems that although Le Fanu had a large amount of knowledge about

¹⁴In *Daughters of the House*, Alison Milbank devotes a chapter to *Uncle Silas* in which she develops the differences between Maud's beliefs and those of Swedenborg more fully. Milbank argues that Swedenborg denies intercourse between spirits and humans other than himself because it is dangerous whereas Maud "speaks with confidence of the ability of *any* human being to consort with angels" (190). However, Milbank does not deny that Maud has been influenced by the Swedenborgianism of her father and his minister, Dr. Bryerly.

Similarly, in "Swedenborgianism as Structure," McCormack notes that the "influence of Swedenborgian thought . . . seems to be subtle and persuasive rather than controlling. Nevertheless, Le Fanu's particular choice of heresy in [*sic*] particularly apt; its metaphysics suggest profound implications in the book . . ." (27-28).

Swedenborgianism, he did not propound the beliefs. In fact, in *Dissolute Characters*, McCormack states that for Le Fanu, Swedenborg “was a blind leader of blind” (27-28). This, like the other comments about Le Fanu’s adherence to Swedenborgianism, may be a bit extreme, but it shows the difficulty critics have with determining Le Fanu’s religious and philosophical ideas.

Despite Le Fanu’s lack of total faith in Swedenborgianism, he made great use of it in his stories. Often in Le Fanu’s works, there is a spirit which seems to correspond with something in the material world. For instance, in “Green Tea” (1869), the first story in the collection of Dr. Hesselius’s cases published together as *In a Glass Darkly*, the Reverend Mr. Jennings is haunted by a spectral monkey, but it is unclear whether this monkey emanates from Jennings’s spiritual strife or causes it. The monkey appears after Jennings has been studying pagan religions, reading Swedenborg, and drinking large quantities of green tea. Dr. Hesselius, the doctor in whose case files this study is found, believes that it is the opening of Jennings’s spiritual sight which allows him to see and hear the ghost, and it is drinking too much green tea that causes Jennings’s spiritual sight to open. The physical stimulant works on the nerves to affect the spiritual fluid they carry, thereby breaking the barrier that blocks human interaction with the spiritual world. Although the physical cause for Jennings’s haunting is not Swedenborgian, the description of the interaction between the spiritual world and the material world has Swedenborgian elements. The monkey corresponds to Jennings, and when Jennings becomes obsessed with his study of pagan religions and isolates himself from others, his corresponding spirit becomes malignant. On the other hand, this monkey may be an evil spirit from Hell.

Reading from Jennings's copy of Swedenborg's *Arcana Caelestia*, Hesselius quotes, "There are with every man at least two evil spirits," and later Hesselius reads from *Arcana* that "if evil spirits could perceive that they were associated with man, and yet that they were spirits separate from him and if they could flow into the things of his body, they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him; for they hate man with a deadly hatred" (14). The monkey may be one of these evil spirits, and when Jennings's interior sight is opened, the monkey torments Jennings until he kills himself. Because neither Hesselius nor the editor specifically identifies the monkey with the spirits to which Swedenborg refers, it is ambiguous whether the ghost is a projection of Jennings's spiritual state or an evil spirit tormenting him. Either way, though, the ghost has certain Swedenborgian qualities about it. What McCormack says of *Uncle Silas* in "Swedenborgianism as Structure" applies to Le Fanu's shorter stories as well: "Although the application of these [Swedenborgian] notions is free, their forms underline the structural importance of certain patterns in the book" (26). Serving as a spiritual correspondent to Jennings, the monkey reflects Jennings's spiritual state, and Jennings's physical state reflects his spiritual torments.

This structure also applies to other stories written by Le Fanu throughout his career, such as "Spalatro" (1843), "The Watcher" (1847) later published as "The Familiar" (1872), "The Mysterious Lodger" (1850), and "The Haunted Baronet" (1870). However, as Sullivan states in *Elegant Nightmares*, "it is just as well that little has been made of Le Fanu's connection with Swedenborg, for Le Fanu's version represents a distortion, or at least a darkening of the original" (22). Swedenborgianism is a useful tool

for Le Fanu because of its blending of the spiritual world with the physical world, and he uses his knowledge of the metaphysics of Swedenborgianism to the same end that he uses his knowledge and experience of Catholicism, the folklore of the Irish-Catholics, the Protestant church, and atheism in his stories: to emphasize the connection between the spiritual world and the physical.

Irish Folklore and Catholicism

In his early stories, Le Fanu draws upon his experiences of Irish folklore and Catholicism to create characters who believe that the spiritual world and material world are intimately connected. Although the reader is not meant to believe in the veracity of all the supernatural events described in these stories, the presence of characters who believe in them offers the reader insight into a belief system which is vanishing because of English control over Ireland and nineteenth-century skepticism. As I noted in the introduction, Le Fanu was influenced by earlier Gothic literature, which can be seen in his integration of the real world and the spiritual world. In *The Purcell Papers*, this integration is represented by the belief system of the Irish peasants. As in this belief system, in “both Gothic and Romantic creeds there is a marked tendency to slip imperceptibly from the real world into the other world, to demolish barriers between the psychic or spiritual” as Devendra Varma notes in *The Gothic Flame* (189-90). Where Le Fanu’s stories and his use of rural beliefs differ from Varma’s definition is in their acceptance of this “other world” not as “other” but as an integral part of the real world. The belief system in Le Fanu’s works is more clearly defined by Linda Bayer-

Berenbaum's definition of Gothicism in *The Gothic Imagination*:

Gothicism insists that what is customarily hallowed as real by society and its language is but a small portion of a greater reality of monstrous proportion and immeasurable power. The peculiarly *Gothic* quality of this extended reality is its immanence, its integral, inescapable connection to the world around us. (21)

The narrator of *The Purcell Papers*, Father Purcell, a priest in a country parish, helps to develop the spiritual's "inescapable connection to the world around us." Father Purcell is a Catholic priest, and simply by his presence, he emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the stories. Purcell also shows that he is intimately connected with the everyday, material world of his parishioners. In many of his tales, he recounts a story that he heard from a peasant in the man's own dialect. Despite the fact that the purportedly supernatural events in some of these stories are not supernatural, the victims often believe they are, and as a result become believing Christians. "In horror stories of Protestant writers," Sage argues, "often there is an emphasis on receiving Christianity through testimony rather than on the authority of the church, especially the Catholic church" (133). Although he does not apply this directly to the stories in *The Purcell Papers*, because of their story-telling nature, they rely on testimony, even if grounded in Catholicism and folklore, rather than on Father Purcell's authority to promote belief in the spiritual and supernatural.

In some of the tales Father Purcell relates, the characters' belief in the supernatural is shown to be based on a blind belief in the existence of a spiritual world, and the Catholic church is satirized for its propagation of the belief in the supernatural in

order to benefit itself. McCormack claims that “in those first stories which Le Fanu had published . . . elements of folklore intruded only to provide comic or pseudo-Gothic effect . . .” (*Victorian Ireland* 239), yet the folklore is not in the stories “only” for that purpose. The elements of folklore also provide a metaphor for a religious belief in a world in which the physical and the spiritual are intimately connected. “The Ghost and the Bone-Setter” (1838), Le Fanu’s first published story, also appears as the first story in *The Purcell Papers*, and at the same time it gently mocks a simple-minded belief in the supernatural (Wagenknecht calls it a “mock ghost story” [12]), it light-heartedly shows some of the benefits of this belief. The supernatural occurrence in “The Ghost and the Bone-Setter” relies on an early Irish-Catholic superstition that the “corpse last buried is obliged, during the juniority of interment, to supply his brother tenants of the churchyard in which he lies, with fresh water to allay the burning thirst of purgatory” (3), which, as McCormack notes, is “a survival into late Christian times of a material concept of religion” (*Victorian Ireland* 32).¹⁵ The bone-setter, Terry Neil, is called upon one night to watch the squire’s castle while the squire is away. Understandably, Terry is frightened at this prospect because the squire’s grandfather, the old squire who died of a burst a blood vessel while trying to uncork a bottle, would emerge from his picture in the castle, break bottles, and drink all the liquor while his family was away. Once the family returned, “he id be up again in his place, looking as quite [*sic*] an’ as innocent as if he didn’t know anything about it . . .” (9). Although Terry induces the steward, Lawrence, to sit up with

¹⁵One episode related in William Le Fanu’s *Seventy Years of Irish Life* refers to families fighting over burial times for fear that their loved ones would be the last buried and would be made to carry water to all the souls in Purgatory.

him, they both fall asleep. Thinking he has closed his eyes only for a moment, Terry opens them to see the old squire climbing down from his picture on the wall. The squire, a regular drinker in his time and obviously not at peace in his death, is not concerned with his soul, but with his leg. It bothers him because he has to carry water to the other people in Purgatory. What the old squire wants, then, is for Terry to pull his leg to reset the bone. To bolster himself while Terry is setting his leg, the old squire reaches for whiskey but grabs a bottle of holy water instead, and as he begins to drink it, he lets “a screech out . . . an’ made one chuck that sent the leg clane aff his body” into Terry’s hands (25). Terry falls sprawling across the floor, and when he comes to, it is a bright morning, and he has the leg of one of the chairs in his hands. This incident frightens Terry so much that he never misses mass nor confession again. Although it is quite evident the bone-setter simply dreams the events, the effect it has on him is spiritually profound. He does not want to suffer physically in the after world by having to serve in Purgatory, so he continually attempts to cleanse his soul. In this case, Terry has both a spiritual fear of Purgatory and a very material concern of physical discomfort while in the spiritual state of Purgatory. The supernatural event in “The Ghost and the Bone-Setter” does not need to be believable in order for the reader to understand the idea underlying the tale: the spiritual and material are interconnected.

Similarly, in “Jim Sullivan’s Adventures in the Great Snow” (1839) and “The Quare Gander” (1840), both also in *The Purcell Papers*, the events related are quite naturally explained by anyone in full possession of the facts, but the villagers do not have all of the facts. Because they believe that the spirit world is connected to the physical

world, the Irish villagers immediately believe the unexplained events are supernatural. Jim Sullivan's wife, Nell, is certain it is Jim's ghost at the door because she believes she has seen his dead body. In "The Quare Gander," the villagers believe that the gander really is Terry's father because when Terry is found in the basket with the gander, no one, not even Terry, can explain how he came to be there when he had gone to bed with his wife the night before. The ideas these tales emphasize is that the people of rural Ireland have a concept of a material world into which spirits can enter supernaturally, and the importance of these stories lies in the characters' superstitions and their willingness to believe in the supernatural. Purcell, the Catholic priest, collects stories in which the characters are connected to both the physical and spiritual world. As a Catholic, Father Purcell has access to much of the Irish world which would have been denied to a Protestant minister such as Le Fanu's father. Through Purcell, Le Fanu presents aspects of a rural Irish-Catholicism mixed with Irish folklore that he admires but does not find in the Protestantism of nineteenth-century Ireland. Le Fanu sees this belief in superstition and folklore as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of spiritual and material matters.

Materialism, Atheism, and Skepticism

In his stories prior to the death of his wife, Le Fanu often creates characters who are unbelievers. Although he uses these characters in the early stages of his writing career from 1838 to the mid 40s, it is in the middle stages from the 40s to the early 60s that the presence of a supernatural force affecting the lives of these characters can be seen more clearly. Some of them are explicitly atheists or "freethinkers"; others reject Christian

morality. In their rejection of the spiritual world, these characters open themselves to retribution, and their physical and mental suffering serves as an indicator of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual. His belief in the interconnectedness of the two worlds may be one reason Le Fanu rejected the mystics of the Victorian age¹⁶ at the same time he rejected the materialism of the age. In "Ghosts and Ghouls and Le Fanu," Joseph Browne claims,

For Le Fanu, the "unnatural troubles" and mysteries of human existence which haunt and torment man's heart and soul were not to be resolved through famous prophecies of the next world nor in foolish efforts to communicate with it: they were very much to be found in the here and now of his own age and in the ages that preceded it. (6-7)

The "table-rappers" and mystics denied that spiritual connections occurred in everyday situations, implying that the only way to interact with spirits was through a medium.

Refuting this, the stories of Le Fanu show that even when there are no explicitly supernatural events, spiritual elements are always present and can reach anybody, even unbelievers, not just mystics. In fact, in *Seven Masters of Supernatural Fiction*, Edward Wagenknecht states that "even when the supernatural does not appear [in Le Fanu's

¹⁶In *All in the Dark*, Le Fanu light-heartedly satirizes mystics and spiritualists. Although he claims to have regretted writing this novel (Crawford *Bio-Bibliography* 26), it shows that he had a good natured attitude toward the supernatural and toward mystics even though he did not agree with their philosophies. However, in *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, William Le Fanu describes his and Joseph's interest in mesmerism and their attempts to discover the secret to hypnotism (303-10). Le Fanu seemed interested in understanding the connection between the physical means of producing hypnotic states and the supernatural experience.

stories], the reader cannot help but feel it is around the corner” (3). Wagenknecht does not explain why Le Fanu creates this haunting feeling even in his non-supernatural stories, but it is because of Le Fanu’s emphasis on the spiritual struggle in them.

This spiritual struggle in Le Fanu’s works connects him to his Gothic predecessors once again. Although many of Le Fanu’s stories are not specifically supernatural, he does rely on Gothic techniques to emphasize the spiritual struggle of the atheist or unbeliever. The primary Gothic setting upon which Le Fanu relies is the old, decaying castle or mansion. As Victor Sage notes, this Gothic quality points to the spiritual because the house is often a metaphor for the body in opposition to the spiritual home (4-6), and “our *spiritual* consolation depends upon a metaphor of domestic ease that is material” (2). Thus, in stories such as “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” (1838), “Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess” (1838), and “A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family” (1839), all of which appear in *The Purcell Papers*, Le Fanu creates the first hints of spiritual unease by noting the domestic unease of the families in their Gothic castles. He also uses this effect in an 1848 story, “Some Accounts of the Latter Days of Richard Marston, of Dunoran” which he later published under the title “The Evil Guest” (1851). However, Le Fanu does not rely only on the non-supernatural Gothic to attack the materialism of the age. Written in 1850, “The Mysterious Lodger” is somewhat of a religious allegory in which the villain is most definitely a supernatural figure. This supernatural devil brings about domestic unease for the couple in “The Mysterious Lodger,” and as in the aforementioned stories, this domestic unease is indicative of the spiritual struggle in the main character, an atheist.

Although there is no professed atheist in "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," it is the story behind Father Purcell's decision to enter the Church, so there is a heightened awareness of the struggle between the material and the spiritual world from the outset. The isolated and decaying Gothic estate also indicates the spiritual threat to the family. In the tale, Father Purcell recounts his friendship with young O'Connor. O'Connor's father is dead, and he is an only child; he is the last heir. Unfortunate enough to have made the acquaintance of the renown duelist, Fitzgerald, while in France, O'Connor has an intuitive feeling that all may not be right, but he cannot account for it:

I sometimes feel half sorry that I ever made his acquaintance: he is quite a marked man here, and they tell stories of him that are anything but reputable, though I am sure without foundation. I think I know enough about him to warrant me in saying so. (116)

The terms "sure" and "think" are enough to indicate O'Connor's hesitation, and he cannot completely rid himself nor Purcell of any bad notions about Fitzgerald. When Purcell meets Fitzgerald for the first time, Fitzgerald's charm almost sways him because he "felt convinced that report had done him [Fitzgerald] grievous wrong" (123). Although considered a dangerous man, Fitzgerald has an attractive demeanor. Evil is not repulsive, and O'Connor succumbs to it. Shortly, though, he quarrels with Fitzgerald, and Fitzgerald manages to manipulate the situation to make it appear that he rather than O'Connor has been the victim of an insult. At the first sign of this falling out between Fitzgerald and O'Connor, Purcell perceives that "nothing short of a miracle" can save O'Connor. Perhaps not recognizing it himself, Purcell has identified the struggle as a spiritual one.

Nothing material can save O'Connor; spiritual intervention is necessary. Still, O'Connor must duel with Fitzgerald. Once on the dueling field, Fitzgerald's demeanor changes. As Purcell notices, "he seemed transformed; he was actually like a man possessed" (173). The physical appearance of Fitzgerald reflects his spiritual state; he is possessed by evil. In fact, as Jean Lozes recognizes, Fitzgerald's "dogged obstinacy" is "unnatural, almost supernatural" ("Prince" 94). O'Connor cannot win the duel, but he wins the spiritual battle; refusing to aim directly at Fitzgerald, O'Connor deliberately misses him to avoid having blood on his hands. Fitzgerald then shoots O'Connor and escapes with his second while O'Connor, who does not die immediately, is carried home.

When at home, O'Connor begins to believe that he has not been mortally wounded and says to Purcell, "I trust this lesson shall not be given in vain. God has been merciful to me. . . . Had I been fatally wounded—had I been killed on the spot, only think on it . . . struck down into the grave, unprepared as I am, in the very blossom of my sins . . . I must have been lost—lost for ever and ever" (180). He does die, though, and the irony seems to undercut O'Connor's statement. Similarly, the terror with which Purcell recounts his memory of the death also seems to undermine any religious consolation we may feel:

When a man is brought in an instant, by some sudden accident, to the very verge of the fathomless pit of death, with all his recollections awake, and his perceptions keenly and vividly alive, without previous illness to subdue the tone of the mind as to dull its apprehensions—then, and then only, the death-bed is truly terrible. (187-88)

This horror seems to contrast with the peace and comfort of O'Connor's mother when Purcell visits ten years later:

It was very natural that I should love him as I did; but it may have been sinful; I have often thought so. I doated upon him—I idolised him—I thought too little of other holier affections; and God may have taken him from me, only to teach me by this severe lesson that I owed to heaven a larger share of my heart than to anything earthly. (198)

The tenor of this argument appears weak; as Sullivan states, "Le Fanu seems to be faking it here," and Mrs. O'Connor's speech appears to be "an ironic commentary on the hollowness of the narrator's Christian 'resignation.' In any case, the tension between the artificially injected faith in Christian redemption and the more dramatically realized terror of the void reflects a painfully divided consciousness" (39). The two speeches, however, are not necessarily at odds with one another, but they do reflect two very different types of consciousness. The terror of the "fathomless pit" is a very real and materialistic fear, yet even when O'Connor realizes he will die and must face this terror, he does not forget the spiritual fears that accompany death, and he asks for a priest. There is evil in the material world, and Fitzgerald is a human manifestation of that evil, "as one possessed." O'Connor is caught in a spiritual struggle that has manifested itself materially, and in the same way he has already faced the specific evil of Fitzgerald and prepared his soul by deliberately aiming away from him, he must face death and again prepare his soul. There are no supernatural events that emphasize the spiritual importance of material events, but none are needed. What is shown is that evil exists in the material world, that it is not

merely a distant spiritual threat but also a material one, and that when one faces it, fully conscious, one sees the terror. This terror, strong enough to draw Purcell into the church, is also strong enough to affect even the most adamant of atheists.

In "The Evil Guest," the spiritual struggle that takes place in Marston, an unbeliever, is again portrayed without any supernatural occurrences. "The Evil Guest" is, perhaps, a more appropriate title for the story than the earlier, lengthier title because it emphasizes Marston's spiritual struggles between the governess, who is the evil guest, and his wife, who is a moral Christian. In fact, McCormack notes that the change in setting from Ireland in "Richard Marston" to England in "The Evil Guest" connects it more closely with "The Mysterious Lodger," also set in England (*Victorian Ireland* 117), and taking this argument in another direction, because "The Mysterious Lodger" often is considered a religious allegory, the connection between the two stories highlights the spiritual themes in "The Evil Guest." Similarly, the epigraph, which is a paraphrase of James 1:15, emphasizes the spiritual struggle Marston undergoes: "When Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin: and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death" (241). The lust mentioned is Marston's lust for the governess, Mademoiselle Barras, a native of France. France and the continent are not usually positive connections in Le Fanu's stories; France corrupts the mind with its "free-thinkers" and atheists, and it corrupts the body with its lascivious and epicurean inhabitants.¹⁷ Mademoiselle Barras appears to be an

¹⁷In "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," Connor meets Fitzgerald in France, and in *Uncle Silas*, Silas's accomplice is Madame de la Rougierre, a native of France. Similarly in "The Familiar," Barton becomes a free thinker after his sea travels to the continent, and in "The Haunted Baronet," Sir Bale returns from the continent after having reduced his fortunes because of his extravagant life-style while abroad. Throughout Le Fanu's stories

innocent young lady, originally of noble birth, who must now take a position as governess, and when she is introduced, the narrator describes her social position as a "fallen condition" (246). This, of course, carries with it connotations of sexual misconduct. Although not apparent at the beginning of the story, it becomes clear that Mademoiselle Barras is indeed a "fallen woman." Not only has she had a previous encounter with Wynston Berkley, Marston's cousin, but she and Marston are having an affair. In the end, Marston establishes his wife and daughter in a small country house while he and Mademoiselle live in his Gothic estate. Here, again, Le Fanu uses the Gothic castle to accent Marston's spiritual trouble with domestic unease. Lust is not Marston's only sin, though; his decision to stay with Mademoiselle implies Marston's rejection of what is Godly, his wife, and his desire for evil itself; his physical connection with Mademoiselle is a material embodiment of his spiritual connection with evil.

When Wynston Berkley writes to request a visit, Marston knows that Berkley must have an ulterior motive because the two have never been close friends. Upon realizing that Wynston's visit is connected with Mademoiselle, Marston's passions are aroused, and evil begins to tempt him. Because there are instances in which Marston does seem to recognize that he is in the grip of some spiritual power, it becomes apparent that his struggle is not merely to do the right thing, but a struggle for his very soul:

Evil thoughts loomed upon the mind of Marston, like measureless black

and novels, there are instances of moral and spiritual corruption having originated on the continent, specifically in France. It may be interesting to note that Le Fanu's early heritage was Huguenot, thus perhaps heightening his interest in France as well as accounting for the fear of French customs found in his works.

mists upon a cold, smooth sea. They rested, grew, and darkened there; and no heaven-sent breath came silently to steal them away. . . . A dreadful power shook his very heart and soul. There was some strange, ghastly wrestling going on in his own immortal spirit. . . . He looked upon the holy influence of the good man's prayer—a prayer in which he could not join. . . . (264)

The language surrounding Marston's thoughts suggests that a non-material power is working within him. Marston has "surrendered his spirit to stormy and evil thoughts" (261), and he is "haunted by his own unholy thoughts" (253). Similarly, other instances of the uncanny, as Freud defines it,¹⁸ appear in the story, suggesting other-worldly powers. For example, Wynston reminds Marston of their time at Eton when a gipsy prophesied Marston would murder him. That Marston does murder Wynston may be a coincidence, or the prophecy may have been self-fulfilling, but the uncanny feelings this prophecy creates remain. There seems to be something other than material greed and lust at work, and one questions whether they are manifestations of something greater.

Marston's spiritual struggle is reflected in Merton, Marston's servant, but Merton recognizes the spiritual implications more clearly than Marston. When one of Wynston's serving men brags about his master's wealth and the money he keeps under his pillow at night, Merton happens to be in the room. Aware that this temptation is too great for him, he begs to be released from service. Continually deterred because he has never caused problems previously (he has, in fact, had exemplary behavior), Merton is still in

¹⁸For discussion of Freud's term, "the uncanny," see the introduction.

Marston's service when Wynston is killed, and it is Merton who finds Wynston dead when he enters the room in an attempt to murder him. Distraught at his own thoughts and at finding a dead body, he flees. Eventually, he returns to face the accusations of Wynston's murder and does not deny it. Although he did not commit the act of murder, Merton is aware that he had lost the spiritual struggle, and as the minister, Dr. Danvers, says later, "*morally*, the wretched man was guilty of the murder" (326). By confessing to the physical crime, he recognizes and begins to rectify his spiritual offense. Before he is brought to trial, Merton dies. Mercifully, Merton has been spared through death, but Marston must still suffer the consequences of both his physical and spiritual actions.

As Marston's spiritual struggle continues, he rejects any consolation either from the Church or his wife, and he is plagued by an apparition. Similar to the man who haunts Barton in "The Familiar," the apparition that haunts Marston looks like the man whom he had killed, only smaller and more malevolent, "a shrunken, malignant libel on the human shape" (316). What differentiates Marston's case from Barton's is that the apparition is not seen by anybody but himself. Thus, for Marston, the spiritual struggle remains an internal one. The supernatural being that he sees can be explained: his guilt has led to madness. Marston, himself, is of this opinion and checks into an institute for the insane. However, he cannot be cured by a medical doctor because his malady is spiritual. After he finally confesses to Dr. Danvers, he is found with his throat slashed, presumably by his own hand. The physical and mental effects of Marston's spiritual struggle cannot be denied. Although the events leading to his suicide can be explained by guilt and madness, there is a quality to them that suggests something more, something spiritual or even

supernatural. Marston himself calls it a “dreadful spirit” (310). Similarly, when the doctor at the mental institution runs into Marston’s room because of the terrific howls and screams, he finds Marston standing, “his eyes burning with the preterhuman fires of insanity,” and the doctor confronts “this demoniac effigy” calling him a “frightful slave of satan” (323). That Marston looks to the cleric, Dr. Danvers, for help and comfort also suggests that there is a profound spiritual struggle taking place within Marston. The tale serves to show the power of evil and the dangers of dismissing spiritual matters as unimportant. Marston realizes this too late.

Because the spiritual is made immanent in Le Fanu’s stories, spiritual and moral corruption and a denial of spiritual needs are shown to have disastrous consequences in the physical world. These consequences are an indication of the impending troubles in the spiritual world. With the material world as an indicator, the terrors of the spiritual realm are impressed more powerfully upon the characters and the readers. What Bayer-Berenbaum says of the use of the supernatural in Le Fanu’s Gothic predecessors can also be said of his use of the supernatural:

By comparison [to the Gothic supernatural] the religious type of supernatural is somewhat remote, projecting a numinous realm that is more otherworldly—heavenly rather than earthly, spiritual rather than physical, sacred rather than profane. The Gothic mentality seeks to obliterate all such distinction to render the supernatural greater and nearer, and thus it avoids the make believe aura of the fairy tale. Particularly in modern horror stories where ancient castles have disappeared, the Gothic

writer clothes his tale in the familiar. The aim of the Gothic in literature is to become as natural as possible, an extension of nature. . . . (32-33)

By showing that spiritual matters are “greater and nearer,” Le Fanu suggests that the religious transcendent is deeply connected to the physical world. As Varma remarks of the Gothic, Le Fanu’s works are “characterized by an awestruck apprehension of Divine immanence penetrating diurnal reality” (211). In Le Fanu’s stories, however, this force usually does not manifest itself benevolently. It is primarily when there is a need for retribution that the spiritual force manifests itself in the material world. What Geary notes specifically of Stevenson’s “The Body-Snatcher” applies to Le Fanu as well; supernatural events do not always bring justice in the material world, but rather they warn those who are transgressing “that something supernatural exists” (110). Marston was not brought to justice by a court of law, but because he came to recognize that something supernatural with the power to torment him exists, he took his own life. By creating characters such as Marston and O’Connor who, after first ignoring its existence, experience the presence of evil in the world, Le Fanu creates uncanny feelings in his readers. The torments which these characters suffer helps develop a picture of the strong relationship between spiritual and worldly matters.

Metaphysics

In the stories written after the death of his wife, Le Fanu’s characters have more interest in what may be called metaphysics, which also emphasizes the connection between the spiritual world and the material world. The aforementioned Dr. Hesselius is

one such character. Although he is not directly associated with the Swedenborgian sect, Hesselius does have some ideas similar to Swedenborg's. He is a metaphysician who combines a knowledge of medicine with a spiritual understanding, arguing that there is a spiritual nature in human beings and materialistic science cannot account for much of what occurs in the world. In the prologue to "Green Tea," the fictional editor who purports to have been Dr. Hesselius's medical secretary and who has gathered some of Hesselius's cases which may "amuse or horrify a lay reader" (6), describes Hesselius's writing:

He writes in two distinct characters. He describes what he saw and heard as an intelligent layman might, and when in this style of narrative he had seen the patient either through his own hall-door, to the light of day, or through the gates of darkness to the caverns of the dead, he returns upon the narrative, and in the terms of his art, and with all the force and originality of genius, proceeds to the work of analysis, diagnosis, and illustration. (5-6)

The unnamed editor of these cases rarely presents any of Hesselius's medical descriptions for the reader because "the strictly scientific view of the case would scarcely interest the popular reader" ("Harbottle" 84); rather the cases are described only as a "layman might." The layman might describe these cases as supernatural events, unconnected with any physical cause. Certainly, with the exception of "The Room in the Dragon Volant," the events in the stories seem explicitly supernatural. However, whereas Father Purcell's presence emphasizes a spiritual connection with worldly events, Dr. Hesselius's presence

emphasizes a material connection with supernatural events. Hesselius's editor teases the reader by occasionally including post-scripts or other notes that indicate Hesselius's medical opinions of and scientific explanations for the seemingly supernatural events. In many cases, though, the natural explanations given are "sufficiently imprecise . . . [and] join the older religious sense of a spirit world . . . to a scientific vocabulary designed to gain credence to what conventional science denies" (Geary 11). By combining the physical concerns of a medical doctor with the spiritual concerns of a mystic, Dr. Hesselius bridges the two worlds.

As Margaret Carter explains in *Specter or Delusion?*, Dr. Hesselius is an "occult doctor" . . . [who] embodies the attempt to harmonize the supernatural with the nineteenth century's advances in scientific knowledge" (85). In fact, most of the cases with which Dr. Hesselius is concerned are both physical and spiritual. In "Green Tea" (1869) Jennings is tormented by a spectral monkey who keeps him from preaching and praying, and the monkey eventually leads to Jennings's death. In "Mr. Justice Harbottle" (1872), the judge and jury who haunt Justice Harbottle and place him on trial for his abuse of power are supernatural beings, but they cause a physical disturbance in Harbottle's world. A servant is physically beaten when Harbottle sends him after an old man, presumably a haunt, who warns Harbottle of his impending trial. Similarly, after his first encounter with Chief-Justice Twofold and the grotesque jury, Harbottle has sore ankles, and after the second encounter, he is found hanging from a banister. In "The Familiar" (1847/72), Captain Barton, a "freethinker" who does not believe in God or the spiritual, is pursued by a specter who has a physical appearance and is seen and touched by others as if he

were human. "Carmilla" (1872-72), a vampire tale from Hesselius's casebooks which is narrated by the victim, Laura, likewise offers the combination of the physical and the spiritual that pervades Hesselius's cases.

Although it is entitled "Carmilla," it is Laura's story. Laura describes her childhood nightmares in which she was visited by a beautiful woman who, after seeming to nourish her, plunged something into Laura's chest, right below her neck. Whereas her father believed the event was merely a bad dream, the young Laura believed in the reality of the experience wholeheartedly. When, one day, a carriage overturns and Carmilla is left in the protection of Laura's father until her mother can return from her errand of life-threatening importance, Laura is again plagued with the dreams. In fact, Laura recognizes Carmilla from her dream, and Carmilla claims she has had a similar experience in which Laura was the person in her dream. As Carmilla's attacks on Laura become more frequent and more harmful, Laura becomes more languid and lethargic, not realizing or caring that she is close to death. Finally, her father's friend intervenes, recognizing Carmilla as the vampire who killed his daughter. Despite his previous reluctance to believe anything supernatural, Laura's father is convinced, and he and his friend kill Carmilla, apparently freeing Laura and restoring her to health. However, Laura has suffered emotionally and spiritually as well as physically.

In "Loving You All Ways," Robert Tracy remarks on the dual threat of vampires: "though they do physically harm their victims, and often bring about their deaths, the vampires also threaten their victims' souls" (33). Later, Tracy argues that "this double threat, at once physical and spiritual, is in practice presented as essentially sexual" (34).

Geary, contrariwise, argues that “it is not primarily repressed Victorian sexuality but the secular culture’s repression of the supernatural which animated and gave form to these [supernatural] stories” (120). The two arguments, however, are not that far apart. The sexual act is physical and spiritual. In the Christian tradition, it marks the consummation of a marriage that is recognized by God: the physical and spiritual giving of each person to the other. Thus, the lesbian elements of “Carmilla” constitute what would have been seen as not only a physical corruption of sexuality, but also as a spiritual corruption.¹⁹

Carmilla seductively tempts Laura:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion [Carmilla] would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. . . . With gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, “You are mine, you *shall* be mine, you and I are one forever.” (264)

This lesbian element of Carmilla’s attack threatens to destroy Laura physically by displacing what, in nineteenth-century Ireland and England, would have been considered her natural sexual desires for a man, and it threatens Laura spiritually by uniting her “forever” with the vampire Carmilla in the sexual act that represents the spiritual state of

¹⁹A lengthier discussion on sexual and lesbian elements in “Carmilla” can be found in William Veeder’s article, “‘Carmilla’: The Arts of Repression.” Robert Tracy’s “Loving You All Ways” discusses sexuality and vampirism in a number of Victorian vampire stories.

marriage. Thus the physical and the spiritual are united in the supernatural threat that Carmilla poses.

Dr. Hesselius's case of Carmilla is different from his other cases because he does not offer a medical explanation for the supernatural events. Carmilla is a vampire. However, in this case, Carmilla's presence is physical; there is no denying she exists, and there is no need for a medical explanation to emphasize the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds. At one point in the story, Laura's father does offer a natural explanation that sounds similar to an explanation Dr. Hesselius gives for some of the supernatural instances in "Mr. Justice Harbottle." Laura's father says, "These poor people infect one another with their superstitions, and so repeat in imagination the images of terror that have infested their neighbours" (269). In "Harbottle," Dr. Hesselius puts a supernatural twist on this explanation yet still claims that these visions are contagious: "So soon as the spirit action has established itself in the case of one patient, its developed energies begin to radiate, more or less effectually, upon others" (83). In the case of Justice Harbottle, the "interior visions" of Mrs Pyneweck (Harbottle's mistress), her child, and a maid are opened, and they all see apparitions. Unlike Justice Twofold and the hangman, however, Carmilla is no ghost, and one's interior vision does not need to be opened to see her. Thus, the supernatural not only intervenes in lives such as Harbottle's and Jennings's which, according to Hesselius, have some physical imbalance that affects the spiritual states of these characters, but the supernatural can also have a material appearance that threatens the physical and spiritual states of those with whom it comes into contact. In "Carmilla," not only is Laura's sexuality threatened, but her physical and spiritual states

are threatened on a more literal level: Laura is losing blood and may die or she may become a vampire herself, never entering the realm of heaven. It is this interaction between physical and spiritual states that interests Dr. Hesselius, again showing the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical.

In *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*, Victor Sage calls Hesselius “a white magician, a magus, posing as a higher form of scientist” (206). Because Hesselius believes that spirit is “organized substance” and that the “entire natural world is but the ultimate expression of that spiritual world from which, and in which alone, it has its life” (“Green Tea” 8),²⁰ Sage argues that eventually, this “dream of a higher synthesis of matter and spirit leads . . . to an orthodox expression of the resurrection of the spirit. . . . Thus, the most ‘progressive’ and ‘modern’ position turns out, after all to ‘vindicate’ the most ancient and traditional” (206). On the other hand, in *Elegant Nightmares*, Sullivan argues that Hesselius’s presence undermines both a theological reading and a scientific reading. For example, in “The Familiar” Barton’s doctor suggests that Barton is disturbed because of a digestive problem, and the clergyman also attributes Barton’s spiritual unease over the malignancy of this “hallucination” with a physical malady. Hesselius, a doctor concerned with both physical and spiritual states, “merges irresistibly with Barton’s physician and Barton’s preacher: both become associated in our minds with ineffectual orthodoxies and institutions” (Sullivan 58). Similarly, but in reference to “Carmilla,”

²⁰That this is a paraphrase of Swedenborgian philosophy should not pass without note. Hesselius’s Swedenborgian tendencies serve to emphasize his beliefs in the connection between the spiritual realm and the material realm. However, this identification also serves to undermine Hesselius’s total authority as Swedenborg’s theories are themselves undermined and found to be insufficient in Le Fanu’s works.

Alok Bhalla in *Politics and the Atrocity of Lust* argues that “both the verdict of the doctor, as well as, the bewildered and sad confession of her experiences by the victim are inadequate” (26). Throughout *In a Glass Darkly*, Hesselius’s explanations seem inadequate. The reader is never given all of the information he or she needs to determine whether Hesselius’s reports are trustworthy. Often references are made to other volumes of Hesselius’s medical works to which the reader is not given access, or as already noted above, the reader is not given the medical version of the story because it would “scarcely interest the popular reader.” For example, in “Harbottle,” the fictional editor states that “after appearances [of ghosts and spirits] are the result of the law explained in Vol. II. Section 17 to 49” (83). Although the editor claims there is a scientific explanation for the opening of the interior visions of the child and the housekeeper, the reader can never judge whether this explanation is valid. He or she must choose whether to trust Hesselius and his editor. If one discredits the scientific explanations, one is led to believe events in the stories are purely supernatural. The reader hesitates between scientific and supernatural explanations in the stories, creating what Todorov calls the fantastic.

Even if his qualifications and diagnoses are questionable and place the burden of belief on the reader, Hesselius’s presence serves to highlight the ways in which the spiritual and material worlds are interconnected. He does not claim that it is through supernatural phenomena that the material world is affected by spirits; rather, Hesselius believes that the spiritual world always exists and only when one’s interior sense is opened can one see into the spiritual world. Often, as in the case of Jennings, it is a physical problem that opens this interior sense and allows the fluid of the nerves to be

altered because the “nature of that fluid is spiritual, though not immaterial” (“Green Tea” 39). As Carter notes, Hesselius’s “‘Metaphysical Medicine’ accepts as real phenomena traditionally supposed supernatural, while supplanting traditional explanations for these phenomena with scientific theory” (87). What Carter’s comment points to, but what she does not state is that this combination of supernatural and scientific heightens the reader’s awareness of the material presence of spiritual elements in Le Fanu’s works.

Warnings

Le Fanu’s stories were more than stories to titillate the reader, and his techniques were more than attention grabbing gimmicks. Although he approached the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds differently as he matured, one primary effect of the stories remains the same: a warning to complacent Victorians who were strict materialists. His stories imply that when one ignores or dismisses the spiritual aspects of life, one ignores the evil that exists in the world, thereby courting it. To communicate this warning, Le Fanu had to make the evil in his stories more frightening, more real than traditional religion had made it because as Thomas Love Peacock claimed in the early nineteenth century, people “had lived upon ghosts, goblins, and skeletons . . . till the devil himself . . . became too base, common, and popular” (qtd. in Varma 176). Thus as David Brownell also claims in “Wicked Dreams,” by making the spiritual immanent through supernatural events, Le Fanu shows “the supernatural world can reach out to affect ordinary humans who have by wrong doing rendered themselves vulnerable” (191), and in many of his stories, the supernatural serves to emphasize the need for spiritual

understanding and belief.

In "The Drunkard's Dream," (1838) and "The Vision of Tom Chuff" (1870), profligate characters have near-death experiences in which they are confronted with the torments their souls will suffer if they die while living dissolute lifestyles. Although these two stories were published more than thirty years apart, "Tom Chuff" is a revision of the original "Drunkard's Dream." That Le Fanu was willing to revive a story after thirty years indicates he was still interested in the same themes. In both tales, the characters reform, much like Terry Neil in "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter." However, in "The Vision of Tom Chuff" and "The Drunkard's Dream," the characters return to their former ways and die under circumstances similar to their earlier visions. These preternatural occurrences are inexplicable. It appears the characters really have been affected by some spiritual force. In "The Drunkard's Dream," Father Purcell prefaces the narrative with a discussion of dreams:

We know, indeed, that in the olden times it [a dream] has been made the organ of communication between the Deity and His creatures; and when, as I have seen, a dream produces upon a mind, to all appearance hopelessly reprobate and depraved, an effect so powerful and so lasting as to break down the inveterate habits, and to reform the life of an abandoned sinner, we see in the result, in the reformation of morals which appeared incorrigible . . . something more than could be produced by a mere chimera of the slumbering fancy, something more than could arise from the capricious images of a terrified imagination; but once presented we

behold in all these things, and in their tremendous and mysterious results,
the operation of the hand of God. (202-03)

At the outset, it is established that preternatural dreams and visions are the workings of God in the material world, and as the narrator of "Tom Chuff" states, the stories serve as a "not altogether fruitless homily" (163).

In "The Village Bully," one of the episodes in the collection that comprises the short story "Ghost Stories of Chapelizod" (1857) published in the middle of Le Fanu's writing career, a spiritual warning through supernatural means is also revealed, but in this story, the warning has a lasting physical effect. Bully Larkin fights with Ned Moran, beating him until he is unconscious. This beating leads to Ned's death, and although the connection cannot be proven, "a strange retribution . . . awaited" Bully Larkin (119). While walking home one evening, Larkin comes to the top of the hill on which he fought Ned, and a figure approaches. Ned, or rather, Ned's ghost raises his fist as if to strike Larkin, and Larkin, in an effort to protect himself, raises his hand. When the two hands touch, Larkin receives a "thrill of unspeakable agony, running through his arm, [which] pervaded his entire frame" (121). Although the figure is merely Ned's specter, its power in the physical world is such that it causes a sort of paralysis in Bully Larkin, and he can no longer work. Also, Larkin is convinced that Ned's presence was only a warning that when he dies, he will have to fight Ned "in the other world—in Hell" (121). Focusing on the physical pain Bully Larkin suffers makes the retribution for his cruelty more powerful. As Bayer-Berenbaum notes, "agony . . . is a very effective technique for intensifying perception . . . pain is an instant cure for apathy and insensitivity" (30). By making the

spiritual warning in this story more obviously physical than it is in "Tom Chuff" and "The Drunkard's Dream," Le Fanu counters any apathy about or disbelief of supernatural intervention by the spiritual world, confronting it with physical evidence: Bully Larkin's paralysis. When argument and church teachings cannot correct a person's actions, as they failed to do for Bully Larkin, the spiritual force can intervene in the material world. Larkin is made aware of this, and he realizes that his physical condition is merely a material sign of the spiritual events to come.

Similarly two other stories by Le Fanu, "Borrhomeo the Astrologer" (1862) and "Sir Dominick's Bargain" (1872), offer a physical reminder of the power of the spiritual force, but these reminders outlast the lives of the characters involved and remain to remind future generations. In "Sir Dominick's Bargain," the material proof of the spiritual world is a stain on a wall in a rotting mansion. The stain, about eight feet from the ground, is made when Sir Dominick is killed by the "Evil One" returning to claim Dominick's soul which he had sold for money to clear his debts. The narrator's grandfather sees the Evil One pick up Sir Dominick, "whirl his head against the wall, and wi' that the hall-door flies open, and out goes the candles" (443). In both "The Village Bully" and "Sir Dominick's Bargain," the physical retribution for moral sins "cures apathy and insensitivity" by presenting a physical image, though an imperfect one, of what will happen in the spiritual world. The stain on the wall where Sir Dominick's head was smashed outlasts the lives of the people involved and remains one hundred years later as a physical reminder of the presence of the spiritual.

This same theme is reiterated in the more horrific tale, "Borrhomeo the

Astrologer.” The Faustian figure in this case is more concerned with his physical and material life than his spiritual life, and he suffers physically because of his insensitivity toward spiritual matters. Borrhomeo, searching for the *elixir vitae* and the concoction that will turn lead into gold, is a seventeenth-century alchemist whose magic has isolated him from the rest of the town. When tempted by a Mephistophelean character who appears as a young man, turns lead into gold, refuses to share his secret, and warns Borrhomeo of the danger involved, Borrhomeo cannot help but follow. His desire for power and earthly immortality overcomes any concerns he may have for his soul. Although told by the young man that alchemy is “folly—and . . . worse—a snare,” that Borrhomeo should rebuke his “dangerous though fruitless frenzy,” and that he will “waste the small remnant of his years in godless search after gold and immortality,” Borrhomeo still thinks it is “better a thousand times” that “he should know all, and feel their vanity” (146, 147). The consequence is that Borrhomeo’s soul is taken by this young man, who at one point reveals a cloven hoof. This character demands that Borrhomeo infiltrate churches and other religious strongholds into which Satan cannot enter. By entering these places and marking them with an “S,” Borrhomeo enables the devil to spread the curse of the plague to the Christian sanctuaries. For his pains, Borrhomeo is given the elixir and will live a thousand years. However, like Tithonus, Borrhomeo neglects to discover an important disclaimer; he is not immune to pain or the physical signs of death. Thus, when the residents of the city discover that Borrhomeo has marked the churches, he is to be hanged, impaled for three days, and then buried in a grave outside of town. After fourteen years, the grave is unearthed, and Borrhomeo is found “in no wise decayed” (153),

suggesting that there is some life in him and verifying the tale. By showing the physical pain and consequences of material desires, this story, like "Sir Dominick's Bargain," heightens the pathos with which the reader regards the importance of spiritual powers. Aptly, the narrator ends Borrhomeo's tale with "get thee hence, Satan" (154).

The presence of the supernatural in stories such as "The Vision of Tom Chuff," "The Drunkard's Dream," "The Village Bully," "Sir Dominick's Bargain," and "Borrhomeo the Astrologer" emphasizes the dangers of ignoring or denying the power of the spiritual force. In Le Fanu's tales, the supernatural moves beyond ghostly warnings and signs, taking up residence in the material world. It will not be denied. Le Fanu, however, does not merely rely on drunkards, bullies, and gamblers to show the power of the spiritual force. His stories also show the dangers that good, upstanding citizens face. As Geary also notes, in many of Le Fanu's tales, punishment is often more for "dogmatic skepticism than for legal or moral wrongdoing" (113), and this seems to be the case in "The Familiar," "Green Tea," and "A Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter" (1839). It has already been noted that "The Familiar" and "Green Tea" exemplify the dangers of "free thinking" and too deep a study into pagan religions, respectively, and that each one also emphasizes the connection between the spiritual and physical worlds. Le Fanu shows consistency throughout his career because in both the later stories as well as the earlier "Schalken," the modern church, having lost much of its belief in the supernatural powers of the spiritual world, is ineffective in the face of the supernatural manifestations of the spiritual power.

In "The Familiar," the clergyman to whom Barton turns, "representing the modern

secularized religion" (Geary 114), advises him to go to a physical doctor, get sleep, and eat well, and in "Green Tea," it is a clergyman who is affected by the hauntings of the spiritual world. Referring to "The Familiar," Jack Sullivan calls the clergyman's response a "typical Le Fanu reversal. When the atheists . . . are awakened by demons in their beds, they undergo rapid conversions; but the spiritual advisors . . . assume the role of hard-line materialists" (43). In the face of real spiritual danger, the church cannot help because its representatives no longer believe in the presence of a spiritual force in the material world. In fact, the fictional editor of *The Purcell Papers* refers to this loss of belief in his introduction to "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter":

To such as may think the composing of such productions as these inconsistent with the character of a country priest, it is necessary to observe, that there did exist a race of priests—those of the old school, a race now nearly extinct—whose education abroad tended to produce in them tastes more literary. . . . (2)

Although this introduces a story in which the supposed supernatural events are easily explained and the reader does not hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation for long, if at all, it indicates an attitude toward both older traditions and current practices. The older traditions and superstitions may be "more literary," but the newer priests who do not have these literary tastes have lost something valuable. Because the clergyman in "The Familiar" does not believe in the possibility that Barton is being tormented by a spiritual force, he cannot understand the greater implications; he does not read Barton's physical experiences correctly. They are a representation of the struggle in Barton's

spiritual life. However, as Sullivan recognizes, even the reader has difficulty understanding the vague resemblances between Barton's physical struggle and his spiritual struggle because the narrator relates Barton's sin "in such halting terms that the reader wonders what he has actually committed" (58). Similarly, Carter comments that in the final paragraph, the narrator "conveys hesitation. In the very midst of stating that 'there can be no doubt,' the narrator conveys nothing but doubt" (90). Like the clergyman in "The Familiar," the reader of Le Fanu's stories must interpret the events either as having a spiritual cause or a physical cause, and although neither Carter nor Sullivan focuses on the hesitation in Le Fanu's stories, the indication in them is that neither a purely natural explanation nor a superstitious one is enough; the reader hesitates. The only point at which Barton seems content is when he has a vision of the girl he loved, the daughter of the man whose specter is now pursuing him. In his vision, the girl sings a song that tells Barton of his life, "all that is past, and all that is still to come" (75). Even if there is a physical or psychological explanation for this vision, it offers him spiritual consolation, forgiveness and comfort. The vision helps Barton to understand his torment, and he is able to bear it stoically. Where the church could not help him, his spiritual vision could. Because it stopped believing in the possibility of a spiritual presence in the material world, whether explicitly supernatural or not, the church is no longer able to offer comfort to those in a spiritual crisis.

This inability of the Protestant church to help in a spiritual crisis can also be seen in "A Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter." As a young painter, Schalken apprenticed under Douw. One evening, while working on a painting of the temptation of

St. Anthony and frustrated because he is “incapable of executing, or even of appreciating, anything of the true sublimity” (195),²¹ a man walks in and asks for Douw. The man is Vanderhausen, and he offers Douw an immense amount of jewels and riches in exchange for his niece in marriage. Douw accepts. Although upset at this because he is in love with Rose, Schalken does nothing to stop her engagement to Vanderhausen. When Vanderhausen arrives to claim his bride, he is unveiled for the first time. His face has a bluish tint, his lips are black, and “the character of his face [is] malignant, even satanic” (224). Even after this demonic figure exposes himself, Douw and Schalken do nothing to keep Rose from him. Consequently, Vanderhausen takes Rose to be his bride, and the two disappear. Although Douw desperately attempts to find Vanderhausen and Rose in Rotterdam, their supposed destination, he cannot find them nor anyone who has heard of them. As time passes, Douw begins to understand that Vanderhausen’s physical appearance is an indication of his spiritual state: “He greatly doubted how far it was possible for a man possessing in his countenance so strong an evidence of the presence of the most demoniac feelings, to be in reality anything but a villain” (234). Finally, Rose reappears at Douw’s house, but she is emaciated. After devouring food and wine, Rose asks for a “minister of God” as she is “not safe till he comes” (238). The clergyman comes but serves little purpose in the story except to be described as a “veteran polemic . . . more dreaded as a combatant than beloved as a Christian . . .” (242-43). As a

²¹James Swafford notes that because Schalken paints a pot-bellied St. Anthony, a priest who was devoted to denying worldly pleasures, Schalken has little understanding of St. Anthony’s asceticism. The image of St. Anthony is a foil for Schalken and Douw who are mesmerized by the jewels Vanderhausen offers.

dogmatic minister, he is unable to read the mystery of the situation and understand its importance; he, as Swafford notes, "offers no prayer. He does no more than stand in the anteroom and clear his throat" (55). Likewise, Douw believes that Rose's physical state is an indication of a physical illness rather than a spiritual one. Rose, however, knows that hers is a spiritual problem. She realizes that she is "in the hands of Satan" (243) and that "the dead and the living cannot be one—God has forbidden it" (241). When Douw leaves Rose's side for a moment to relight the candle, the door swings closed behind him, and Schalken and Douw cannot open it. Finally, they are able to open the door; the room is empty and the window is open. It appears that Rose has jumped from the window into the canal, but it is never clear whether Rose jumped herself or Vanderhausen returned to claim his bride, but the end is the same. Because they have failed to read the spiritual signs in the material world, neither Douw, Schalken, nor the clergyman can save Rose from the effects of her marriage to Vanderhausen.

Many years later, Schalken has a vision or a dream at a cathedral in Rotterdam where he is attending his father's funeral. He sees Rose with "nothing horrible or even sad in the countenance" (250). Intrigued, Schalken follows the silent Rose through the vaults to a room in which she reveals "sitting bolt upright in the bed, the livid and demoniac form of Vanderhausen," and "to his dying day Schalken was satisfied of the reality of the vision which he had witnessed . . ." (251-52). In the morning, Schalken is found lying next to a coffin, the reader is never told whose, in the vaults. Through this second revelation, which becomes the subject of one of Schalken's famous paintings, it becomes clear that Vanderhausen is the material manifestation of something spiritual; he

is supernatural. Swafford claims that Vanderhausen "is the demon of the church itself. . . . [He is] a walking religious memorial to secular success" (55). Because the church can no longer understand the connection between the physical and the spiritual, as is evidenced by Schalken's misunderstanding of St. Anthony's asceticism and the clergyman's ineffectiveness, the spirit of the church has become demonic. Although Swafford does not make this distinction, it is important not to confuse the church with God. Rose calls upon God and is aware that she can "hope for deliverance—only from heaven" (243). The clergyman does not recognize this, and neither do Douw and Schalken because they have been blinded by Vanderhausen's offer of riches, buying into the materialism of the age.

Throughout his short stories, Le Fanu reacts to the materialism and the skepticism of the Victorian age. This materialism is met by the supernatural, creating physical consequences that heighten the reader's sensitivity to the presence of the spiritual in the material world. Although Crawford argues that the "'ironic distance' which he maintains" in his stories suggests that Le Fanu "did not take a further step into the belief of the supernatural on earth" ("*In a Glass Darkly*" 25), it is apparent that the "ironic distance" also distances Le Fanu from the purely material explanations. In Le Fanu's stories, the fantastic, the hesitation between belief in the supernatural and science, between belief in the church and folklore, and between belief in a spiritual force and atheism, leaves the reader with an uncanny feeling. This uncanny feeling works on the mind and heart, urging the reader of Le Fanu's stories to be skeptical of skepticism and to see the spiritual force in everyday experiences. From the religious tensions of his youth to the spiritual crises of his adult life, Le Fanu was surrounded by very physical representations of spiritual

beliefs: the demise of the Irish-Catholic gentry because of Anglican power, fights over burial rights because of superstitions, attacks on his family because of their Protestant beliefs, and his own spiritual struggles. Able to draw upon these experiences, Le Fanu uses Catholicism, Protestantism, folklore, and Swedenborg's metaphysics in his stories to develop heightened and urgent examples of the spiritual presence in the material world.

Chapter Two

The Historical

Ireland has suffered political upheaval for centuries. Despite attempts and apparent successes by Protestants and the British to squelch Irish uprisings throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rebel movements continued to gain force into the nineteenth century. The Tory Anglo-Irish, even with England's political and military force supporting them, could not appease the Irish-Catholics because they still felt the poverty and exploitation that had begun centuries earlier. From the invasion of Henry II in the twelfth century, through the slaughter of the Jacobites led by the Dutch Protestant, William of Orange, in the seventeenth century, to the bloody battles of the 1798 uprisings, the Irish-Catholics felt the loss of their freedom. Any professed Catholics were forced to give up their land; their trade was stifled; they were denied education; and they were required to pay taxes to the British government. With these pressures, noble Irish families began to decline and rural peasants were reduced to poverty. By the mid-eighteenth century, Catholics owned only five per cent of the land (Wall 220-21). The Irish could not overlook the history of English oppression, and despite attempts by Anglo-Irish Tories to keep Ireland under English rule, they could not escape the consequences of history.

There were some Anglo-Irish who recognized this past cruelty and its effects. Even as an Anglican clergyman, Swift satirized and derided the British government for its apathy toward poverty in Ireland. Similarly, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu recognized the suffering imposed on the Irish-Catholics despite his association with the Anglo-Irish

Tories. Le Fanu was aware that the political past was a powerful force in the lives of the Irish. The number of noble Irish-Catholic families was declining because of past injustices by Williamite forces, and the Irish peasants were still suffering under heavy taxes and induced poverty because of past laws. Also, Le Fanu felt the pressures of his own family history: his father's position as an Anglican clergyman, his mother's sympathy with Irish rebels, and the political violence he witnessed during his childhood. Recognizing that the past is a powerful force, he made use of it in his short stories, but as McCormack notes, Le Fanu recognized that "history is only one name for a force which cannot be fully specified under any terminology" (81). Like the spiritual force discussed in chapter one and the force of human conscience discussed in chapter three, the force of history is present but cannot be explained by material science. It has a supernatural presence, directing and informing events in the present without a scientific explanation for its effects. In his works, Le Fanu uses supernatural and preternatural events to emphasize the immediate presence of history and the effects it has in the present physical world. In his earlier stories, Le Fanu often incorporates Irish history. By doing this, he is able to show the power the past has over the present not only through the effects of history as described in his stories, but also through the recurring historical presence in his stories; the past cannot be forgotten. For the same reason, he creates fictional families to show how the actions of one's ancestors in the past can affect one's life in the present. The stories in which these fictional families are affected supernaturally by their past were written, for the most part, after the earlier, primarily historical, stories.

As with politics and religion, there is no clear separation between national history

and family history in many of Le Fanu's stories such as "Ultor De Lacy." However, for purposes of clarity, I have separated them when discussing both Le Fanu's personal history and the history in his stories. Thus, like the previous chapter, this one begins with a background of Le Fanu's national and familial histories. This section serves to give insight into the political and familial influences on Le Fanu and the reasons he felt their presence so strongly. From there, in the section entitled "Irish Ghosts," I move into a discussion of the way in which Le Fanu incorporates Irish history into his stories in order to emphasize the importance of acknowledging the non-material force of history. In the following section, "Family Ghosts," I focus on the way in which Le Fanu uses the history of fictional families to show that the past continues to affect people in the present and that actions in the present will remain to affect people in the future. The past, like a ghost, is a haunting force which works supernaturally in this world; it cannot be explained by science or materialism. Although it has no physical properties, the presence of the past is keenly felt in the events of the present.

Le Fanu's Ghosts

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was not English, but he was Anglican. The Le Fanus were descended from Charles de Cresserons, who had fought for William of Orange, and because of their Huguenot ancestors, when they settled in Ireland, the Le Fanus found their place among the Anglicans who inhabited "England's colony," as T. A. Jackson calls it (75). However, the Irish-Catholics did not adapt quite as well, and as the Anglican upper and middle-classes grew, the Irish-Catholic aristocracy diminished, and the

economic gap between the Catholic peasants and the Anglican bourgeois widened. English laws and taxes harmed the Irish-Catholic upper and lower classes, challenging their previous way of life and making it more difficult for them to survive in their changing world without converting to Protestantism. As Maureen Wall comments in "The Age of Penal Laws," the Irish-Catholics were at first permitted to own land and participate in trade, but in the early eighteenth century, laws were created to keep Catholics from purchasing land and developing their trade (219-220). In the prologue to *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, Julian Moynihan comments that, during the seventeenth century, many Irish-Catholic aristocratic families renounced their faith and intermarried with English and Protestant families in attempts to "gain access to the privileged class" (4). After the 1798 uprising in which the United Irish rebelled but were defeated, Anglicans in Ireland were threatened, and although they sustained a tentative power by supporting the British government, fear lingered just over their shoulders. Dublin provided a relatively safe place for the new family of Thomas Philip Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan's father, but when they moved to the country, they were no longer protected by the civilities of city life. Thus, as he was growing up, Joseph Sheridan was surrounded by the violence brought about by British rule in Ireland. His family was a target, and this fear of violence was a powerful influence on Le Fanu. Later in his life, Le Fanu "found in sensational fiction the means to describe the extraordinary quality of his life, its urbanity and its closeness to violence" (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 8). In fact, Sage argues that it is the fear of Irish-Catholic uprisings that lies at the heart of Protestant horror fiction (44-45). Le Fanu does more than simply describe or

represent the violence in his stories; he portrays the historical causes for this violence as supernatural.

Another political influence in Le Fanu's life was his mother. In her youth, Emma Lucretia Dobbin formed a sympathy for Lord Edward Fitzgerald, an Irish rebel, and Emma is said to have acquired the dagger with which he killed a captain as he was arrested in Dublin (Ellis 147). Emma Dobbin's Catholic sympathies can be traced to her father, William Dobbin. Although he was a clergyman in the Church of Ireland, William Dobbin was acquainted with John and Henry Sheares, well-known Irish rebels, and rumors existed about a relationship between Sophia Dobbin, Emma's sister, and one of the Sheares brothers. Thus, despite their Protestant heritage, the Dobbins seemed to be intimately concerned with the progress of the Irish cause.²² Even with this influence, Joseph Sheridan stayed true to his Protestant-Huguenot Le Fanu heritage and remained a member of the Tory party throughout his life, although he occasionally spoke against aspects of British rule. The contradictions in Le Fanu's political life can be seen in the conflicting statements critics make about it. Whereas McCormack claims that Le Fanu was sympathetic to the movement for Irish home rule, others differ. However, all recognize the confusion in his life. In a bio-bibliography of Le Fanu, Gary William

²²In *Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* McCormack writes of William Dobbin's relationship with the Sheares as their confessor and of his official duties at the execution of another rebel, Robert Emmet. According to McCormack, despite his Irish leanings, Dobbin had little sympathy for Emmet because he was what Hamilton Maxwell called "a determined infidel," a religious sin that Dobbin could not forgive (3); religion, even Catholicism, was more important to him than politics. On the other hand, McCormack notes that on the side of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's father, the family was "in a sense too conventional" (2) as members of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy.

Crawford recognizes these contradictions and states that "for all his life . . . [Le Fanu] remained attached to the country of his birth. . . ." At the same time, however, "he adhered to the belief for all his life that Ireland should remain subservient to Britain" (4), even if Ireland were to have its own parliament. Thus, the young Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was raised with strong Anglican beliefs but with conflicting sympathies for Irish-Catholics.

The sympathy Le Fanu had for the Catholics was tried when, in 1831, the Tithe Wars, Catholic rebellions against the tithes they were required to pay to the Anglican church, began. In *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, Joseph's brother, William, writes about some of their experiences during this time. One time, William recalls, he and Joseph were attacked by groups of Catholics who, angry at the rector as a representative of the Protestant government, threw rocks at the two boys. Had the brothers not been on horses, enabling them to get home and into the house quickly, they may have been killed (65). All members of the Le Fanu family were affected by the uprisings: Catherine, Le Fanu's sister, was pelted by rocks and mud, and friends who visited were subject to taunts from the mobs as they drove into town.²³ Indeed, the whole of Ireland in the nineteenth century was suffering from the repercussions of British rule, and, as McCormack notes, the phrase "Victorian Ireland . . . is itself mildly surprising" (*Victorian Ireland* 5) because of its conflicting implications. Despite all of this strife, Joseph Sheridan seems to have retained some compassion for the Irish-Catholics. In an 1868 letter cited in McCormack's

²³In *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, William Le Fanu describes some humorous and some shocking instances of attacks on his family and friends by the Irish-Catholic mobs.

Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland, Le Fanu claimed that although he did not think that England and Ireland were ready for a Catholic Lord Chancellor, he would not have been opposed to the idea (39). Indeed, McCormack notes that Le Fanu supported taxing absentee landlords (51). Although this plan would alleviate primarily the burdens of the Anglo-Irish rather than the Irish-Catholics, Le Fanu also felt a sense of nationalism and pride in Ireland and its Catholic heritage. Never a zealous radical, he did, however, support an Irish state separate from but subservient to England, even though he feared "that militant Catholicism would swamp all political initiative in Ireland" (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 52); yet separating religion and politics was almost impossible because so much of past politics had been fueled by religion. Although McCormack does not make the connection, it seems Le Fanu was pulled in two directions: one by his ancestral, Protestant history and one by his national, Irish history.

Like his maternal grandfather and his mother, Le Fanu admired much about the Irish, even some of the Irish revolutionaries. This changed when Daniel O'Connell entered the scene in the 1820s. Because he was able to gather and organize the support of the Irish-Catholics, the threat to Anglican rule in Ireland was a greater possibility than ever before. The threat came not through political means as much as it came through religious. McCormack attributes the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 to Daniel O'Connell's ability to unite the Irish-Catholics from outlying areas. They became a formidable force, and "the mood in Ireland from 1826 onward was truly apocalyptic" (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 26). This apocalyptic fear developed because of O'Connell's religious tactics. By focusing on religion and Catholicism, he appealed to a

broad range of Irish people than other revolutionaries because the people understood his rhetoric. Most Catholics in Ireland felt the pinch of Anglican rule through the tithes they were required to pay to the Protestant Church; thus any movement that favored Catholicism over Protestantism was more easily accepted by the Irish. On the other hand, the Protestantism of the Anglo-Irish was threatened by O'Connell's presence, and his "Anglo-Irish contemporaries were convinced that his aim was Catholic domination rather than liberal secularism" (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 12).

O'Connell's threat was not only political, but also spiritual. In 1840, "Le Fanu's admiration for the Irish-Catholic revolutionaries changed to hate, specifically for O'Connell" (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 84) when he finally decried O'Connell in the *Dublin Evening Mail*, calling him a "sworn exterminator of Protestantism" (qtd. in McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 84), and as McCormack notes, it is at this time the last of the stories in *The Purcell Papers*, narrated by a Catholic Priest, is written. In fact, McCormack considers Le Fanu's stories collected in *The Purcell Papers* "a farewell to Abingdon" in which he mourns the decline of the Irish county (*Victorian Ireland* 63). Sadly, he had turned from what he admired about the Irish because of his political fears, and "behind the fears of O'Connell . . . lay fears about the spiritual quality of his [Le Fanu's] inheritance, fears ultimately involving larger issues of identity which merged with religious unease" (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 86). In *The Victorian Short Story*, Harold Orel remarks that it is these fears about the political and religious strife in Ireland, particularly the unrest between 1842 and 1848, which were reflected in Le Fanu's works during that period as "psychic decomposition" (37). Similarly, Lozes sees psychological

unease in Le Fanu because of his life-long divided political support for the two countries. On the one hand, he had a business sense of loyalty to England, and on the other he had a literary sense of loyalty to Ireland, which “suggests a troubled, complicated case of divided loyalties, and the possibility of guilt, for it was impossible for Le Fanu to be true to all his sympathies at once” (“Prince” 93). It is clear, then, that Le Fanu was deeply affected by the political and religious history of Ireland and that it emerges in his stories. In *Specter or Delusions?*, Margaret Carter notes that just as the supernatural invades faith and sanity in horror stories such as Le Fanu’s “Green Tea” and Stoker’s *Dracula*, the past intrudes on a “tidy conventional world” like the Anglo-Irish regime (99). Because of this, Le Fanu had the “conviction that the nineteenth century had inherited, and must pay for, the sins of the eighteenth” (Orel 38), and although neither Carter nor Orel states it, this retribution for historical events is one of the driving forces behind the supernatural.

Similarly, Le Fanu felt that he inherited his family’s history with Ireland’s national history. His Huguenot heritage immediately associates him with the Protestant ruling class, as does his ancestor, Charles de Cresserons, who fought with William of Orange and the Orangemen. Similarly, as Swafford notes in “Tradition and Guilt,” because of the religious station of Le Fanu’s father, “situation, history and personal finance had become intertwined for the Le Fanus, who were literally having to pay for injustices—or so their Catholic neighbors would style them—committed by generations past” (50). The tithes that had been extorted from Catholics to pay Protestant clergy were being challenged, and Le Fanu’s family stopped receiving much of the income to which it was accustomed. Le Fanu himself never completely recovered from the pressing financial

situations his father faced. In college, he felt the strain of not being wealthy, struggling to find money to pay dues to the Historical Society (McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 50-51), and because he still was struggling financially when his father-in-law died in 1856, he, Susanna, and their children moved into the house they inherited at eighteen Merion square, Dublin (Crawford *Bio-Bibliography* 6). Although never poor, Le Fanu continued to suffer financially, and as Orel notes, Le Fanu included much of his own financial troubles in the novel *The Tenants of Malory* (1866). However, there are aspects of Le Fanu's family life other than politics and money that affected him deeply.

One was the seemingly "inescapable heredity" of intermarriage. As McCormack remarks in *Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, "the Le Fanus were related to the Sheridans by three alliances, to the Knowles by two, to the Dobbins by two, and to the Bennetts by two" (1). It must have seemed that wherever he turned, Le Fanu was confronted by relatives. Although these familial relations are not specifically historical, they are another example of the difficulty of escaping one's family, and the theme of intermarriages emerges often in Le Fanu's works such as *Wylder's Hand* (1863-64) and *Uncle Silas* (1864). Both novels reject the idea that intermarriage is beneficial to the family. In *Wylder's Hand*, two cousins, Mark Wylder and Stanley Lake, are killed in their efforts to marry their other cousin, Dorcas Brandon. Similarly, in *Uncle Silas*, Silas attempts to force Maud Ruthyn into a marriage with her cousin so that he may have control over her money. When she refuses to marry Dudley, Silas and Dudley plot her death. At the end of both novels, the women are no longer tied to their cousins; however, they are irremediably affected by the events. Their lives may be happier now, but their suffering

remains with them as a memory, coloring their future. That Le Fanu incorporates many of his own familial anxieties and troubles into his works indicates that just as he felt the seemingly supernatural presence of Ireland's national history, he felt the presence of his family and its history as a powerful force, affecting his present life and his future.

Irish Ghosts

Throughout his writing career, Le Fanu drew upon Irish history and the demise of the landed Irish to show the effects that the past had on his own generation. Because of this, there are similarities between Le Fanu's experience of Ireland and the events in the lives of his characters. Characters such as O'Connor in "The Last Heir of Castle Connor" (1838), Silas and the Countess in "A Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess" (1838), O'Mara and Heathcote in "The Bridal of Carrigvarah" (1839), and the Glenfallens in "A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family" (1839) reflect some of the same conflicts and struggles Le Fanu saw and experienced while growing up in rural Ireland. All collected in *The Purcell Papers*, these stories are connected through Father Purcell, the fictional Catholic Priest among whose papers they were found. In his later works, Le Fanu turned from nostalgically mourning the loss of the noble Irish families to reflecting the way in which a nation is haunted by its past crimes. In "Ultor De Lacy" (1861), "The Stories of Lough Guir" (1870), and "Carmilla" (1871-72), he uses supernatural elements to emphasize the effects a nation's past has on the present. Thus, although his modes of representation changed slightly as he matured, Le Fanu continued to develop the theme that the past is a force which works supernaturally in the present. It makes itself felt in the

material world through loss and destruction. Often, the consequences of past actions cannot be avoided, but Le Fanu suggests it is important to recognize the power of the past in order to understand that actions in the present will affect the future.

Although William of Orange conquered Ireland and the Irish forces allied with England's deposed Catholic King James II at the end of the seventeenth century, the Irish-Catholic nobility continued to exist into the late eighteenth century. However, during this period, its power declined, and the noble family lines eventually dwindled because of their loss of land, their intermarriage with the British, or their transformation from landed aristocracy to bourgeois merchants. Le Fanu recognized this loss, and in his early, non-supernatural stories, he shows the demise of these Irish-Catholic families due to the effects of earlier religious and political wars in Ireland. His stories seem to be haunted by nostalgia for a time when Ireland still possessed some of its old nobility. In "Le Fanu's Houses," Jean Lozes notes of *Uncle Silas* what also may be said of the earlier stories in *The Purcell Papers*: it is "the ancient inevitability of violence that recurs and remains, the unalterable mark of history, of a troubled past which provides the scene for a plot that involves the collapse of a family, of a class, of a house" (108). The past violence and oppression led to the collapse of the Irish nobility, and because of Irish anger at this collapse, there was political unrest in Victorian Ireland. Through his nostalgia for an Ireland of the past, Le Fanu emphasizes that, even if non-material, the past is a very real force in the present.

In *Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, McCormack claims that as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was growing up, "an atmosphere of automatic, casual, and yet strangely intimate

violence pervaded rural Ireland, and Joseph transposed the mood of his own youth back into history . . ." (35). Through the character of Father Purcell, Le Fanu is able to project back onto history his current anxieties. Because Father Purcell is dead and the fictional editor has sifted through Purcell's papers to decide which are interesting enough to collect and publish, the stories already have a sense of history. However, they also are primarily stories of people's lives and histories from farther back. In order to distance the stories even more, Le Fanu includes notes from the fictional editor which remark on the deaths of those involved. In reference to the Countess in "A Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess," the editor states,

She is no more—she long since died, a childless and a widowed wife, and as her letter sadly predicts, none survive to whom the publication of this narrative can prove "injurious, or even painful." Strange! two [*sic*] powerful and wealthy families, that into which she was born, and that into which she had married, have ceased to be—they are utterly extinct. (2)

The history that this and other stories in *The Purcell Papers* recount is distanced by the deaths of the people involved, and the noble characters in these stories, like the Ireland of old, are "no more." In "The Prince of the Invisible," Lozes argues that Father Purcell's preoccupation "with the ancient glory of Ireland . . . strikingly contrasts its present dismal condition" (94). By distancing these stories and creating noble characters with which the reader can sympathize, Le Fanu develops a sense of nostalgia for Ireland before the nineteenth century.

In the prologue to Le Fanu's early story "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," the

narrator, Father Purcell, establishes a sense of nostalgia by reminding the reader of Ireland's past grandeur:

There is something in the decay of ancient grandeur to interest even the most unconcerned spectator—the evidences of greatness, of power, and of pride that survive the wreck of time, proving, in mournful contrast with present desolation and decay, what *was* in other days, appeal, with a resistless power, to the sympathies of our nature. (98)

While the reader is pondering this “evidence of greatness,” Purcell refers to ruined families whose “self-devotion and sacrifices in the cause of a lost country and of a despised religion” (99) instill a passionate interest in the person who gazes on the ruins of these families. In fact, the story of the demise of the young O'Connor, as Lozes also notes, can be read as “an allegory of the fate of . . . his own country . . .” (“Prince” 95). Although Lozes sees this story as an allegory of “the blind savagery [that] directs the theater of its [Ireland's] history” (95), it seems to be more of an allegory suggesting that something has infiltrated Ireland and is turning the people of its country against one another. As has been discussed in chapter one, Fitzgerald has a supernaturally evil quality about him, and his desire to kill O'Connor after they have developed a friendship almost parallels the way in which the Irish people were divided. As mentioned earlier, some, recognizing the inevitability of British rule, acceded, and others, with a sentimental and noble belief in nationalism and their religious freedom, would not give in. Like young O'Connor, they sacrificed themselves and their family lines by remaining true to their faith during a period when being a Catholic meant being denied education and land. Thus,

“The Last Heir” can be seen as a farewell to a noble class of Irish who sacrificed itself on principle in the same way that O’Connor deliberately aims away from Fitzgerald in order to keep his soul free from blood guilt. Because he represents Fitzgerald as a mysterious character who seems to have other-worldly qualities, Le Fanu indicates that the effects of the past on the present appear supernatural in some instances. By drawing a picture of the glory of the old and noble families of Ireland, Le Fanu develops a sense of nostalgia for a country that has decayed because of the internal divisions caused by invasions and religious wars of the past.

Similarly, this nostalgia is developed in “The Bridal of Carrigvarah” (1839), also published as a part of *The Purcell Papers*. In this story, Father Purcell introduces the character Martin Heathcote, father to a young girl who marries O’Mara, the boy next door not long before he is killed. Heathcote still lives in the stone house constructed by the Puritan Cromwellite settlers from England in the middle of the seventeenth century, but despite his Protestant ancestry, he has converted to “the true faith” (104) of Catholicism. Although the young O’Mara marries Heathcote’s daughter, Ellen, it is a secret marriage, and O’Mara does not tell his father because Colonel O’Mara wants his Irish son to marry Lady Emily, from England. Threatened with disinheritance if he does not marry Lady Emily, the young O’Mara visits her after he is married to Ellen. Prompted by an evil character Dwyer, who has mysterious and supernatural qualities like Fitzgerald, Heathcote follows O’Mara to the city, and before the young O’Mara can disclose his secret marriage, Heathcote does this for him. Enraged, Lady Emily’s father kills him in a duel. Because of Ellen’s poor health, Heathcote and Colonel O’Mara never inform her of

her husband's death, and she lives in seclusion believing that O'Mara chose to be with Lady Emily. Eventually, Ellen's illness leads to her death. Again, a noble family line collapses because of the machinations of a character with inexplicable motives. Dwyer turns the British against the Irish and divides the Irish against themselves. Despite his Protestant heritage and his family's immigration to Ireland, Heathcote has become a part of Ireland, as his Catholicism attests, whereas Lady Emily and her family are British. Colonel O'Mara's desire to marry his son to an English woman can be seen as an attempt to dismiss his Irish heritage in favor of wealth and status. Dwyer's presence and ability to manipulate others seems almost supernatural, and his machinations indicate an Ireland too willing to serve its own interests by sacrificing its principles. The young O'Mara and Ellen Heathcote are the true, noble Irish-by-birth characters, whether from Anglican or Catholic heritage, who can no longer exist in an Ireland which has lost its heritage to an assimilation with England.

This nostalgia for what has been lost can be seen in other stories in *The Purcell Papers* such as "A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family" (1839) in which an ancient family line is lost. Before his marriage to the current Lady Glenfallen, Lord Glenfallen has previously married a woman who appears to be Dutch and who is blind. This is significant because, in 1689, William of Orange, from Protestant Holland, invaded Ireland. Thus, the blind first wife of Glenfallen is associated with Protestant invader with whom Le Fanu's ancestors fought. Despite, or perhaps because of, these associations, Le Fanu never indicates that she is to blame; rather, Lord Glenfallen appears to be at fault for attempting to be true to two women, one associated with Protestantism and the other with

Catholicism. As in the cases of O'Connor and O'Mara, it is the division between loyalty to Irish heritage and loyalty to the new ruling class that causes the destruction of the Glenfallen family line. In this case, however, the past invades upon the present through visions rather than manifestations of evil. Lady Glenfallen's sight is obscured when a black veil that no one else sees drops before her eyes, and Lord Glenfallen imagines he speaks with angels. Although these are not explicitly supernatural events, their preternatural qualities suggest that something other than an explicable physical force is acting. Lord Glenfallen's division of loyalties between his wives reflects the division of loyalties already noted in *Le Fanu*. The invasion of the British and the laws imposed by them on the Irish-Catholics furthered these divided loyalties and the eventual demise of Irish nobility. By developing a nostalgia for the "ancient grandeur" of Ireland, *Le Fanu* heightens the contrast between what Ireland once was and its decay in the nineteenth century. This contrast emphasizes the destructive effects injustices of the past can have on the present and the almost supernatural way they are manifested in the world. As I have already noted, because of the invasions and wars of the seventeenth century and the anti-Catholic laws of the eighteenth, many Irish-Catholics in the nineteenth century had been reduced to poverty and rebellion. Not only do the injustices of the past haunt the present, but, like a ghost, nostalgia of the past haunts the present to reinforce the memory of those injustices.

In his stories after those collected in *The Purcell Papers*, *Le Fanu* heightens the impact of the past on the present by focusing on elements of the supernatural. He shows that the past not only haunts national memories, but it also haunts a nation in a way that is

more inexplicable. In “An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street” (1853), “Ultor De Lacy” (1861), “The Stories of Lough Guir” (1870), and “Carmilla” (1871-72), supernatural elements from the past invade the present. Differing from those in his earlier works, these elements are not merely preternatural visions nor mysterious characters, rather they have a material presence, heightening the supernatural quality and emphasizing the impact the past has on the present.

In *Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, McCormack argues that suicide is a symbol for Le Fanu’s time in history and the destruction of the Anglo-Irish (80) because the laws they made cause the strife and uprisings that threaten them. As he shows through noble Irish characters in “The Last Heir,” and “The Bridal of Carrigvarah,” Le Fanu shows through suicides that the destruction of Ireland comes from within, from the divided Irish and Anglo-Irish. Caused by its internal divisions, much like the divided loyalties Le Fanu felt, the demise of Ireland returns to haunt the people currently living in Ireland in the same way the ghost of Judge Horrock haunts the two medical students who rent the house in which he hanged himself. In “Strange Disturbances,”²⁴ the two students are haunted by this ghost over a number of nights. Although the reader hesitates between a supernatural and a natural explanation for the hauntings (is it a rat or is there really a ghost?), placing

²⁴“Strange Disturbances” is an earlier companion story to “The Haunted House in Westminster” (1872), which was later republished as “Mr. Justice Harbottle” in the collection *In A Glass Darkly* (1872). Whereas “Harbottle” focuses on Harbottle’s life and his suicide, “Strange Disturbances” focuses on Horrock’s ghost and his haunting of the house years after he died. It appears that after writing “Strange Disturbances,” Le Fanu recognized the potential for a story explaining the presence of the ghost. However, like most of his later stories, “Harbottle” is set in England whereas “Strange Disturbances,” like most of his early and middle stories, is set in Ireland.

the story in the category of Todorov's fantastic, the fact that the students were unaware of the story surrounding the house before they see the ghost suggests history can haunt people even when they have no knowledge of it. If, as McCormack suggests, suicides do represent the demise of the Anglo-Irish, then this story of the fantastic can be understood as Ireland's history, specifically the cruelty of the Anglo-Irish upon the Irish that brings about the demise of both. Although his heritage is never revealed, Judge Horrock lived in eighteenth-century Ireland but is associated with the ruling class of Anglo-Irish because of his position as barrister. He was a particularly cruel judge, and in the same way his ghost comes back to haunt the present occupants of the house, the crimes of the English return to haunt the lives of those occupying Ireland in the present. Although the students in this story do not suffer except for sleepless and fearful nights, there are other stories in which Le Fanu uses a similar technique to emphasize the often harmful effects past cruelties have on the present.

In "Ultor De Lacy" and "The Stories of Lough Guir," Le Fanu shows the harmful effects that events from the past can have on the present. "Ultor De Lacy," subtitled "A Legend of Capperpullen," is specifically historical in its dealings with the sixteenth- and eighteenth-century wars and their effects on Victorian Ireland. However, Le Fanu locates this history in one family, the De Lacys. Like the divided Ireland, the De Lacys have a divided history. Although the family has English origins, it is now "long naturalized in Ireland" (445). This division is echoed in the current De Lacy, Ultor. Whereas he fights against the crown of England and is forced to go into hiding and leave his daughters, Alice and Una, his ancestor, Walter De Lacy, took Irish prisoners on orders from the

Queen of England.²⁵ One of the prisoners taken by Walter De Lacy was a man named O'Donnell, who had asked that his life be spared because of a familial connection to the De Lacys. He was executed, however, and at his death, he vowed to destroy the De Lacy family. At his father's death bed, Ultor De Lacy, only twelve years old, was made to look at a miniature portrait of O'Donnell, who had been dead for almost a century, because his dying father wanted to warn him of O'Donnell's threat. One hundred and fifty years after his death, O'Donnell does return to haunt the De Lacys and exact his revenge. When Ultor sees O'Donnell's ghost, he calls for a priest to keep his daughters safe, but the priest is lost in a mysterious fog surrounding the estate. In a physical form, O'Donnell seduces Una, the youngest and fairest of Ultor's daughters, into the spectral world. By the nineteenth century, the family line is finished because Alice, the oldest, is pledged to and eventually enters a convent, and as in "Secret History of an Irish Countess," the narrator states that all are now gone. Their family's past has come back to haunt and destroy them. In "Blue Devils and Green Tea," Barbara Gates notes that "in the fictional world of Le Fanu, whatever a man's visage or name, his past cannot be eluded or denied; it is encoded within him" (190). Although she refers to Le Fanu's novel *Checkmate*, in which a man attempts to disguise his identity and return from exile by changing the appearance of his face, her statement is certainly true of "Ultor De Lacy" as well. The De Lacys cannot escape the crimes against the Irish committed by their ancestor, Walter De Lacy, even though they were committed over a century prior to the time of the story. Through the

²⁵Because a portrait of the executed O'Donnell is dated 1601, it appears that the queen mentioned is Queen Elizabeth I.

supernatural presence of O'Donnell, Le Fanu shows that the past is a powerful force, physically affecting the present.

Similarly, the past becomes a supernatural force in the "Stories of Lough Guir." For this collection of anecdotes, Le Fanu returns to his childhood, remembering Irish superstitions and folk tales. These folk tales and superstitions take on a slightly different tone from those in *The Purcell Papers*, though. Whereas tales of superstition and folklore in *The Purcell Papers* tend to fit into Todorov's category of the uncanny, seemingly supernatural at the beginning, but with a natural explanation at the end, the tales in "The Stories of Lough Guir" are fantastic; the reader hesitates between a supernatural explanation and a natural one.²⁶ Two of the stories in this collection refer to instances in which the Magician, Earl of Desmond, attempts to lure someone into speaking with him in order to break the curse which has sent him and his castle to the bottom of the lake from which he emerges every seven years. In one instance, the Earl approaches a blacksmith and motions for him to re-shoe the horse; however, when the blacksmith sees that the horse has on silver shoes, he is aware that this is the Magician Earl, and the smith utters a prayer. Of course, this angers the Magician who, however, cannot harm the smith now that he has prayed, and the Earl disappears. Because the smith did not speak with the Magician Earl, he was safe from harm and the Earl still remains under the spell, "but

²⁶Although Le Fanu wrote both uncanny and fantastic stories, as defined by Todorov, throughout his career, his earlier stories are primarily uncanny whereas his middle and later stories are usually fantastic. Perhaps this change marks his recognition that in order to impress upon his readers the presence of forces which cannot be explained by material science, he needed to make the readers question the events in the stories more. By forcing the readers to hesitate between a natural and supernatural reading, Le Fanu makes them spend more time pondering the forces in the stories.

what, in the event of his [the Earl's] succeeding, would befall the person whom he had thus ensnared, no one knows" (148). This story, like the others in the collection, emphasizes the force of the past within the present. It was centuries ago that the Magician Earl was confined to the lake, yet his presence is felt among the people of the county who still fear him, much as the Irish still suffer under the ghostly presence of the English. McCormack also notes that in the "Stories of Lough Guir," each tale "tells of an unsuccessful attempt by the past to lure a human being into complicity with evil or death" (*Victorian Ireland* 240). Although the past is unsuccessful in these stories, it still threatens the peace of the present. The threat is physical; like Una in "Ultor De Lacy," a person who speaks to the Earl may be taken from the physical world. Just as with the history of the Irish nation, the history of an Irish county looms as a powerful force in the present.

"Carmilla," too, suggests the idea that the past sins of a nation linger, affecting those who inhabit it in the present. Although it is not explicitly about Ireland (it is set in Styria), "Carmilla" often is read as political allegory of the Anglo-Irish. Because Laura's father is English, he and his family are outsiders in Styria, much as the English are outsiders in Ireland. However, like the Anglo-Irish, the narrator is a hybrid: Laura's father is British and her mother, who died when Laura was young and is rarely mentioned throughout the story, is Styrian. Like the Anglo-Irish in Ireland, Laura has a position of power in Austria; her father owns a castle, and even though they are not wealthy by English standards, "a small income, in that part of the world, goes a long way" (244). Thus, when Carmilla, emerging from the ancient folktales of Austria, intrudes on Laura's

life, threatening her existence and luring her toward death, it is as if Laura's Austrian heritage intrudes on and threatens her complacent, aristocratic, English life. As Robert Tracy notes in *The Unappeasable Host*, Laura's situation in "Carmilla" suggests "the lives of many Anglo-Irish landowners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," in which the old Catholic families threatened the English landowners as Carmilla threatens Laura and her family (71). At the same time Laura is repelled by Carmilla, she is drawn to her, and at the end, as I have already noted in chapter one, Laura cannot escape Carmilla, imagining she hears Carmilla's step. Once again, Tracy remarks on the similarity between Laura's situation and that of the Anglo-Irish: "In Laura's failure to resist we can perhaps discern La Fanu's deepest anxieties about his own class, and his fear that the events of Irish history can never be laid to rest" (72). History is vampiric, drawing those from the present into the same cycle, creating more vampires. The events in the present will affect future generations, returning to haunt them.

Not only can "Carmilla" be read as political history, but it can also be read as sexual and economic history. In fact, in *Politics of Atrocity and Lust*, Alok Bhalla argues that Laura is the sexual and economic victim of her father's patriarchal culture. Bhalla claims that Carmilla is "the monster men always succeed in creating when they refuse to meet other men in a free and equal democratic space" (30). Thus, Laura is threatened because of her dependence on her father. She depends on him both economically and sexually. Although Laura's economic dependence is easily understood—Laura must rely on her father for income until she is married at which time she will rely on her husband—her sexual dependence should be explained briefly. Because Laura and her

father live in a castle in Austria, they are isolated; the nearest residence which houses a family of their social class is over three miles away, and the only person of Laura's age who resides there is a young woman. However, as the reader soon discovers, the young woman was killed by Carmilla. Laura has no contact with anyone but her father and the household servants, and she has no means by which to discover her own sexuality or develop it in relation to men. It is likely that her father would have chosen her husband for her; he controls her sexuality. When Carmilla enters and begins to awaken Laura's sexuality and interfere with the relationship between her and her father, the lesbianism and loss of vitality, Bhalla argues, is a natural extension of the power which her father holds over Laura. Carmilla takes Laura's life and strength, slowly killing her in the same way that oppressive rulers slowly drain the economic life from those over whom they rule, and "Laura's agony is a particular instance of the pattern of social cruelty and human grief which has persisted over centuries and has, therefore, begun to be seen as if it is preternatural" (Bhalla 26). This social cruelty is historical; just as England invaded and oppressed Ireland, making it economically dependant, the patriarchal system of Laura's father oppresses Laura and threatens to make her another Carmilla. Thus, Laura, "believing she has no choice, . . . surrenders herself without protest and . . . becomes another victim in the long and repeated histories of sexual and economic coercion . . ."

(Bhalla 30). Because the English, patriarchal system has created Carmilla and threatens to make Laura vampiric like Carmilla; it is as if Laura's father has threatened his own family's existence because of his oppression of Laura and isolation from the Austrian culture of Laura's mother.

Although Bhalla's reading might seem a bit forced, the idea of division is important. Carmilla awakens Laura sexually, and her recognition of her own sexuality is contrary to her image of herself as a young Victorian lady. With the help of her father and English Victorian culture, Laura tries to ignore both her sexuality and her Styrian heritage, but they emerge in the supernatural form of Carmilla. This is similar to Le Fanu's perception that a divided Ireland was destroying itself by ignoring its heritage. The past pattern of oppression and rebellion affects the present, and those who live in the present are at risk of becoming like vampires themselves, repeating the sins of their nations at the same time during which they suffer for them.

Le Fanu was well aware of this inevitable intrusion of the history of a nation on its present inhabitants; nineteenth-century Ireland was suffering from the political events of the seventeenth century, and, it can be argued, suffering for events as far back as the twelfth. By ignoring history, people are unlikely to recognize the threat it poses to their present stability. In Victorian Ireland, the Anglo-Irish were in danger of losing not only their position in society, but also their land if the Irish uprisings were successful. The aristocracy needed to understand the past injustices in order to recognize the present threat. Another danger in ignoring a nation's past is that the crimes it has already committed may be repeated only to affect future generations. Certainly, the Easter uprisings of 1919 and the current complications in the 1998 Good Friday Peace Accord talks indicate that England and Ireland are still experiencing the consequences for the social injustices committed by England centuries ago. These twentieth-century events, like La Fanu's stories, are evidence that the past is a powerful force which affects events

and people in the present in ways that cannot be explained by science or rational thought.

Family Ghosts

Similar to Le Fanu's interest in national history, which is evident throughout his writing career, his interest in the history of families appears in his stories from the early ones collected in *The Purcell Papers* to the later ones from *In a Glass Darkly*. Stories such as "The Last Heir," "A Tyrone Family," and "Ultor De Lacy" indicate his interest in both the familial and the political, and they also show that the familial and political are intimately intertwined. Though, as I remarked earlier, I have separated the two for clarity. The same themes and ideas occur, however, and because these themes are most obviously evident in those ancestral stories which are supernatural, I will refer primarily to Le Fanu's later stories in which the supernatural is more prevalent. Also, because of the way in which Le Fanu intertwines family histories with political histories, I will refer to some of the stories mentioned in the earlier sections of this chapter, primarily "Carmilla." Whether through the use of specters, vampires, or men returned from the dead, Le Fanu uses these supernatural occurrences in his stories to demonstrate the powerful force of ancestral history.

In many of Le Fanu's stories such as "Ultor De Lacy" and "The Mysterious Lodger" (1850), the consequences of one character's actions are suffered by others of a later generation. Just as Una, Alice, and their father, Ultor, suffer for the sins of their ancestor, Walter De Lacy, the children in "The Mysterious Lodger" "will have to pay for

the sins of the father, because of some ruthless determinism" (Zeender 83).²⁷ Some force, which science is unable to explain, works within this world to serve retribution for crimes committed, but it is indifferent to the innocence or culpability of the person on whom it exacts revenge. For example, unlike Walter De Lacy, Ultor De Lacy is innocent of crimes against the Irish because Ultor rebels against England, the country for whom his ancestor fought. Unfortunately, Ultor cannot escape the consequences for his ancestor's actions; they are "encoded within him" (Gates 190). As Joseph Browne recognizes, "the most horrible fears and the greatest terrors for Le Fanu were generated not only by man's capacity for self-destruction . . . but also by the prolonged suffering and wretched misery that such destruction could effect in succeeding generations among the guilty and innocent alike" (9). Although neither Gates nor Browne connects an individual character with a nation, it is apparent that in the same way a nation must suffer the effects of its actions in the past, so must the descendants of a family line suffer the consequences for the actions of their ancestors. It is this force of family history that Le Fanu emphasizes by combining a strong sense of family heritage with the supernatural.

Although including primates as a part of human family heritage may not be usual, in the nineteenth century there was much discussion about the relationship between humans and apes; Darwinism threatened the religious beliefs of many. When Darwin's work appeared, it challenged the traditional understanding of ancestry or, at the very least, added a new dimension to it. Discussions about the ancestral history of humans, their

²⁷In "The Mysterious Lodger," the narrator's children die under suspicious and horrible circumstances that are connected to his atheism.

descent from primates as Darwin argued, certainly could not be avoided or escaped during the Victorian period. As Lenora Ledwon points out in "Darwin's Ghosts," it is important to remember Darwin never claimed that humans descended from apes, but rather that they had a common ancestor. Although in *Origin of the Species* (1859) Darwin did not discuss the implications of natural selection for humans, Ledwon notes that "the public immediately drew the obvious conclusion that man was kin to the ape" (10). After presenting this background, she continues to argue that, published in 1869, two years before *The Descent of Man*, Le Fanu's "Green Tea" can be read as a story responding to the frightening implications of Darwinism for clergy. She asks, "why not assume the apparition of the monkey [in "Green Tea"] represents a monkey. . . ? A monkey has terrible implications for a clergy-man in the post-Darwinian world" (12). Ledwon is not alone in noticing the Darwinian implications of "Green Tea"; Helen Stoddart in "The Precautions of Nervous People are Infectious," also recognizes the similarities between the monkey in the story and the primates of Darwinism. When the spectral monkey first appears, Jennings is studying Pagan and ancient religions. Although he is a clergyman and apparently a strong Christian believer, he is haunted even during his prayers. Eventually, the monkey urges him to slit his throat, and despite his attempts to ignore the monkey, he cannot fight it and kills himself. If this deadly ghost is a Darwinian monkey, Jennings is haunted by the ghosts of his ancestors; no matter how much scripture he reads, he cannot escape his heritage, his animalistic nature. In fact, it is possible that Jennings's research may have contributed to his visions of the monkey, and because his research is about Pagan religions, there is a connection to the Druids of ancient England

and Ireland. Thus, Jennings cannot escape either his Pagan religious past nor can he escape his Darwinian biological past.²⁸ His animalistic and primitive heritage haunts him. The Darwinian rumors during the Victorian period offered Le Fanu another method for emphasizing human inability to escape the powerful force of history and the past.

In two of his later works, "The Haunted Baronet" (1870) and (as I have already discussed earlier) "Carmilla"(1871-72), Le Fanu returns to more traditional family ancestry to emphasize the force of the past. Although "Carmilla" involves a slightly older family line, the hauntings in both stories emerge from maternal ancestry.²⁹ In "The Haunted Baronet," Philip Feltram is the great-grandson of Mary Feltram, who was in love with her ward, Sir Jasper Mardykes. Mary Feltram was of Cloosted, across the lake from Mardykes Hall, and when she was made ward of Mardykes after her parents died, Cloosted deteriorated. Despite Mary's love for Mardykes and the fact she had borne his son, he married another woman. Leaving the son to be reared by the town innkeeper, Mary disappeared, and although she was no longer seen in town, her ghost was often seen rising out of the water. Cloosted passed to the Mardykes. At the time of the story, there

²⁸Here, again, it is important to remember that Darwin had not made any of these claims by the time "Green Tea" was published, although they were circulating among the public.

²⁹Because the hauntings in these stories emerge matrilineally, the ghosts can be associated with Catholic Ireland, the mother country. This helps to support Sage's argument in *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* that Protestant writers reflected the threat of Catholicism through the ghosts they created. Similarly, the matrilineal heritage shows Le Fanu's fear that Ireland was crumbling from within because Laura is threatened by her mother's family at the same time she is a part of it, just as the Anglo-Irish were threatened by aspects of Ireland at the same time they were intimately connected with it.

are only two Feltrams living, Philip and his brother, William. Through Philip, though, the Feltram line still is connected to the Mardykes because Philip is a traveling companion to the current Mardykes, Sir Bale. It is the wrong committed by Sir Jasper Mardykes upon Mary Feltram that must be avenged by Philip and William three generations later. Unlike Ultor De Lacy, Sir Bale is not completely innocent; he drinks, gambles, wastes his money, and treats Philip cruelly. Thus, when vengeance is attained, "the personal and the ancestral past are made to coincide . . ." (Coughlan 37). When Philip is dragged from the lake and pronounced dead, the doctor, a representative of physical science, cannot explain how Philip regains his life. Whether he has been raised from the dead or this is a spirit manifested through Philip's body is unclear. Either way, a force more powerful than the physical world has brought him back, and because of the personality change after his apparent death, he seems to have a supernatural presence. Now that Sir Bale is in debt and desperate and Philip is no longer meek, Philip begins to take control. When he claims there are men in the woods across the lake at Cloosted who would be willing to lend Sir Bale money, Sir Bale frantically accepts the offer and even overcomes his fear of the lake to travel by boat to meet them. Later, the reader and Sir Bale discover that one of the men he meets is identical to the man in a picture his servant finds stored away. Apparently, the picture is of Mary Feltram's father, whose spirit is supernaturally manifested in the physical world to exact revenge on Mardykes descendants. Despite his recognition that he is dealing with ghosts and spirits, Sir Bale's desperation drives him back to the wood, and upon his last visit to Cloosted, Sir Bale is mysteriously forewarned of his death. He returns and correctly predicts the day of his death although the doctor cannot find any

signs of illness. After Sir Bale dies, Philip mysteriously disappears, and the Mardykes' land passes to Sir Bale's wife, who, in her will, bequeaths the land to her cousin, William Feltram, younger brother to Philip. The wrongs of history have been corrected, and the Feltrams now own the property that should have been theirs.

Through supernatural means, the force of the past has intruded into the present; its power to resurrect the dead Philip cannot be explained by the doctor of physical science, yet it affects the physical world. Just as Philip inherits the crimes committed against his great-grandmother and must avenge them, Sir Bale inherits his ancestor's crime as well as the punishment for that crime. In an attempt to explain this connection, Patricia Coughlan comments that "Sir Bale seems to carry in the people's mind the guilt associated with his ancestor's evil deed. It seems that he is not quite fully an individual, but as well as being himself, in some sense *is* also his ancestor" (32). Although Coughlan's statement holds true in one sense, the supernatural presence of Philip and Mary's father seems to suggest that as well as being punished for his ancestor's crimes, he is also being punished for his own; there are two wrongs being avenged: Mardykes's treatment of Mary and Sir Bale's treatment of Philip. Unfortunately, Bale must suffer for both. Just as Jennings cannot escape his Darwinian ancestry, Bale cannot escape his familial ancestry or his own past.

Similarly, Laura, the narrator and victim in "Carmilla," cannot escape her family's past. While Laura and her father are looking at some restored paintings, they find a portrait of Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, dated 1698, and Laura comments, "I am descended from the Karnsteins; that is, mama was" (273). This picture contains the history of Laura's own family line at the same time it intermingles with the present.

Carmilla is the Countess Mircalla from the picture; she simply uses an anagram of her original name when she enters the house of a new victim. (Previously, she had entered the home of Laura's friend under the name Millarca.) As Carol Senf states in "Women and Power in 'Carmilla,'" "that Carmilla is a distant ancestor of Laura's mother, another woman who may have succumbed to a vampire attack, leads the reader to infer that Laura is simply the last in a long line of victims" (28). Laura cannot escape her family's history and is intimately connected to her maternal ancestor, and Carmilla's "presence once again suggests that the new times have not found their way out of anguish; the future has already been prefigured in the despairs of the past and has been foredoomed" (Bhalla 31). Although Bhalla argues this in reference to the political revolutions of the countryside, the same is true of Laura's familial history. She is related to Carmilla through her mother, and the family connection haunts and nearly kills her. It is possible that what has happened to Carmilla in the past might happen to Laura; she may become a vampire herself. Even though she does not, the danger is present. Once Carmilla is killed with a wooden stake through the heart and decapitated, it may seem that her threat and the threat of the past is gone. However, as Jack Sullivan remarks, Carmilla's death scene "fails to contain the larger forces of which she is only a single manifestation" (60), implying that the threat still exists and explaining Laura's longing for Carmilla as she concludes her narrative. Sullivan never indicates, though, what the "larger forces" are, but William Veeder recognizes that one of these forces is the past. Although Veeder does not focus on Laura's family heritage, his statement, "the past can never be purged" (219), is applicable to a reading of "Carmilla" that implies a person is haunted continually by his or her

family heritage.

Throughout his other short stories, Le Fanu continues to emphasize that the past is a force which "can never be purged." Whether it be the past of a nation, the past of a family, the past of all humanity, or his own past, Le Fanu recognized the past as a powerful force affecting the physical world. To heighten the reader's awareness of this presence, Le Fanu often turned to supernatural elements which represented the power of the past. By showing the power of this non-material force, Le Fanu warns his readers that there are elements of which they may not be aware affecting their lives. Similarly, he attempts to explain the plight of Victorian Ireland through stories such as "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," "The Bridal of Carrigvarah," and "Ultor De Lacy" by showing how past events emerge in and affect the present state of the nation. In stories such as "The Haunted Baronet" and "Carmilla," Le Fanu also shows that often people in this world suffer the consequences for actions taken by their ancestors centuries earlier; the non-material force of the past manifests itself in the present, affecting those who are connected with it. As Joseph Browne notes, Le Fanu's villains "rarely 'look back' to realize the suffering they have caused. Needless to say, they never look forward either to the destructive consequences of their acts—consequences which Le Fanu always forces the reader to appreciate" (13). Because Le Fanu highlights the impact the past has on the present, the reader becomes aware that any actions taken in the present may have a profound, often unexpected, and seemingly supernatural effect in the future.

Chapter Three

The Psychological

Reacting against the rationalism of the eighteenth century, the Romantics began to focus on internal, subjective experiences, which they portrayed as external, objective realities. For example, Wordsworth projects his feelings onto the landscape in "Tintern Abbey," and Coleridge expresses the workings of the creative mind through the supernatural landscape in "Kubla Khan." Not only did this technique pave the way for the ghost story (as I explained in the introduction), but it also paved the way for the psychological story, an exploration of the human mind. As individual experiences gained precedence over collective experiences, writers began to draw upon the notion that different people may have different interpretations of the same event. Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein*, Wilkie Collins in *The Moonstone*, Robert Browning in *The Ring and the Book*, and Charles Dickens in *Bleak House* use multiple narratives to reflect varying vantage points of the same events. In the nineteenth century, growing interest in individual perception can also be seen in the number of authors who broach the subject of madness: Byron, Mary Shelley, Collins, Robert Browning, Charlotte Brontë, and Braddon, for example.³⁰ Not only did writers portray individual perspectives and experiences, but they also began to use images that reflected a character's inner state. As

³⁰Gilbert and Gubar's book, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, also identifies a number of nineteenth-century writers, primarily women, who refer to madness. Although their reading of these occurrences is feminist rather than psychological, it supports the idea that many Romantic and Victorian writers were focusing on mental states, repressed emotions, and internal experiences by expressing them externally as madness.

Elizabeth MacAndrew states, in the nineteenth-century fiction that descended from the Gothic novels of the eighteenth century, "man's soul, already reflected in paintings and statues, began to look back at him from the mirrors and, worse still, from his double, a living breathing copy of himself" (7), and as the nineteenth century progressed, writers became even more interested in man's inner demons.

Although psychological novels developed from nineteenth-century supernatural fiction, the later fiction tends to represent the psyche of a character as an internal mental state that other characters do not experience, in contrast to much of the earlier fiction which represents comparable phenomena as an external threat to many of the characters involved. However, many of the themes in psychological novels of the early twentieth century developed from Victorian supernatural and preternatural fiction because, in these Victorian stories, "there is a probing of humanity's basic psychological forces . . ."

(MacAndrew 8). Instead of portraying external dangers and troubles humans face, as many eighteenth-century novels did, supernatural tales in the nineteenth century tend to show "the unknown forces in man, forces, that . . . appeared dangerous and alien, [and] were profoundly frightening" (Briggs 20). Humans were no longer represented as facing a danger other than themselves; they were shown to be facing a danger within themselves, presented in the fiction as preternatural or supernatural events.³¹ According to MacAndrew, these nineteenth-century supernatural tales and novels "occupy a middle

³¹As I noted in the introduction, I differentiate the preternatural from the supernatural by defining preternatural as an occurrence that may not be explicitly supernatural but creates an uneasy feeling in the reader or character, indicating that there may be something greater at work than mere coincidence.

ground where concepts of general human psychology can be portrayed. Their characters fall between the abstract and the concrete, between the transcendental and the everyday, between the allegorical and the mimetic" (83), where the psychological lies. Writers were interested in the human conscience, and according to Peter Penzoldt, "as most of these ghosts [in supernatural literature] are avenging spirits, the idea that you cannot escape your own conscience may partly account for this." He adds, however, that "under the influence of psychoanalysis many authors have come to the conclusion that ghosts are neither realities nor momentary illusions, but symptoms of a form of mental disease and thus liable to appear independently of time and place" (35). Remembering this is important because it is easy to read the characters of many ghostly tales as being afflicted with mental diseases such as schizophrenia even though the authors would not have been able to apply that term or have had an understanding of the illness. Although the author may have been describing what readers now know to be a specific form of dementia, the cause for the apparent madness was more uncertain in the nineteenth century than it is today, and because the attacks of dementia appeared "independently of time and place" with no rational explanation, they were often attributed to preternatural and supernatural intervention.

That Le Fanu was interested in the powers of the human mind, its relation to the physical world, and what is now called psychology³² is apparent in his stories. The inner states of characters are reflected externally through struggles with their consciences,

³²Although he would not have used this term, I use the words "psychology" and "psychological" because Le Fanu is interested in the relationship of the human mind with the external world.

dreams, doubles, projections, and grotesque images, all of which heighten the supernatural presence of the human psyche. As Bayer-Berenbaum says of the Gothic, "the ability to think has been projected beyond the human mind and then given the capacity to alter the physical world, to materialize objects at will, instantaneously, miraculously. The supernatural therefore represents the ultimate expansion of human consciousness" (32). This is a clear expression of the relationship between the supernatural and the psychological, but it avoids mention of other supernatural forces, such as the spiritual and historical, often found in Le Fanu's works. Although the psychological is closely connected with the spiritual and historical forces, there are aspects that separate them. The psychological refers not to the religious and spiritual state of the character but is tied to his or her mental state. The psychological force does not focus on something outside of the person such as a spiritual being controlling events in the material world; it focuses on how the internal state of a person can control his or her outward actions. However, like manifestations of the spiritual and historical forces, the physical manifestations of the psychological force cannot be understood materially; its power is inexplicable, and even twentieth-century attempts to explain the phenomena of the human mind are insufficient. No matter how much the characters and the readers explain the supernatural events in rational or scientific terms, there is still something inexplicable that leaves the reader with an eerie and uncanny feeling.

I have divided this chapter into four sections, the first dealing with Le Fanu's interest in the human mind and inner states of the soul. Following this are three more sections divided by the different techniques Le Fanu used to portray the psychological

force. In the early stages of his writing (1838-1842), analyzed in the section labeled "Perceptions," the guilt and uneasy consciences of Le Fanu's characters are often expressed through the ways in which they interpret and understand their experiences. The next section discusses Le Fanu's technique, as it developed throughout his career, of emphasizing the supernatural quality of the human conscience through ghostly projections. In the last section, "Doubles," I will refer to "Spalatro" (1843) and the stories from *In a Glass Darkly* (1872).³³ In these middle and later stories, Le Fanu intensified the supernatural presence of the psyche by creating grotesque doubles of the characters. Because Le Fanu often returned to stories he had written earlier and his themes are similar throughout his works, the chronological divisions I suggest are not precise; rather I create them to show the progression of the techniques Le Fanu used to present a similar theme. By focusing on and reflecting the inner states of his characters, Le Fanu is able to warn his readers that the human conscience is a powerful force, and if its presence is not recognized, it will surface in the material world, often with dangerous results.

Le Fanu and The Human Mind

At the same time writers were becoming more interested in the experiences of the individual, the public was becoming interested in the power of the mind and its ability to

³³When discussing *In a Glass Darkly* throughout the section "Doubles," I avoid referring to "The Familiar" and "The Room in the Dragon Volant." "The Familiar" was originally written in 1842, when it was published under the title "The Watcher." It will be analyzed in the preceding section, "Projections." Although it can be read psychologically, "The Room in the Dragon Volant" is not a supernatural story and does not fit into these sections.

control the body. Hypnotism and mesmerism were popular; for the Victorians, they were a concrete representation of the power the mind had over the body and the ease with which that mind could be controlled by someone or something else. Because Le Fanu's writing coincided with the popularity of Anton Mesmer's theories of hypnotism, as Crawford notes, it is easy to understand why "Le Fanu, like numerous other Victorian authors, was sensitive to the inner self" ("Landscape" 98). Thus, Le Fanu was not only influenced by the Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century, but he was also influenced by the interests of popular culture.

It is clear from William Le Fanu's *Seventy Years of Irish Life* that his brother, Joseph Sheridan, was familiar with hypnotism. William introduces his own interest as his "experiences in a science, if it may so be called, which is still full of difficulty and mystery." He continues:

I have ventured to call it a science, as the study of it in France and elsewhere has led to a greater sense of its importance than formerly existed. I refer to hypnotism, or electro-biology, as it was called when I first experimented in it, from its supposed connection with electricity, and with the relation of electricity to human life. (301)

Although William never offers any explanation of how mesmerism works, he claims that it does work and gives several examples of his own experiments. At first, he places metallic discs in the hands of his subjects. He realizes, however, that any small object works, indicating that this form of control is not electro-biological, but works because of the power of "suggestion," a word he uses often when describing his experiments. He

claims to have had such power over his subjects that he always refused to suggest death to them, fearing the results. Whether these experiments and occurrences are legitimate is not as important as the fact that William Le Fanu was interested enough in mesmerism and hypnotism to study and write about it, implying that Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was familiar with experiments in this popular phenomenon as well. Although he never directly refers to it in his short stories, he does write about some instances which are similar to those William Le Fanu describes, also indicating his interest in the subject.³⁴

Whereas William was interested in how hypnotism works, Joseph Sheridan seems to have been more interested in the effects hypnotism wrought. Patricia Coughlan notes:

Subjects in the trance cast by hypnotists using the newly discovered “animal magnetism” seemed to reveal the possible existence of other personalities within the self, and in fact the development of psychology towards the discoveries of the psychoanalysts did happen as a curious combination of rational and avowedly surrational inquiry. The status of dual or multiple personality and of apparent haunting and visionary experiences of all kinds remained uneasily undefined throughout Le Fanu’s period. . . . (18)

It is on this uneasiness and ambiguity that Le Fanu seems to focus. The doubles and projections of his characters reflect the possibility of multiple personalities. Although

³⁴In “The Room in the Dragon Volant,” the narrator is given a drug that immobilizes him although he still retains control over his senses. This immobility is similar to the experiences of William Le Fanu’s subjects who, after he had suggested immobility to them, were unable to open their eyes or move their muscles, no matter how much they struggled.

Coughlan does not analyze the multiple personalities in Le Fanu's novel *Uncle Silas*, McCormack's analysis can assist the readers in understanding her comments. In *Uncle Silas*, the two brothers, Austin and Silas Ruthyn, appear to be different aspects of the same person, and McCormack notes that the two brothers "represent two aspects of a unity rather than two individual characters . . ." ("Swedenborgianism" 24). Whereas Austin seems good and kindly, even if isolated, Silas is evil and cunning, but Austin places his daughter in Silas's care, sacrificing her so that Silas's name may be cleared from murder. McCormack suggests that Austin's act foreshadows Silas's real attempt at murder and that the two personalities are not so far apart. Thus, if Silas really is a double for Austin, or at least another aspect of him, Maud's journey to her uncle's is really a journey into the repressed personality of her father, Austin. By combining McCormack's and Coughlan's readings, then, one can see that the mystery is how one person can have two personalities: a moral one and an immoral one. This, like the results of hypnotic experiments, suggests there are parts of the human conscience that are still unknown.

Like his interest in the effects of hypnotism, Le Fanu's interest in Swedenborgianism shows that he was interested in the human psyche, the true inner nature of people. Although Swedenborgianism is a religious theory, it has elements that can be associated with psychology. One of the main tenets of Swedenborg's philosophy is that when a person dies, the soul of that person progresses to another world. In its new state, the soul externally reflects its true character. What may have been hidden is revealed: greed, lust, and hate, or kindness, compassion, and love.³⁵ If as McCormack

³⁵I discuss Swedenborg and his theories more thoroughly in chapter one.

argues, Silas is an aspect of Austin, then because Austin dies before Silas is seen, Silas can be read as Austin's true nature—his soul after death. What McCormack does not note, though, is that this reading of *Uncle Silas* is discomfoting because Austin appears to be a good man. However, this discomfort might have been intentional; Le Fanu could be recognizing that there are many people who appear good but whose inner natures are otherwise. The connection with Swedenborg is already present in *Uncle Silas* because both Austin and Silas profess to be his followers. Despite the fact that Le Fanu was not a Swedenborgian himself, he was interested enough in the theories to use them in his works as another means of expressing the supernatural force of the human psyche. Thus, it appears that Le Fanu was not merely pandering to the tastes of the public when he included stories about altered states of mind; rather, he was interested in the subject and found ways to develop his ideas through his stories.

As well as being interested in the power of the human psyche, Le Fanu was troubled by his own conscience. I have noted in chapter one how his feelings of spiritual anxiety at the time of his wife's death contributed to the spiritual struggle in many of his stories. Similarly, the guilt he felt over his relationship with his wife emerges in them. In *Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, McCormack suggests that Le Fanu's "marital difficulties combined with religious anxiety to produce a painful nexus of negative reactions" (134). Although it is not clear what these "marital difficulties" are, excerpts from Le Fanu's diary, the diary of Susanna's mother, and letters from both parties imply that there was some difficulty. McCormack notes that, in *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, William Le Fanu's comments about his brother's marriage paint a picture of a happy couple (132).

McCormack does suggest, however, that Le Fanu may have been attracted to Susanna's sister, Bessie, before he married. He did have a good relationship with Bessie and wrote letters to her, but to what extent it exceeded the normal bounds of friendship, if at all, is unclear. Even if it were an innocent friendship, if Le Fanu were having difficulties with Susanna, his friendship with her sister may have created a sense of guilt that is similar to Schalken's guilt in "Schalken the Painter." The young painter has a secret relationship with Rose, but when her uncle, his art master, sells her to Vanderhousen, he does not interfere; he is ineffective in saving her from death. Years after her death, Schalken's vision of her and Vanderhousen in the vaults at the Rotterdam Cathedral may be a projection of the guilt he feels at having contributed to her death. In this and other stories, Le Fanu's guilt about his relationship with his wife combines with the guilt he felt about his divided political loyalties³⁶ to create layers of psychological readings as well as the historical and spiritual readings. Thus, the guilt in Le Fanu's life seems to emerge in his stories to show how the human conscience can destroy a person.

Despite the fact that Le Fanu died before the birth of psychology, many critics point to his stories as the forerunners of psychological ghost stories and novels.³⁷ Even without psychological terminology, it is evident that, in much of his fiction, Le Fanu is describing what psychologists of today would call guilt complexes or repressed desires,

³⁶I have discussed Le Fanu's mixed sympathies for and divided loyalties toward England and Ireland in chapter two. Lozes in "The Prince of the Invisible" goes into more detail about Le Fanu's conflicting patriotisms.

³⁷Critics such as Joseph Browne, Nelson Browne, Michael Begnal, Peter Penzoldt, Patricia Coughlan, Gary Williams-Crawford, Franz Rottensteiner, and many others recognize the broad possibilities of reading Le Fanu's stories psychologically.

emotions, and feelings. However, it is important to avoid the temptation to categorize everything in Le Fanu's fiction as psychological. Certainly, the human psyche is an important aspect of his works, but the psychological elements are not the only themes in his works. As shown in chapters one and two, there are events and experiences described in the stories that also place them outside of the human mind, connecting them with historical events and spiritual traditions. Together, these themes point to something which is beyond human comprehension, of which the psyche is one aspect. Because of their complexity, it is important to avoid labeling Le Fanu's works only as early psychological stories. At the same time, however, one must not overlook the psychological elements in his stories.

Perceptions

Le Fanu was aware of the ability of the human mind to distort perceptions of events in the material world, and in his early stories, he creates characters whose guilt affects their perceptions of themselves and others. As Crawford remarks, Le Fanu "creates a landscape of the mind" ("Landscape" 95), and, although Crawford does not make this connection, it is in creating this landscape that Le Fanu is able to show how a person's guilty conscience, a non-material force, can control him or her. By controlling a character's perception, the conscience affects the material world in ways that cannot be rationalized or explained by the physical laws of science. Like the historical and spiritual forces in his stories, the force of the human mind can manifest itself physically. In *The Supernatural in Fiction*, Peter Penzoldt also recognizes Le Fanu's presentation of the

moral conscience as a non-material power:

[Le Fanu] knew that a guilty conscience manifests itself by degrees, and this gradation gives his tales an additional firmness of structure and helps to build up suspense. He knew, moreover, that any event, even if it had no outward connection with the deeply rooted guilt, could, by symbolical connection with the crime, suddenly awaken the feeling of guilt. (78)

Based on Penzoldt's argument, it seems that Le Fanu's stories imply the mind can control the body and its perceptions of the world by mere suggestion, as William Le Fanu would say. Sometimes, as in "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter" (1838), the non-material power of the conscience has no lasting harmful effects, but other times, this power can haunt a person, as in "The Drunkard's Dream" (1838) and "The Last Heir of Castle Connor" (1838). The presence of this force is seen most clearly in those stories in which the main character struggles against someone or something who is a reminder of his guilty conscience. Although this theme runs throughout his works, early in his career, Le Fanu writes about the preternatural power of the human mind; later, he develops this idea into tales which are more explicitly supernatural.

One of Le Fanu's early stories that develops this theme is "The Last Heir of Castle Connor" in which Fitzgerald can be seen as a reminder of O'Connor's guilt for his lax morals while living on the continent. Although there is no specific mention of his guilt or crimes, the fact that he spends time on the continent³⁸ and befriends Fitzgerald, a duelist

³⁸I have noted in chapter one that France and other continental European countries have a negative connotation in Le Fanu's stories.

who is a known criminal, suggests that O'Connor was participating in some activities that may have been considered morally reprehensible. Thus, Fitzgerald, whom O'Connor met while abroad, is a constant reminder of that guilt, in a sense haunting him until he confronts it. This sense of haunting can be seen in Fitzgerald's uncanny appearance in unlikely places, such as a party for O'Connor's return, and in his persistent, almost supernatural, manipulation of O'Connor, forcing him into a duel. By participating in the duel, O'Connor finally does confront his guilt, and when he submits to his conscience in this way, it kills him. Similarly, but with much less grave results, in "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter," Terry Neil submits to his conscience. It is possible that he dreams of the ghost because of his guilt for drinking and neglecting his master's property. In Terry Neil's case, the experience triggered by his guilt also may have been caused by an external spiritual force, warning him not to neglect his spiritual duties. On the one hand, as Terry believes, a supernatural force other than his conscience is working, and on the other, it is his guilt which affects him. Although the two are connected, Le Fanu creates a sense of both forces being at work by having the character interpret the events spiritually and giving the reader information that will help him or her to interpret it psychologically as well. The two readings do not have to be in opposition. In "The Landscape of Sin," Crawford recognizes the crossover between the psychological and the spiritual in Le Fanu's works: "The inner life of the mind penetrates the other life of evil in an allegory of sin and death, mingling fears and desires" (99). Although the two mingle, there are differences between the psychological and spiritual elements in Le Fanu's stories, and often "the fatality haunting the protagonist suggests that aspects of his psyche that he has

repressed are having their revenge" (Brownell 191), just as the guilt O'Connor and Terry Neil repress surfaces to haunt them.

"The Drunkard's Dream,"³⁹ another story collected in *The Purcell Papers*, also presents the conscience as a powerful force. When Pat Connell dreams that the bottom of his stairs gives way and he falls into hell, he receives not only a spiritual warning and prophecy, but a reflection of his own guilt for his profligate lifestyle as well. Connell is aware that his excessive drinking is morally reprehensible, but he has repressed this in favor of continuing to drink and mistreat his family. In his sleep, however, his subconscious emerges, and his guilty conscience affects his perception of his dream and reality. Like Terry Neil in "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter," Connell attempts to change his lifestyle because he perceives the dream as a real experience. In itself, this is not astounding, but because the workings of dreams cannot always be explained scientifically, this occurrence creates within the reader an uncanny feeling. Freud's term works well here because, although there is no concrete evidence that anything supernatural has occurred, readers are haunted by the feeling of something familiar—the old belief that dreams are warnings or prophecies—and they begin to question whether there is some supernatural force at work in Connell's life and, perhaps, their own.

If, as Rottensteiner states, "objects and events [in supernatural stories] . . . are simply externalizations of inner psychic states" (15), then Connell's dream and his death

³⁹Although this is an early story by Le Fanu and fits nicely into the category of the preternatural presence of moral conscience in his early stories, "The Vision of Tom Chuff" is a much later story that is a slightly different version of "The Drunkard's Dream." Le Fanu's revision of this story indicates that he never lost interest in the moral conscience as a presence that acts as a warning as well as a prophetic power.

are reflections of his inner guilt and lack of morality. However, this reading does not completely explain everything in the story: Connell's wife sees a shadowy figure leading Connell out of the room. The shadow his wife sees indicates that there might be something other than Connell's internal guilt that leads him to his death, something supernatural. However, despite her assurances that the figure could not have been a shadow because it was too far from Connell, Purcell believes the wife saw Connell's shadow. Either way, this ambiguous figure is connected with Connell. The parallelism between his dream and his death parallels his moral life: he has fallen into sin, and although he tries for a while to escape it, he cannot. Because he does repent of his harmful lifestyle for a short time, Connell's death, occurring on the same night in which he backslides, is identified with his moral conscience even more strongly. His dream might be merely a dream, but like hypnotism, the dream might tap into his subconscious, suggesting to Connell that if he continues to err, his death and descent into hell will follow. Thus, his dream is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and in a way that cannot be explained by material science, his conscience affects his perceptions of himself and understanding of his dream, leading him to his death.

Although it is possible to read "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter," "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," and "The Drunkard's Dream" as focusing on the presence of a spiritual force rather than a psychological one, it is important to understand the psychological aspects as well. Le Fanu plays on the interconnectedness of the spiritual, historical, and psychological forces to create more ambiguity. As I will note in chapter four, it is this ambiguity which helps to make Le Fanu's stories so intriguing and

effective. Therefore, by presenting the power of the human psyche as well as the power of the spiritual world and the past as supernatural forces, Le Fanu warns his readers about the dangers of materialism and its tendency to deny the presence of forces which rationalism and material science cannot explain.

Projections

Whereas in most of his early stories Le Fanu recognizes the power a person's conscience can have over him or her, in his middle and later stories, he moves from hinting at the presence of the psychological force to representing it more fully. Although there are elements of this transition even in his early stories such as "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh" in *The Purcell Papers*, it is more fully developed in his later writings. In *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*, Begnal also comments on this transition in Le Fanu's writing:

As his work develops, he begins more and more to take us inside his characters, to take a psychological interest in what is happening in the minds of those who are terrorized and victimized by forces which they cannot control. . . . Thus as his writing continued, Le Fanu came to consider not only the origins of evil but also its effect on the human consciousness. (36)

Le Fanu considered not only the effects of evil on the human consciousness, but also the effects of the human psyche on the material world, which is represented supernaturally in Le Fanu's stories. Often, the guilty consciences of his characters are projected into the material world, and they suffer physically as well as psychologically. This trend is

recognized by Swafford, who states that "in story after story, an encounter with one's guilty past brings destruction—to Sir Balé Mardykes, Squire Toby Marston, Mr. Justice Harbottle, the reverend Jennings" (57). What Swafford does not note is that by creating characters who must face their guilty consciences yet situating the representation of that guilt outside of the character, Le Fanu enables the reader to sympathize with the character, recognizing the possibility of good within him. However, the reader is also aware that despite this physical separation, the character is psychologically connected to his guilt. As MacAndrew comments, Gothic and supernatural writers "create monsters, which force an unwilling recognition of the dread blend of good and bad to be found in themselves and the rest of mankind" (44). This claim is true of Le Fanu as well.

Although he often focuses on the inner state of a character, Le Fanu presents his or her subconscious as an external projection. Rather than being separate, the projection is part of the character even though it exists outside of him or her. It is the presence of such projections, as Alison Milbank argues, which "suggests that Le Fanu is wedded to the theory of projection to account for the hauntings of men who call forth spirits to bear the parts of their own psyche which they find unacceptable" (163). Although I do not believe that Le Fanu was "wedded" to this theory, I do believe that he was interested in it, and projections appear in a number of his stories. However, because many of Le Fanu's characters are involved in what MacAndrew identifies as "a pursuit which divides one part of the human personality from the other" (184), the projections of many of his characters seem to be "complementary halves . . . rather than the more usual mirror-images" (Coughlan 29). Just as Austin and Silas may be "body and soul, living and dead

aspects of the same individual” (McCormack “Swedenborgianism” 24-25), other characters and their projections complement each other: Philip Feltram revives from his apparent death strong and in control, having previously been meek and conforming. Throughout the various stages of his writing career, in stories such as “The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh” (1838), “The Familiar” (1847/1872),⁴⁰ and “Squire Toby’s Will” (1868), Le Fanu portrayed these projections as supernatural beings to heighten the reader’s awareness of the often inexplicable power of the human mind.

Although this technique is not fully developed in “The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh,” Le Fanu does create a character who is a projection of Ardagh’s guilt or evil nature. Playing with the connection between spiritual struggles and psychological struggles, he offers the reader two versions. First, the narrator, Father Purcell, recounts a superstitious tale of Ardagh’s death which indicates that he was “what the country people call a *dark man*” (33) who gambled and won with the help of a mysterious stranger. After an absence, this stranger calls on Ardagh, and the servants report that there was a struggle between this man and Ardagh before they plunged over the cliff next to which the castle stands. However, Father Purcell claims that this supernatural reading is merely legend:

The original facts [of the story] are so dissimilar in all but the name of the principal person mentioned, Sir Robert Ardagh, and the fact that his death was accompanied with circumstances of extraordinary mystery, that the

⁴⁰As well as a change in the title, there are a few differences between the earlier text of “The Watcher” and the later text of “The Familiar,” but because it is more easily accessible and the differences do not affect my argument, I have chosen to refer to “The Familiar.”

two narratives are totally irreconcilable. . . . However this may be, I shall lay before the reader a distinct recital of the events from which the foregoing tradition arose. (51)

The second narrative recounts Ardagh's return from the continent with a fortune, subsequent marriage, and mysterious death after the departure of Jacque, a valet Ardagh brought with him from the continent. This valet is connected to the supernatural character in the first narrative because both have a continental origin and dark looks. Whereas the first narrative suggests that Ardagh struggles with an evil force outside of himself, the second narrative suggests that Ardagh struggles with a projection of his own conscience. The evil character appears to be Jacque, but there are instances which serve to identify this attendant with Ardagh himself. At one point, Ardagh says of Jacque, "his commands are mine" (69-70), which, as Gates notes in "Blue Devils and Green Tea," indicates that Ardagh treats Jacque as a "second self" in the second narrative (16). At another point in the story, Ardagh's anger flares when his wife requests that Jacque be dismissed, and he states that if she wishes Jacque to leave, he will leave her as well, indicating that Jacque and Ardagh are connected. Similarly, he has access to Ardagh's "private room," suggesting that he also has access to Ardagh's private thoughts and fears. Finally, when Jacque does leave for unknown reasons, Ardagh becomes "almost unnaturally placid and cold" and "his spirits totally failed" (73); he has lost a part of himself and no longer has any "spirit" or life. Although years pass with Ardagh in this state, the narrative moves quickly to the apparent suicide. Because the suicide occurs in Ardagh's private room, it is linked to Jacque even though it is unclear why or how Ardagh dies. This connection with

Jacque cannot be dismissed as easily as Purcell dismisses the first, superstitious narrative.

What Ardagh did during his time abroad is uncertain, but he did amass a great amount of wealth.⁴¹ Because the first narrative implies that Ardagh is guilty of a Faustian pact, the reader connects that sense of guilt with Ardagh in the second narrative as well. His apparent guilt, his time spent in Europe, and his devotion to Jacque, despite his evil appearance and continental origin, indicate that Ardagh may be controlled by Jacque. Witnessed by the servant in Ardagh's room, his mental struggle with Jacque is also an indication that he is controlled by Jacque. Thus, it appears that Jacque is a projection of Ardagh's inner state of guilt or anxiety stemming from something that occurred during his eighteen years on the continent. Like Le Fanu's other villains with split personalities, Ardagh has what MacAndrew calls "an excrescence on the core of his being"—Jacque (105). Unlike the doubles which I will discuss later, Jacque does not emerge as a reflection of Ardagh's whole personality; rather, he is a supernatural projection of the guilt Ardagh feels but is incapable of containing within himself. Because the first narrative implies that Jacque is like Mephistopheles, conjured when Ardagh wants to cheat at gambling or participate in some other immoral adventure at which the reader can only guess, it is difficult to interpret him as a double because he appears at time when Ardagh ignores his guilty conscience. It is Ardagh's guilty conscience, which is projected into the material world as Jacque, who appears to be supernatural and from whom there is no escape.

⁴¹The reader's uncertainty about the true nature of Ardagh's guilt does not imply that he is not guilty; rather, it makes Ardagh's inner struggles more frightening because the ambiguity intensifies the preternatural qualities.

Because Le Fanu opens this story with the supernatural tale of Ardagh's death, there is an element of the supernatural in the second narrative even though Purcell denies the supernatural occurrences mentioned in the first tale. Also, the presence of a malignant character in both narratives binds them together. Even if the characters see no obvious connection between Ardagh's death and Jacque in the second narrative, the reader makes the connection and is left questioning Ardagh's suicide. According to Gates, Jacque, the "mysterious other" in this story, "feeds Victorian fears and uncertainties about death by suicide" (17). In her article, Gates focuses on the suicides, but the uncertainty about what drives a man to kill himself is also important because that is what combines the psychological and the supernatural. Ardagh may have been insane, tormented by his sin, or tormented by supernatural beings. Whatever torment causes him to kill himself is so closely identified with Jacque, a projection of his psychological state, that it appears to be supernatural.

As his writing matured, Le Fanu created projections not only to show the extent to which one's internal struggle can manifest itself externally, but he also used them to show how one's guilt can affect and control events in the material world. In "The Familiar," a story originally written during the middle stages of Le Fanu's career, Captain Barton is pursued by a disfigured image of the man he killed years ago. Although, as I have mentioned in chapter one, Barton might simply be imagining that he is pursued, there is a supernatural quality to the presence of the man he describes. This supernatural quality exists not only because of the character's resemblance to the murdered man, but also because of the way in which it controls him. Although this apparition might be caused by

Barton's "free thinking" and lack of respect for the spiritual world which his victim's soul has entered, the spiritual force is connected to the psychological force of Barton's repressed conscience. Not only does he deny the spiritual world, but he denies his conscience, and even though he had justified the man's murder (the man was beating his daughter), Barton still must face the repercussions of his actions and his guilt. Nobody else is aware that he committed a murder, but he carries this knowledge within himself. His awareness of this crime may cause him to believe he is haunted by his victim, much as Macbeth is haunted by Banquo. However, unlike Macbeth, Barton is not the only one who sees the man whom he believes is an apparition; Barton's guilt has emerged in the material world. Despite his attempts to ignore, confront, and hide from this specter, he continues to be haunted by it. He is unable to escape from this apparition because it is a part of himself: his guilt. Toward the end, he attempts to hide from the apparition by shutting himself in his room, yet even these attempts to shut out his guilt fail. One afternoon, an owl makes its way into Barton's room, and when the servants finally are able to open the door, Barton is dead. Earlier, Barton is convinced the owl is another form his ghostly visitor has taken. Perhaps it is, but even if it is not truly a specter, it still represents Barton's guilt, which is projected into the physical world, and its supernatural presence is observed not only by Barton, but also by those around him. His guilt controls him and eventually leads to his death. Because it cannot be explained by material science, when it does affect Barton physically and others are able to see projections of it, the guilt has a powerful supernatural quality.

Similarly, in "Squire Toby's Will," the psychological force is connected with the

guilt of the main character. The first indication of Charles Marston's guilty conscience appears when he confesses to his servant, Cooper, that while he was in a coma after a fall from a horse, he was with his dead father, Squire Toby. Although he cannot remember what his father said, he thinks it might refer to some papers having to do with the estate. Prior to Charles's coma, his elder brother, Scroope, accused him of consorting with their father years ago to hide these papers. Because Charles and Scroope are feuding over the estate, Charles claims, and apparently believes, Scroope is fabricating this story. However, when he has this vision of his dead father, Charles immediately guesses that his father's spirit is angry about these papers. Whether Charles knows about the hidden papers is uncertain, but his subconscious is aware of their importance, evidenced by the way in which his mind latches on to that issue rather than another one. Cooper, unburdened by any sense of guilt, is able to offer another explanation for Squire Toby's ghostly visit: his desire to have a proper headstone. As Charles and Cooper walk to the squire's grave to remedy this, they are met by a dog. Charles notes "how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features when he was clutching his horsewhip and swearing at a keeper" (8). A further indication of the dog's association with Charles's guilt is the dream that he has on a regular basis. In this dream, the dog "seemed to stretch himself up the side of the Squire's bed, and in dilated proportions to sit at his feet, with a horrible likeness to the pug features of old Squire Toby" (10). Sitting at the foot of the bed, this distorted image urges Charles to reconcile with his brother, but because it means that he would no longer be master of the house, Charles does not wish to reconcile with Scroope.

In a final dream, the dog becomes more grotesque than ever and informs Charles that it is the final hour to resolve the wrongs committed against Scroope. In the closet indicated by the dog, Charles finds a deed willing the estate to the oldest. Disturbed, but still unwilling to give up his position as master of the house, Charles determines not to tell his brother, but he does not destroy the deed either. This "quite satisfied what he called his conscience" (14). However, there is a greater sense of guilt at work than any of which Charles is aware. Fearing he may lose the estate, he eventually destroys the deed and "had pretty well gotten rid of his supernatural qualms. It was a different kind of trouble that agitated him now." This new trouble is a "terrible sense of actual guilt" (17). Soon after Charles destroys the deed, Scroope dies, and Charles inherits all of his possessions, but even in his excitement, Charles is wary. He begins to see ghosts that resemble his father and Scroope. Then, after Charles appears to be going mad and hallucinating, he is found hanged in the same closet in which the deed was found. The coroner states that Charles died "by his own hand, in a state of temporary insanity," but because Cooper believes something supernatural is involved, it becomes evident that the dog and the visions Charles sees are supernatural projections of his guilty complicity in keeping the estate from his brother. Charles is tormented by his mental state, which is projected into the material world as a dog and the ghosts of his father and brother. Coughlan, too, recognizes this projection and claims, "on the story level, to him and his servants, the dog resembles his dead father, who thus seems to be accusing him; but to the reader, it seems the embodiment of the guilt he feels but will not acknowledge" (33). Although Coughlan does not make the connection, it is Charles's guilt that leads to his

death, whether it is by his own hand or by the supernatural representations of his guilt. Gates notes the identification between the character and the object onto which the character projects his guilt, in this case the dog:

The suicidal men . . . become more emotionally withdrawn and isolated within themselves and move inexorably toward self-destruction. Their phantoms represent aspects of the self displaced and imagined as things or people outside the self, often monstrous selves freed from most human constraints. (16).

Both Coughlan and Gates point out that the fact that these supernatural emanations are reminders of his guilt implies that Charles projects his own conscience onto them. However, neither recognizes that the dog and ghosts may be aspects of the spiritual world, which Charles has disrupted by ignoring the request of his dead father. The combination of the two readings is important because it helps to heighten the ambiguity and also the supernatural quality. By creating characters who project their mental states externally, Le Fanu emphasizes the impact of a person's conscience and subconscious on the material world in order to warn his readers that denying the power of the human psyche can have dangerous effects on their lives.

Doubles

In addition to projections and a character's altered perception of events, Le Fanu also created doubles for characters in his stories to show the existence and power of the psyche. Although he began applying this technique in some of his middle stories such as

“Spalatro” (1843), it is in his later stories that he mastered it. *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) represents this stage in his writing. In fact, Nelson Browne sees this book as an excursion into the human mind (78). In order to help portray the human psyche in these stories, Le Fanu devises Hesselius who, because he writes in “two distinct characters,” as Stoddart remarks, writes “his patients *as* two distinct characters” (20); Hesselius’s stylistic divisions encourage the reader to view each patient as two different characters, one who experiences supernatural phenomena and one who is mentally distressed. What Stoddart does not note, though, is that through Hesselius Le Fanu is able to present the different psychological aspects of one character. Perhaps because Le Fanu seems to have delved into the human mind more in the stories of this collection than in those of his earlier ones, Edna Kenton, in 1929, stated that the fictional metaphysician, Dr. Hesselius, “was John the Baptist for the little gods of later fiction—the psychic doctors” (533). Similarly, Penzoldt claims that Hesselius “marks the beginning of the psychological ghost story” (74). However, he also notes,

Le Fanu never ceased to believe that the ultimate cause of such [psychological] suffering lay in another world, yet at the same time he seemed to think, in some curious way, that the evil could be cured in the body. In this respect, all authors before the Freudian era were more materialistic than the later champions of the psychological ghost story.

(75)

Although Penzoldt often confuses Le Fanu’s beliefs with the beliefs of his characters, what he states is true of Le Fanu’s stories. In them, perceptions, projections, and doubles

have a more physical quality than those which occur in works by later writers. It is this material quality of the apparitions that places Le Fanu's use of the psychological in the realm of the supernatural. A person's state of mind not only affects him or her psychologically, but it also affects him or her physically in ways that cannot be explained by physical science.

In order to develop the doubling techniques in his works, Le Fanu again turned to Swedenborg's teachings. As Trobridge claims in *Swedenborg: Life and Teaching*, there is "not only a correspondence between the natural and spiritual worlds . . . there is, or should be . . . a correspondence between the internal and the external of the man himself" (184). Thus, when Barton sees the image of the man he killed, he recognizes that it is a shrunk and malignant likeness, a true external representation of the man who beat his daughter. Similarly, the bull dog in "Squire Toby's Will" is an accurate representation of Squire Toby's inner state: powerful, mean, and ready to fight. These doubles differ from projections. Whereas projections are a supernatural manifestation of one aspect of a character's psyche such as guilt, doubles are usually mirror images of the whole personality of the character. When doubles appear, the characters come face to face with themselves, and because their doubles usually are more powerful than they are, they often submit to them. Thus, it appears that the subconscious aspects of a person will surface in the physical world. Le Fanu warns his readers of this danger by creating doubles who are hideous and grotesque in order to heighten an awareness of the presence of the psychological force.

Although "Spalatro" is written almost thirty years prior to *In a Glass Darkly*, in

which his most fully developed ideas of the psychological double are presented, it shows that Le Fanu was interested in creating doubles even in the middle of his writing career. At the beginning of this tale, the double image is established through a teacher-student relationship, and although this image is more like Coughlan's description of "two halves of a . . . pair," the ground work for developing the image of the double is established. It is Fra Giacomo, the confessor at his execution, to whom Spalatro tells the story of his life and describes his tutor in some detail. Despite his monk's clothing, the tutor is unchristian; in fact, "a more *unchristian* one could scarcely have been found" (340). Because of his influence over his young student's mind, this tutor is able to chide Spalatro into rejecting many of the Christian doctrines and to mold the student into an image of himself. Despite his revulsion and fear of his tutor, Spalatro realizes that this man, "corrupt in heart and powerful in understanding, acquired a strong control over" him (341). When Spalatro finds the monk about to rape his sister, he is attacked by the monk who hits him with a force that throws him across the room.⁴² The monk disappears after this incident, and because his step-father treats him badly (his mother and father are both dead), Spalatro leaves home, too, echoing the actions of his double.

After witnessing many horrors on his travels, such as murders and robbery, Spalatro begins to recognize the evil within others as well as within himself. The relationship between Spalatro and the monk becomes more obvious when, many years

⁴² Although the scope of this work does not include the psychological implications of incest, the incident in which the monk, Spalatro's double, molests Spalatro's sister certainly can be read as incestuous. This reading supports the argument that Spalatro might have been repressing aspects of his own psyche which disgusted him, and the monk confronts him with these repressed desires.

after the incident with his sister, Spalatro is confronted by a demonic man, another manifestation of his tutor, the monk. Although he flees, he cannot escape the monk, and when the monk stops running, Spalatro also stops. He does not control his movements—the monk does:

We were opposite to one another—face to face, and scarcely a yard asunder. He tossed his arms wildly in the air—I could not choose but to do the same: he writhed his features into contortions such as delirium never portrayed, each one of which, with frenzied exaggeration, I felt forced to imitate. . . . There remained within me, as it were looking on, a terrified self-consciousness. . . . My motions all corresponded with his, with the simultaneousness and accuracy with which shadow follows substance; I felt as if my identity was merging into his. (418)

Just when the monk has led Spalatro to the point of slitting his throat, a peasant intervenes, and when Spalatro asks about the man who was opposite him, the peasant replies that nobody else was there. Spalatro cannot escape this devilish and supernatural monk nor keep from imitating him because it is his double, his mirror image.

Because Le Fanu makes the reader aware of Spalatro's struggle against this evil monk, it is easier for the reader to sympathize with him even though he is a villainous highway thief. Although she refers to supernatural fiction in general, what MacAndrew argues can be applied to this situation as well:

The doubles figure showed that it was the nature of every man that the good in him must struggle in unending battle against the distortions of

evil. It did so in a way that would make the reader accept the terrible certainty that this was true of himself, for it not only prevented him from rejecting the central character as evil; but, to the extent that he sympathized with that character, the double became a potential mirror image for himself as well. (50-51)

It is this inner evil that Spalatro must confront later in his travels when he meets a strange man in an ancient house. This man is not another double for Spalatro, but his presence emphasizes the connection between the psychological and the supernatural. It appears that this man has been alive for over a century and is a vampire of some sort. However, this is never explicitly clear. What is interesting, though, is that this man of uncertain age asks, "Oh, eternal, unforgiving spirit! Is there any rest—is there any unconsciousness?" (450). His desire to escape his own consciousness is like Spalatro's attempts to escape his tutor; they fail because no one can escape him or herself. The subconscious has a power that cannot be ignored or explained rationally. At the end of the story, the reader learns Spalatro killed over two hundred men during his years as a highway robber, and even he recognizes himself as belonging to Satan. Fra Giacomo, the priest to whom Spalatro ineffectually confesses, states that "the giddy unconscious world is scouting such [evil]," and in order to save himself, Spalatro needs to "purify [his] conscience" (455). Although the priest describes this as more of a spiritual battle than an internal struggle, he is using language indicating the struggles undergone by Spalatro are related to the conscience and the subconscious. His inner state controls his murderous actions. As I mentioned, Le Fanu's ideas are not fully developed in this story, and the confusion between the spiritual

and psychological are evidence of this. However, even the spiritual struggle between good and evil can be read as a psychological struggle externalized through double figures. This externalization helps to strengthen the reader's perception of the power the mind has over the body and its supernatural presence in the material world.

In Le Fanu's later works, the double becomes more of a caricature than a human reflection, especially in "Green Tea," the first story from *In a Glass Darkly*. Although Sullivan states that "the horror which pursues him [Jennings] is more than a psychological phenomenon" (21), there are psychological aspects that indicate the monkey is intimately connected to Jennings's psyche as well as to the spiritual world he neglects and the Darwinian ancestors he cannot escape. As Robert Tracy argues in *The Unappeasable Host*, "Jennings's haunting monkey is an aspect of himself, from whom there is no escape . . ." (62). Jennings's own reading into Swedenborgian theories further indicates that the monkey may not be only a spiritual force, but a psychological one, too. Swedenborg claims that "the animals which inhabit this mental earth, are the various affections and desires of human nature . . ." (Trobridge 177). Thus, the monkey which haunts Jennings can be seen as an external representation of the desires which haunt him, and it appears in all areas of his life: in his study, in the pulpit, on busses, at parties, and in his bedroom. Unlike the specter in "The Familiar," the monkey does not suggest that it is associated with a specific crime or guilt, but many. Its inhuman nature allows it to represent Jennings's whole personality, all of his desires, rather than one specific aspect of his psyche; the monkey is more than a projection of his guilt or conscience, it is himself, a hideous and malignant double. As Jennings begins to recognize his failing

mental state, like the other nineteenth-century heroes of supernatural stories to whom MacAndrew refers, his “eyes are turned upon the inner landscape of the mind itself, rather than discerning transcendent truths beyond it, [and] what they see are the fearful outlines of the subconscious . . . which can only be exposed to full day light at great risk” (217). When they are exposed, they have harmful effects on the physical world.

To avoid becoming too absorbed in his studies into the ancient religions, Jennings searched for ways to keep his mind connected to his body:

I believe that everyone who sets about writing in earnest does his work, as a friend of mine phrased it *on* something—tea, or coffee, or tobacco. I suppose there is a material waste that must be hourly supplied in such occupations, or that we should grow too abstracted, and the mind, as it were, pass out of the body. . . . (22)

Jennings settled on green tea; however, it seems that he was not successful at keeping his mind connected to his body because, after a few months of drinking green tea, this monkey, a reflection of Jennings’s inner state, his double, becomes disconnected from his body and supernaturally emerges in the material world. It is at this point that Jennings turns to Hesselius, who can be seen as the forerunner of the psychiatrist, attempting to correct psychological states through physical means. Because he is convinced that it is a disturbance of the “nervous tissue and brain” which is the “seat of interior vision” (39), Hesselius implies that, in Jennings’s case, his interior vision has affected his external vision: his mind affects his body. In *Night Visitors*, Julia Briggs recognizes this relationship in other works by Le Fanu: “Behind Le Fanu’s imaginative descriptions of

psychological states, especially the states of fear, lay a profound concern with the relationship between the mind and the body, and the way one might exert its influence over the other" (50). In chapter one, I mentioned that in Hesselius's casebooks, information is withheld. Without the other works mentioned by Hesselius in which he explains the "interior visions" and the connections between the spirit world and the physical world, the reader cannot determine the validity of his arguments. Despite the reader's hesitation in accepting Hesselius's analysis of the case because it is unsubstantiated, the reader recognizes that there is a connection between Jennings's internal, psychological state and his double, the monkey. The power that this psychological force exerts can be dangerous, even driving a person to suicide just as the monkey drives Jennings to slit his own throat.

In the same way that the monkey can be interpreted as a double of Jennings, the vampire can be read as a double of Laura in "Carmilla." In fact, in "The Landscape of Sin," Crawford briefly mentions that he believes this is a story about "the other self" (98). Although he refers mainly to Swedenborg's theories, there is evidence in the narrative that also supports this reading. Certainly, Carmilla has characteristics that identify her with Laura. First, Laura's mother is descended from the Countess Karnstein, and Carmilla is the Countess Karnstein. More strikingly, Carmilla often speaks the phrases, "You are mine," "you and I are one," and "I live in you" (264, 274), which imply that she is a part of Laura and, as Adriano suggests in *Our Ladies of Darkness*, "an inner spirit" (103). Because Carmilla speaks to Laura in romantic and sexual terms, Carmilla breaks the boundaries of Victorian decorum, indicating that she is not regulated by these social

strictures whereas Laura is. Carmilla is able to express what Laura cannot, that she has sexual feelings. At one point, when Carmilla is especially loving, Laura fantasizes that Carmilla is a young man who, because of his love for her, has disguised himself to be with her. She is aroused by Carmilla's advances because Carmilla's sexual desires are her own. However, social etiquette denies Laura the ability to express those desires and teaches her to fear them. At the same time Laura is attracted to Carmilla, she is repulsed by her: "What can you mean by all this [talk of love]? . . . you must not . . . I don't know you—I don't know myself when you look and talk so" (264-65). The fact that she conflates not knowing Carmilla with not knowing herself suggests that Carmilla is Laura's double, acting out her repressed desires at the same time she fears them. Also recognizing this connection, Penzoldt argues that "the 'physical vampire' is not simply an allegory as many authors believed, but the outbreak of deeply rooted subconscious fears" (37). That Carmilla is a psychological force does not negate the presence of the historical forces; because she is descended from Laura's mother, Carmilla is connected both with Laura herself and her past. As the past is represented physically in Carmilla, so is Laura's psyche. Although there is no mention of Swedenborg in this story, his theories can be applied very loosely to this doubling because he believed that the external state would come to reflect the internal state, the true self. Thus, Carmilla is the reflection of Laura's true self. Her psychological state is expressed supernaturally as an inexplicable force in the material world, affecting Laura's physical state; it is killing her.

Like Laura, Justice Harbottle's inner state leads him toward his death; he suffers from a guilty conscience for being a particularly cruel "hanging judge." In "Mr. Justice

Harbottle," Justice Twofold is an horrific caricature of Harbottle; the double sits in judgment on Harbottle just as Harbottle judges others. Because he wants to eliminate any possibility of trouble from his mistress's former husband, Pyneweck, Harbottle sentences him to hang although there is evidence to suggest Pyneweck is innocent. Before the official trial, Harbottle is visited by what seem to be flesh-and-blood people who warn him against sentencing Pyneweck, but he ignores them. By ignoring them, he ignores his own conscience; these visitors, the reader later realizes, are not physical humans, but supernatural characters, reflecting Harbottle's inner state. As I argued in chapter one, they are also manifestations from the spiritual world, which implies that Harbottle's conscience and his spiritual awareness, like Barton's, have been repressed, causing them to emerge in the material world as supernatural beings. Finally, when Harbottle is brought before the ghostly tribunal, he faces "a dilated effigy of himself . . . at least double his size, and with all his fierce coloring, and his ferocity of eye and visage, enhanced awfully" (108). Just as with Jennings and Laura, the external double corresponds to Harbottle's inner nature. Although he does not seem to be the type of person who has a conscience, he feels some anxiety about the sentence he passes on Pyneweck, and after the sentencing, but before the execution, he questions his decision. However, he does not allow these misgivings to enter his mind for long, claiming that it is only the interference of outsiders who cause him to doubt. What this suggests, though, is that Harbottle's conscience does exist in the form of these outsiders, however much it is ignored. In the end, the image of the double implies that it is Harbottle, struggling with his true nature, who sentences himself to death for his crimes against Pyneweck and numerous others.

Although he does not apply the same terminology, Begnal also understands the relationship between Harbottle's guilt and the double as a representation of his psyche: "Even the blackest sinner cannot escape the retribution of his conscience, and Harbottle hangs himself in a kind of atonement for his sins" (41). Just as Charles's guilt is projected onto the dog, Harbottle's conscience is projected onto the grotesque images of the jury who find him guilty, and Harbottle's own cruel nature is reflected in Justice Twofold, his double, who sentences him.

Although Harbottle is not a likeable character, readers empathize with him because Le Fanu allows them to experience the "tortured mind of the evil character," which, as MacAndrew notes, allows readers to "see the potential for such evil in all minds, experiencing compassion for it through an understanding of its psychological causes, they can no longer look on good and evil as absolute or as forces outside the human psyche" (44). MacAndrew refers specifically to Gothic novels in this instance, but it applies to "Harbottle" as well. In this case, though, the human psyche becomes a supernatural force outside of the human body, which cannot be explained scientifically. Its power is beyond human understanding. The psychological force does seem to overlap with the spiritual and historical forces, but in each case the motivation for the supernatural interference comes from a different source: the character himself, a spiritual being, or an event in the past, respectively. That a supernatural event can be caused by a disruption in more than one of these forces shows that they are intertwined even though they have different loci.

In the introduction to *Best Ghost Stories of Le Fanu*, E. F. Bleiler states that in

many of his stories, "the supernatural is an unconscious element in the mind and it may leap into emergence when the barriers protecting the conscious ego are broken down . . ."

(viii). The subconscious does not remain in the mind, but it invades the material world by distorting a character's perceptions, by becoming a projection of a character's guilt or obsession, or by reflecting the psychological state of a character. This line between the psychological and the supernatural is blurred, and Penzoldt comments that even "C. G. Jung admits that he has some doubts where the borderline between mental disease and the intervention of genuine supernatural powers lies" (55). By showing the supernatural, which as I noted earlier is "ultimate expansion of human consciousness" (Bayer-Berenbaum 32), Le Fanu does not offer any easy answers to questions about the power of the human mind. Many of his characters are affected by their subconscious states, and their perceptions, projections, or doubles emerge in the material world; the inner state is not merely a matter of the mind, but also a matter of the body. This heightens the ambiguity in his stories as does "his insistence on keeping open the question of the origins of the psychological malaise" (Coughlan 19). Because the reader must question the origins of the disturbed inner states of the characters and the connections between the internal states and the external events, he or she cannot easily dismiss the notion that what Le Fanu describes is not merely a ghostly tale, but a recognition of the power of the human psyche. In fact, Joseph Browne states:

The more I read and reread Le Fanu, the more I am convinced that his major goals as a writer were to confront the reader with the true nature and origins of these "psychic infections" and to ensure him that if they are

ignored or succumbed to, they will unquestionably create the kind of
hellish existence which Joseph Conrad's protagonist surveyed in *Heart of
Darkness*. . . . (8)

Le Fanu's tales haunt us because they remind us of the mysterious and often
uncontrollable power of our own minds.

Chapter Four

The Ghosts that Haunt Us

Although it is unlikely that Le Fanu believed in ghosts and vampires, it is clear from his life that he did believe in the presence of inexplicable forces affecting our lives daily. It is this that he expresses in his short stories, and once the relationships between, his literary culture, his life, and his stories are clearly understood, it is easier to understand the power of the themes in his stories and their effect on the readers. Throughout his career, he did attempt to communicate the power of the spiritual, historical, and psychological forces to his readers, and the changes that occurred in the literary and social structures of the Victorian period helped Le Fanu to develop into one of the best nineteenth-century ghost story writers, influencing later writers of the psychological ghost story. In addition to the literary changes, the changes that occurred in his life also affected his writing style, shifting the focus of his stories and heightening their uncanny effects. Primarily, these changes occur when he relocates to the city, when there are deaths in the family, and when he changes his political outlook. Similarly, the challenge of writing in a different genre helped to develop the maturity of writing in his short stories. Understanding these relationships helps to clarify why Le Fanu's stories of the fantastic have an uncanny effect on their readers.

In chapters one, two, and three, I have focused on his spiritual, historical, and psychological themes rather than on contextualizing Le Fanu's works. This, the final chapter, however, discusses the way in which Le Fanu's stories relate to other Victorian works, to his life, and to his readers. In the first section of this chapter, I place Le Fanu's

works in their social and historical relations with those of other sensational novelists and ghost story writers. I also describe how later writers continued to develop the connection Le Fanu made between the psychological and supernatural. Next, in "Le Fanu's Stories and His Life," I focus on the ways in which his life affected the development of his writing style. Because of changes in his life, he found different, and often more powerful, methods for communicating his themes to his readers. Finally, I move to the relationship between Le Fanu's stories and their readers; it is through this relationship that Le Fanu hopes to communicate his own fears and experiences.

Le Fanu's Stories and Sensational Novels

Because he published his stories in literary journals associated with other sensational writers of the time such as Braddon, Collins, and the later Dickens, it is helpful to identify the relationship between Le Fanu's works and other ghost stories and sensational novels of his time. Despite the lack of agreement as to whether sensation novelists affirmed social values or rebelled against them, most believe Collins and others such as Braddon, Bulwer-Lytton, the later Dickens, and Gaskell, were addressing anxieties about issues such as marriage, divorce, bigamy, poverty, loss of religious faith, and social mobility—all of which developed because of the new economy, science, and changes in education. When introducing the various essays she collected in *Wilkie Collins*, Lyn Pykett lists the different readings critics have of Collins's sensational novels. From critics like Jenny Taylor and Deirdre David, who argue that he subverts class and gender roles of the Victorian era, to those like D. A. Miller, who argue that he reflects

bourgeois values, all of these critics underscore the idea that Collins and other sensational novelists responded to Victorian anxieties (Pykett 24). Similarly, in *Victorian Ghosts*, Vanessa Dickerson claims that the supernatural offered female novelists of the period a way to express experiences and emotions that did not conform to Victorian decorum (149). She implies, but without clearly stating it, that for Victorian male writers, the supernatural was an extension of the scientific mind, probing the subconscious of the age. Their writing was "more diagnostic, clinical, journalistic, vested in mensuration" (7). In a note, she cites Le Fanu's Dr. Hesselius as an example. Although I disagree with her comments about Hesselius because, in his cases, the primary focus is on narrative accounts of supernatural events rather than Hesselius's scientific accounts of them, she does recognize that both male and female writers were responding to the social climate, even if in different ways. Similarly, Le Fanu was responding to the skepticism of the period.

What made this new type of literature possible, according to Elton Smith and Robert Haas, was that "in terms of literature, social reformists of the 1830s and 1840s provided a level of consciousness that had been missing from the earlier Gothic writers . . ." (vii-viii). Sensational novelists reflected the information found in studies such as those by Mayhew and Engels, and created characters such as Lady Audley, who moves from her lower-class beginnings to an upper-class marriage. Likewise, social and political issues emerged in Le Fanu's stories. For example, the struggles between the Irish-Catholics and Protestants surfaced through supernatural characters such as Fitzgerald in "The Last Heir of Castle Connor." As in these stories, society's religious

and economical problems that had been hidden from public view were beginning to be recognized in the nineteenth century, and because these problems were not visible on the surface of society, they emerged like ghosts, threatening the established order and providing material for the sensational novelists.

Many critics note that Le Fanu abhorred being called a sensational novelist.⁴³ His unwillingness to be identified with those writers whose main intent was to thrill an audience suggests that Le Fanu believed his writing was more than mere sensation and that he wanted to be associated with writers such as Sir Walter Scott. Despite the fact that, according to Christine Longford, he “styled himself as a writer of tragic romance” (434), he remains numbered among the top ghost story writers. Perhaps it is because he had in mind a greater project than thrilling his audience that Le Fanu’s stories are among the best in the genre. In *Elegant Nightmares*, Sullivan also recognizes that “the intensity and authenticity of horror and agony in [Le Fanu’s short] stories suggest . . . these fictions sprang from a deeper source than a desire to entertain” (68). Indeed, although Sullivan does not suggest it, this greater project can be seen in the spiritual, historical, and psychological themes that are apparent in Le Fanu’s works. Through these themes, he warns Victorian readers about the dangers of replacing their spirituality with materialism and rationalism.

If Le Fanu read and was influenced by writers such as Braddon, Collins, and the

⁴³Notable critics such as Crawford and McCormack refer to letters from and about Le Fanu that state he did not like the idea of being recognized as a sensationalist. In fact, in a 1942 essay for a Dublin journal, *The Bell*, Christine Longford states that “to call Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu a writer of thrillers would be to make him turn in his grave” (434).

later Dickens, they were equally influenced by him.⁴⁴ Not only did these writers influence one another, but their similar styles can be seen as products of the Victorian era. Indeed, as I mentioned before, many critics note the similarities between Poe and Le Fanu.⁴⁵ Although writing concurrently from different countries, both address the fears of the period, yet there are some interesting differences, indicating their different concerns. Poe, much like Browning, tends to write from the vantage of the madman, recognizing the fears and evil lurking in humanity. On the other hand, Le Fanu tends to write from the vantage of one who has been plagued by a Poe-like character: Poe would have written "Carmilla" from Carmilla's point of view, and Le Fanu would have written "The Cask of Amontillado" as a case history of Montessor's disrupted spiritual system, focusing on the ways in which his spiritual depravity, the history of his country, and his psychological distress created his hysteria. Although the terror the authors produce is similar, their different perspectives on characters suggest that they respond to anxieties of the period with individualized techniques.

In "Edgar Allan Poe: Tales of Dark Heat," David Punter recognizes that many of Poe's works are "reworkings of psychological materials which were already foci of interest" in the nineteenth century (1-2). He also notes that Poe's tales are divided between detective stories such as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and supernatural

⁴⁴It is interesting to note that Le Fanu's influence stretched beyond the Victorian era. Moderns such as M. R. James and Dorothy Sayers were influenced by him. Sayers even includes references to him in one of her detective novels, *Gaudy Night*.

⁴⁵Poe died in 1849 during the middle stage of Le Fanu's career. However, most of Poe's short stories of the supernatural were published after 1838, the year Le Fanu's first story was published.

horror stories such as "Ligeia" in which the "only resolution is death." These two forms have "opposite psychic structures" (2). The former is based on a reasoning power that, as Punter claims, seems supernatural, and the latter is based on apparently supernatural events and a loss of reason. Despite the geographical distance between the writers, Le Fanu, like Poe, takes up the "psychological materials" of the time, but, unlike Poe, in his later stories, Le Fanu attempts to combine the rational and irrational instead of developing a different form for each. This conflation occurs primarily in the character of Dr. Hesselius, who accepts the supernatural at the same time as he presents a scientific reason for it. For example, in "Green Tea," Dr. Hesselius exercises his detective skills when he is able to determine aspects of Jennings's life from a short conversation. However, unlike Poe's Dupin, Hesselius does not disclose his deductive reasoning: when Lady Mary asks how he knew that Jennings's father had seen a ghost, Hesselius replies with a cryptical "by the planets of course . . ." (12). The reader is led to assume that Hesselius has used his excellent reasoning powers to deduce this information, but that he is unwilling to share how he arrived at his conclusion. Later, Hesselius tells Jennings to "regard his illness strictly as one dependant on physical, though *subtle* physical causes" (33), indicating there is a purely scientific reason for his visions, yet Hesselius never denies that what Jennings sees is a ghost. Despite his intellectual capacity for reasoning, Hesselius, unlike the rational detectives, is willing to accept the supernatural, linking him with some of Poe's less rational characters such as the narrator of "Ligeia," who accepts the supernatural explanation that his second wife resurrects as his first wife.

It is Hesselius's attempts to understand the connections between the human mind

and seemingly supernatural events that connects him with doctors of modern psychology. Although there are psychological elements throughout Le Fanu's works, the presence of Dr. Hesselius in *In a Glass Darkly* intensifies focus on the mental states of the characters. In "Mr. Justice Harbottle," Hesselius explains Harbottle's supernatural experience and the ghostly visitations experienced by the child and maid in clinical terms later associated with the psychological profession:

It was affected, too, by the phenomenon, which occurs so frequently as to indicate a law of these eccentric conditions; that is to say, it exhibited, what I may term, the contagious character of this sort of intrusion of the spirit-world upon the proper domain of matter. . . . We see the operation of this principle perfectly displayed, in certain cases of lunacy, of epilepsy, of catalepsy, and of mania. . . . (83-84)

Although Hesselius does not deny the possibility of supernatural intervention, he is concerned with its "contagious character," the psychological effects that create a mob-like mentality—if one person sees a ghost, then people around that person begin to see ghosts.

Because of the ways in which Le Fanu attempts to reconcile the spiritual and scientific contradictions created by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rationalism, it is no surprise, then, that often he is considered the first writer of psychological horror stories. Later Victorian and Modern writers continued to develop this connection between socio-psychological anxieties and the supernatural; writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Franz Kafka championed the form into the twentieth century. In fact, Henry James recognizes Le

Fanu's contribution to this form; in "The Liar," James writes that Le Fanu's novels are customary reading after midnight when one is in a country house. His reference to Le Fanu, combined with the socio-psychological problems raised in stories like his "The Turn of the Screw" suggests he was interested in continuing what Le Fanu had begun. Whereas Le Fanu focuses on spiritual, historical, and psychological forces, James focuses on social forces; their supernatural manifestations, however, are similar. Just as Laura's naivety and innocence are no protection against the threat Carmilla poses (Carmilla first appears to Laura when she is six), Flora and Miles are not protected by their youth. When they are just eight and ten, the children see the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. These ghosts reflect class-oriented and sexual fears. At one point the cook, Mrs. Grose, exclaims that when he was alive, Peter Quint was "too free" with Miles (665), and Quint's lowly social status is emphasized again when his sexual relations with Miss Jessel are broached: "*She* was a lady" even if "infamous" (673). Because no one likes to talk about them and the governess is never told about them until it is absolutely necessary, it becomes clear that the household is repressing these social issues. Even though the issues of an integrated class structure and sexuality were repressed, they emerge as ghosts, threatening the status quo and the future of upper-class society, represented by the young Miles and Flora.⁴⁶ This ghostly emergence is a continuation of the hauntings that occurred in Le Fanu's stories.

⁴⁶A reading of "Turn of the Screw" in which the governess imagines the ghosts, who are representations of her own anxieties, also supports the idea of repression of social anxieties. The social concerns are present, and the governess is concerned about the possible corruption of the children, even if she is the one who has repressed her own anxieties, only to be reminded of them by ghosts.

This broadening awareness of social issues like class mobility and sexual promiscuity opened the way for awareness of psychological problems as effects of society on the individual. Reflecting this trend, psychological literature slowly began its development. Earlier in the century, however, this change can already be seen in the differences between Le Fanu's early and middle stories such as "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter" and "The Mysterious Lodger," respectively, and his later ones such as "Carmilla" and "Squire Toby's Will." Thus, as Le Fanu's writing progressed, it became more overtly psychological, indicating that while his work was influenced by other literature of the period, it also foreshadowed the psychological literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Le Fanu's Stories and His Life

It is partly true that Le Fanu's stories, like other stories of the period, moved from the more traditional Gothic, historical ghost to the modern, invasive, psychological ghost because of the shift in literary tastes and new social anxieties, and by entering the literary movement of this period, he also helped to shape a new form of literature. Even though the maturation of Le Fanu's writing both reflected and contributed to the literary culture of the time, what is known about his life and his writings suggests there is something else behind the development of his writing style: Le Fanu's literary development reflects the development of his own life. As I discussed in the previous chapters, there are spiritual, historical, and psychological elements throughout his writing. Even in his more psychologically oriented later stories such as "Carmilla," there are hints of history and

superstition. Conversely, there are hints of the later, more grotesque stories in his earlier ones such as "Schalken the Painter." The similarities occur because throughout all stages of his writing, he focuses on the theme that there are forces present in the material world that science and rationalism cannot explain; however, he changes his methods for developing it. These changes, while not eliminating any one subject, shift the emphasis placed on each force.

The developments in Le Fanu's literary style occur when something changes in his life. As I stated in chapter two, McCormack considers *The Purcell Papers* "a farewell to Abingdon" (*Victorian Ireland* 86). Le Fanu wrote the first stories in the collection in 1838 after he had decided to settle in Dublin and enter the newspaper business. In stories such as "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter" and "Jim Sullivan's Adventures in the Great Snow," Le Fanu does not mock rural superstitions but develops them as a warm-hearted look into a way of life of which he could no longer be a part. He feels an affinity for the people who hold these superstitions and those who have strong religious beliefs, and in other early stories like "A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family" and "A Drunkard's Dream," the religious elements suggest the danger in ignoring or denying the presence of a spiritual power. Not finding this sense of interaction between the spiritual and the physical in his own Protestant religion, he used Catholicism and folklore as a metaphor to explain the presence of the non-material spiritual, historical, and psychological forces in the physical world. In "Schalken the Painter," also published in *The Purcell Papers*, the Protestant clergyman is cold and ineffective. On the other hand, the Catholic narrator, Father Purcell, is warm and compassionate, and although he cannot help O'Connor in

"The Last Heir of Castle Connor," this is before he becomes a priest. Unlike the Protestant clergyman in "Schalken the Painter," Purcell is active; in fact, it is his experience with O'Connor that motivates him to become a clergyman. Although he obviously regrets the loss of the ancient glory of Ireland, he also misses the interconnectedness of the spiritual and material worlds that he experienced when he lived among the rural Irish-Catholics.

As unrest among the Irish-Catholics progressed, however, Le Fanu's sympathy toward Catholicism waned, and his fear of an uprising increased. Although his middle stories are not as well written as either the early or the later ones, they do help to chart the transition from his early stories of an old, rural Ireland to his stories in which the hauntings of the characters take precedence over the location. Although "The Mysterious Lodger" differs from many of his stories, it marks how Le Fanu's life influenced his works during the middle stage of his career. In this story, the location, England, is not as important as the spiritual battle undergone by the narrator because it was at this time that Le Fanu and his wife wrestled with spiritual anxieties. Two other middle stories also show this same shift. Le Fanu wrote "Spalatro" in 1843, two years after the death of his sister and in the same year as his marriage; and he wrote "Borrhomeo the Astrologer" in 1862, four years after the death of his wife and one year after the death of his mother. Whereas "Spalatro" marks Le Fanu's movement into the middle stage of his writing career, "Borrhomeo" marks his movement out of it. What links them is that they have a seventeenth-century continental setting and chart the spiritual corruption of the main character. Like "The Mysterious Lodger," these stories have an interesting background

setting, but it is not as important as the Irish setting is in *The Purcell Papers*. In "Spalatro" and "Borrhomeo," the location offers a Gothic setting along the lines of *The Castle of Otranto*, yet Le Fanu's stories are more violent and the ghosts less easily explained than in most early nineteenth-century Gothic novels.

These middle stories also are important because they mark Le Fanu's change in attitude toward politics and religion. They mark his turn from representing Catholics sympathetically and warm-heartedly in his early stories to representing seventeenth-century Roman-Catholic Italy as a center of corruption. Although "Spalatro," like stories in *The Purcell Papers*, is narrated by a representative of the Catholic church, Fra Giacomo, he lacks the warm-hearted insight into the religion that Purcell possesses, and he is not as central to the story as Father Purcell is to many of the tales he recounts. In this case, the main character, Spalatro, rejects God, and the monk who tutors Spalatro is evil. Because this story is at the beginning of the middle period, it suggests that Le Fanu felt a stronger revulsion toward Catholicism in the 1840s and early 1850s than he did toward the end of the period, in 1862, when "Borrhomeo the Astrologer" was written. Although the anti-Catholic sentiment is not as strong in "Borrhomeo the Astrologer," there is no Christian character who plays a primary role in the plot. There are Christian citizens and clergymen who denounce Borrhomeo, but they are not central or individualized. The churches do play a more central role as safe havens from the plague, but the Satanic character desires Borrhomeo to paint an "S" in blood over the church doors to allow the devil ingress. Even though Borrhomeo is punished for this act, evil is much more prevalent and ominous in this story than in Le Fanu's earlier ones. Just as the change in

emphasis from location to spiritual battle indicates that Le Fanu's personal struggles directed his writing, the change in representation of Catholicism as a good and beneficial religion to an ineffectual one that harbors evil indicates Le Fanu's political concerns. The political threat of the Irish-Catholics and his personal problems—his wife's spiritual depression and the deaths of his wife and sister—affected Le Fanu tremendously, and the urgency with which he felt these spiritual and historical forces affecting his life works its way into his stories, making them more graphic and violent during the middle stages of his career.

Although these pressures in Le Fanu's life did not subside, toward the end of his career, he found a more efficient way to convey his ideas. After his wife's death, when he began writing novels, his short stories become more controlled, intensifying the fear and ambiguity. In a letter, Richard Bentley, his British publisher, encourages Le Fanu to write "the story of an English subject and in modern times" (qtd. in McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 140). This letter prompted Le Fanu to write the novel *Wylder's Hand* (1864), which is set in England. Choosing not to use the supernatural in his novels, Le Fanu focused on character development. Despite the fact that he did not include the supernatural in his novels, the supernatural elements in stories he wrote concurrently become more threatening and powerful, suggesting that his experience writing novels helped him to intensify his focus when writing short stories. Because the structure of the novel calls for more detailed characters, Le Fanu would have had to work on developing characters with more depth than historical stereotypes and allegorical corollaries. Whereas his novels contain characters and plots developed from his earlier stories, his

later stories contain new characters whose psyches are more fully developed.⁴⁷

As I mentioned in the introduction, Le Fanu was aware that short stories are a much better medium for ghostly tales than novels, which would account for the difference between his novels and stories. In these later stories, though, rather than focusing on anecdotes, tales, and superstitions, as in "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardaugh," where the retelling of the tale is more important than the character of Ardaugh, Le Fanu began to focus on individual characters and their experiences. For example, in "Green Tea" and "Mr. Justice Harbottle," the mental states of Jennings and Harbottle are of primary concern. This shift in focus from the superstitions in a village to the ghostly experiences of an isolated individual shifts the supernatural from a communal experience to a personal one, thereby intensifying it. Even though "Spalatro," "Borrhomeo," and "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," among others, focus on the life and experiences of one character, none of them offers the same amount of character development as his later stories do. On the other hand, the characters in "Squire Toby's Will," "The Haunted Baronet," and the stories from *In a Glass Darkly* are individuals: Charles, Sir Bale Mardykes, Jennings, Harbottle, and Laura.⁴⁸ Although there is a Gothic setting in

⁴⁷Even though Justice Harbottle is a later character developed from an earlier one, Horrock's ghost in "Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street," the later story shifts focus from the tale of a haunted house to the story of the judge who haunts it. Similarly, "The Vision of Tom Chuff" (1870) is modeled on "The Drunkard's Dream" (1838). However, Le Fanu develops Tom Chuff's character more fully than Pat Connell's, and the result is a story in which the supernatural is tied to the psychological aspect of guilt in the character's life, creating an even stronger uncanny feeling.

⁴⁸Although Captain Barton in "The Familiar," written in the middle stages of Le Fanu's career, and republished in *In a Glass Darkly*, is a fairly developed character, the reader learns less about his psychological state, personality, and history than the other

"Carmilla," and Judge Harbottle seems to fit the stereo-type of a "hanging judge," the reader is given more history and insight into these later characters and on the internal struggles these characters face. The spiritual struggle that is important in the middle stories is not abandoned in later stories. However, the psychological causes for and effects of the spiritual struggle each character undergoes are given in more detail. For example, in "Green Tea," the reader is made aware of Jennings's obsessive consumption of green tea and his obsessive studies into Paganism; his obsessive character was part of the cause for his spiritual battle, and, at the same time, he suffered psychologically, descending into a paranoia that leads to suicide. In the earlier "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh," the reader must imagine what has caused Ardagh's disturbed mental state, and, although there are clues to his seeming madness, the only effect of which we are certain is his suicide. This character development in Le Fanu's later writing reflects the insight he gained from creating more developed characters for his novels and a more mature writing style in which the supernatural is intensified by focusing on individual characters.

During this stage of his writing career, Le Fanu became more solitary. Those closest to him were dead, and, given his religious studies into Swedenborgianism, it appears he was searching for something to comfort him. Whether he found comfort and peace is unclear, but his stories never offered any. Even at the end of his career, he depicted the presence of spiritual, psychological, and historical forces beyond human knowledge and control. Although he understood the importance of acknowledging the presence of these forces, he also understood that they could not be explained rationally.

characters from the stories in *In a Glass Darkly*, which were written later.

As he confronted changes in his life, Le Fanu's awareness of these forces became greater, and their presence in his stories became more powerful. In the beginning, he wrote of their presence in historical and legendary Ireland and moved toward writing about their presence in the spiritual lives of characters who are more allegorical than individual. When he most strongly felt their presence in his own life, though, Le Fanu wrote stories in which well-developed characters were confronted with historical, spiritual, and, most prominently, psychological forces they could not explain.

Le Fanu's Stories and Their Readers

Throughout his works, Le Fanu shows the physical effects these spiritual, historical, and psychological forces have by supernaturally projecting them into the material world, attempting to disturb or, in Freudian terms, create an uncanny feeling in the reader. He creates this feeling by highlighting the ambiguity and multiple possibilities in his tales. The ghosts and haunts can be read as emanating from any number of places, allowing for the possibility of both supernatural and natural explanations, neither of which is completely believable or unbelievable. As in "Schalken the Painter," "The Familiar," and "Mr. Justice Harbottle," the ghosts and supernatural events in Le Fanu's stories are ambiguous; thus, the reader hesitates when determining the origins for them. This is what Todorov terms the fantastic, and it is through his stories of the fantastic that Le Fanu creates an uncanny feeling in the reader. Again, this is not the uncanny in the way Todorov uses it to describe a story in which events seem supernatural but are easily explained; I use the term in the way Freud uses it: to describe a feeling in a person who is

reminded of the possibility of ghosts and other superstitions, but who, nevertheless, dismisses them as unreal at the same time as he or she questions a rational explanation. Although his stories are not meant to convince readers that there are ghosts and goblins constantly surrounding them, Le Fanu does lead his readers to question their own skepticism and scientific learning.

Le Fanu develops both the fantastic and the uncanny in his stories with what Carroll considers "the greatest contribution to the horror genre": placing "the supernatural amidst the world of everyday life, where the persecution of ordinary, innocent victims, (rather than Gothic overreachers) was closely observed . . ." (5-6). Although Carroll focuses more on form than on theme, it is because the stories are set in the midst of a world with which the reader is familiar that they are more effective in showing how spiritual, historical, and psychological ghosts reassert themselves in the material world. In "Doubles, Shadows, Sedan Chairs, and the Past," Coughlan attempts to explain this relationship between the supernatural and the realistic, everyday world in Le Fanu's stories. Realism is a house, she states, and "in this metaphor the shadows, stains, traces, inexplicable noise, and puzzling visitors stand for horror and supernatural fiction, which do not so much set themselves up as alternatives to realism, as loiter darkly in its interstices, as if waiting to pounce" (23). The supernatural is not separate from the material world; rather, it is an integral part of the real world. She pushes the metaphor further by adding that the house is not simply representative of realism and the material world, but is a person's consciousness. Representing the house as a person's consciousness works, however, only for authors in which the creakings and moanings of

the house are caused by internal problems, but in Le Fanu, bumps in the night can be caused by something external—something outside of a person's consciousness. For example, in "A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family" and "A Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess," Lady Glenfallen and the unnamed narrator are not suffering for their own crimes, but for the crimes of Lord Glenfallen and the Uncle, respectively. Despite this, the metaphor is interesting in that it implies ghost stories do not contradict realism, but are an aspect of it, just as the superstitions, historical events, and psychological neuroses people repress are a part of them. Thus, one of the reasons for the haunting impact of Le Fanu's stories is that the supernatural events in them are an aspect of the real, material, everyday world.

Although Briggs argues that, for the reader in an age of growing skepticism and atheism, the ghost story in the nineteenth century "gave comforting proof that there was something beyond" (24), Le Fanu's stories do not offer much comfort. What they do offer is a warning. By writing stories which stir up doubt and hesitation, Le Fanu shows his readers that there are forces in the universe affecting the physical world in ways that cannot be explained. Our superstitions and fears cannot be explained either, but to deny them is to repress them. When we do this, inevitably, like religion, history, and the subconscious, they force their way to the surface and emerge when we least expect them. Le Fanu attempts to shake his readers' faith in the science, materialism, and atheism which pervaded his own Victorian culture by pointing to the doubts in each person, even if well hidden. Although one can dismiss the events in Le Fanu's stories as merely

superstition, folklore, or psychological hysteria, one cannot so easily forget the eery feeling they create. His stories are not only magnificent tales of the supernatural, but they are the ghosts that haunt us.

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